



Council on Aging

February 13, 2014 – 9:00 AM - **Minutes**
181 Hillman Street, Building 9

****View Agenda****

Board Members Present:

Bruce Duarte, Chair
Esperanza Alejandro-Berube
Inez Mello
Joan Swain
Jane Stott
Mary Sullivan

Also Present:

Debra Lee, COA Director
Cynthia Wallquist, Director of Community Services
Marisol Grant, Hazelwood Senior Activities Director

Excused:

Patricia Costa, Vice Chair
Virginia Morrison, Secretary
Stanley Ociesa
James Sylvia

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by the Chairman, Bruce Duarte

Secretary's Report

Mr. Duarte asked the board members to read over the minutes to see if there were any questions. The board members agreed upon the approval of the January 9th, 2014 minutes.

A motion to approve the minutes for January 9th, 2014 was made by Ms. Swain, and seconded by Ms. Mello. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Grant, Hazelwood Senior Activities Director, to speak about how things are going at the Hazelwood Senior Center. Ms. Grant spoke about how the seniors have been receptive and welcoming with her arrival. Ms. Grant talked about how she has been asking seniors what programming they would enjoy seeing added to the schedule. Ms. Grant said she has an influx of ideas of different activities to add to the weekly schedule. Ms. Grant stated the Ms. Lee and Ms. Amaral-Lema have been very helpful and they are always there to answer questions and to formulate ideas. Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Grant about daily attendance at the senior center. Ms. Grant stated the attendance is continuing to rise with the new programming at the senior center. Ms. Grant stated there are two new classes added to Monday's schedule, Computer Classes from 10AM-12PM, and Zumba held from 1PM-2PM, and also a catered hot lunch for the first Monday of the every month is also provided at the center for the computer class attendees and the Zumba participants. Tuesday's schedule has Strength and Conditioning and Dancercise which are both popular classes for the senior center. There has been a cold lunch served at the center every Tuesday to help bridge the gap between the two exercise classes. There has been an average of 15-25 seniors who have attended the lunch on Tuesdays. Ms. Grant said the bingos that are held every Wednesday and Friday are increasing with participants. Also, there are two Yoga classes now with the additional Friday class. Yoga classes are held on Wednesdays 10AM-11AM and Fridays from 9AM-10AM. Thursday's schedule has a Knitting and Crocheting group which meets from 9:30AM-11:30AM and Line Dancing from 1PM-2:30PM. Birthday Cake celebration has been added to the last Friday of every month from 11AM-12PM. Mr. Duarte said there is a Spanish community in the south end location and asked Ms. Grant how she is reaching out to the population. Ms. Grant stated she would like to add an Intro to Spanish class, and a Dominoes group. Mr. Duarte spoke about the free transportation and how we can help with transportation services if that is an issue for seniors. Mr. Duarte asked the other board members if they had any questions for Ms. Grant, and they wished her the best of luck and to keep up the great work at the Hazelwood Senior Center. Mr. Duarte stated that New Bedford has the fifth highest elderly population in the state of Massachusetts. Ms. Grant stated Ms. Amaral-Lema and Ms. Lee have been very helpful and informative and have assisted her through this transitional phase. Mr. Duarte said Ms. Lee and Ms. Amaral-Lema are a great resource and are willing to assist her through any turbulence and questions.

Mr. Duarte stated the Hillman Street Senior Support Center is today, February 13th. The wintery weather may hinder the attendance, but whatever happens the board members and Council on Aging staff are excited about the hard work and determination that has gone into this dream becoming a reality.

Old Business

Ms. Lee informed the board members that ridership for all of the transportation services have greatly increased: personal, shopping, medical and free transportation. Ms. Lee said with the overwhelming need for an additional grocery shopping day the COA has added Thursday shopping transportation on the schedule. Now seniors have the option to shop on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday at various supermarkets.

New Business

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee how the Community Development Block Grant process is going. Ms. Lee stated she is hoping to get more than level funded, but if we are level funded it will be better than a decrease. Mr. Duarte asked if Ms. Lee could asked for a higher amount from the CDBG to assist with free transportation, but Ms. Lee informed the board member the CDBG funding covers the salaries of many COA employees.

Chairman's Report- Mr. Duarte

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee how the SRTA Boston Transportation is going. Ms. Lee said the Boston transportation has greatly increased. In the month of February, there will be seven new transportation riders.

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee how the free transportation is working out. Ms. Lee said the free transportation has taken off well with seniors frequently calling and using the service. Mr. Duarte asked how the free transportation is being funded. Ms. Lee stated the funding comes from Coastline Elderly Services Title III Grant. Ms. Wallquist stated the free transportation has caused a hindrance with funding with the extra hours that have to be paid for the driver for the free transportation. Ms. Wallquist also stated the funding is running low and may be used by the summer. Mr. Duarte asked about a solution to keep this service available to seniors especially with the positive turnout received and how seniors are socializing and getting to the seniors centers for activities. Ms. Mello asked Ms. Lee about how the free transportation is being coordinated. Ms. Lee stated the dispatcher schedules the transportation to make sure the pickups and destination drop offs are conducive for the optimal time results and to minimize travel needed. Ms. Lee said many individuals are picked up in groups, so there is less surplus driving.

Ms. Wallquist recommended Ms. Aguiar, Community Services Fiscal Administrative Specialist, to attend next month's advisory board meeting on April 10, 2014 to explain the financial status and progress of the free transportation to the board members. Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Wallquist and Ms. Lee to please invite Ms. Aguiar to the advisory board meeting on Thursday, April 10, 2014.

Motion to approve the Chairman's report was made by Ms. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. Swain. It was unanimously approved.

Director's Report- Ms. Lee

Ms. Lee spoke about how excited she and the COA staff are about the grand opening of the Hillman St. Senior Support Center. Ms. Lee and Ms. Amaral-Lema are enthusiastic about the new prospects this new center will bring to the senior population. Ms. Lee is thrilled to show the renovated space, and the new computer lab, art room and wellness room to visitors.

Ms. Lee has been in communication with other human service agency representatives to see what programming she and Ms. Amaral-Lema can add to the Hillman St. Senior Support Center.

Ms. Lee stated since there has been an overwhelming response for snow removal and Ms. Lee has found several individuals to assist seniors with snow removal.

Ms. Lee talked about the importance and significance an electronic tracking system would have on most of the New

Bedford Senior Centers. It would track the daily attendance of the centers, and would calculate all of the unduplicated and duplicated services. The tracking system would configure most of the data needed for grant applications, and would allow the administrative staff to seek additional funding for programming.

Motion to approve the Director's report was made Ms. Mello and seconded Ms. Swain. It was unanimously approved.

Director of Community Services Report- Ms. Wallquist

Ms. Wallquist spoke about how well the "Clear Path" program has been running. The Department of Community Services and the Council on Aging have been assisting disabled seniors with shoveling their driveways and walkways through a contracted vendor.

A motion to approve the Director of Community Services report was made by Ms. Alejandro-Berube and seconded by Ms. Sullivan. It was unanimously approved.

Correspondence

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee to invite Ms. Aguiar, Community Services Fiscal Staff Administrative Specialist, to attend the April 10, 2014 meeting.

Mr. Duarte stated the next advisory board meeting will be held on Thursday, March 13, 2014 at 9AM.

Motion to adjourn this meeting was made by Ms. Swain and seconded by Ms. Mello. It was unanimously approved.