

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
December 6, 2012
Bangs Community Center: Room 101

Members Present: Sue Dierks, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Rosemary Kofler, Barbara Sutherland, Jack Wollensak

Absent: Dan Clapp, Mary Jane Laus, Juana Trujillo

Select Board Liaison: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Helen MacMellon (Social Worker), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant)

Guests: Shirley Lauder (Assistant Treasurer, Friends of the Amherst Senior Center), Scott Merzbach (Gazette reporter)

Welcome: Joan Golowich, Vice Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 10:38 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the November 8, 2012 meeting were approved and accepted.

FRIENDS

Treasurer's Report:

Shirley Lauder reported \$12,007.24 in the Checking Account; \$2,312.45 in the Program Account; \$3,834.58 in the Travel Club; and \$87,830.47 in Investments. **Total Assets of \$105,984.74.**

Donations to Friends:

Karen reported. To date for FY13 a total of \$3,212.50 has been received. A new solicitation letter for the Friends went out in the December *Senior Spirit* newsletter. Stylus contributions have netted \$955.00.

Friends Update:

Barbara reported. The Friends will meet on December 12 to discuss the Fourth Annual Follies. Amherst College granted us permission to use Buckley Recital Hall on March 24, 2013 for the Follies.

NEW BUSINESS

New Furniture Subcommittee Needed:

Nancy said the chairs we use currently at the Senior Center are very uncomfortable for most older people. They force elders to sit back in such a way as to make it difficult to get up to a standing position. Nancy asked for a few members to look around for chairs with **flat** seats, locate an appropriate one and get a sample from the company to try it out before ordering any.

New ADA Advance Reservation Policy Pilot Program:

Maura met with Nicole from PVRTA who explained the pilot program for advance reservations, which will take place from January 2 – March 31, 2013. Presently ADA eligible people can make reservations up to two weeks in advance. PVRTA has found that there are a number of 'cancellations' and 'No Shows'. Forty seven percent of the 'cancellations' were reservations scheduled more than five days in advance.

Twelve percent of the 'no shows' are trips that were scheduled eight days in advance. The pilot program will be a "Five Day Advance Registration" period. Nicole feels that may open up more slots for the non-ADA eligible riders. A voice mail and email is set up for feedback. ADA riders can still make reservations up to 4:30 the day before. People with standing reservations will also use the pilot program. Regular Dial-a-ride van riders can reserve two to five days in advance.

PVRTA will also provide travel training and work one on one with a senior or person with disabilities on learning to use the fixed-route buses – determining best route, getting to the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, getting to their destination.

PVRTA is moving toward the use of "Smart Cards" for using the buses and on-line booking or cancellation for rides.

In the fleet for the van service, PVTA has nine smaller transit-connect vans, which can be used for people who do not need the accessible vans. They get better gas mileage and can transport two ambulatory people.

Joel proposed that we provide a service at the Senior Center of helping seniors who do not have computers to book reservations on-line.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

MCOA Conference Ideas to Consider:

Jack spoke in November about follow-up with statistics.

Rosemary followed up with her suggestion at the November meeting that a monthly memo be sent to the Town Manager and the Select Board keeping them informed of some of the services we provide at the Senior Center and of our value to elders in the community. The November memo focused on the At-Risk Database and was delivered on November 21.

Sue plans to pursue a relationship with people at the Amherst Regional High School.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

2013 Parking Sticker Update:

Jack reported. Sales for the 2013 stickers will begin on December 17, 2012. The first seventeen months of the parking program were a test period. The new program needs to be renegotiated with the Town based on the results of the test. We plan to ask the Select Board to change the eligibility age from 65 to 60 but otherwise continue the program without change. We have developed a spreadsheet which shows the hours spent at Senior Center activities by the approximately 140 seniors who hold parking stickers. The hours include volunteer hours. There are thirty seniors who have not attended activities as required, which is one hour per week during the period that they used the sticker. We will discuss the reason for this low attendance with each of the individuals. If it is due to illness, seasonal travel to a warmer climate or other understandable reason, we would like to use our discretion in deciding whether to allow renewal of the sticker. We cannot determine whether these parking sticker holders made use of their stickers in the Boltwood Garage for reasons other than Senior Center activities, but the denial of these sales would result in a loss of \$750 to the Town.

The Town has asked that we determine whether the sale of parking stickers has resulted in an increase in attendance at Senior Center activities. We will attempt to show the change that occurred between 2010 when no stickers were sold and 2012 when the program was fully in effect.

COA members were reminded of how important it is to 'scan' their volunteer hours into the *myseniorcenter®* system.

Highland Valley Elder Services Update:

Joan reported. The auditors have not completed their report as yet and the November deadline was extended. The Finance Committee will meet with the auditors on December 21.

There is grave concern over the Governor's proposed cuts.

Barbara went to a nutrition meeting. There have been some complaints about the food, such as three days when food was burned. The reasons will be investigated.

STAFF REPORTS

Nancy:

- We had the biggest Thanksgiving Dinner ever at the Senior Center in 38 years. We served about 115 elders in the dining room and delivered about 35 meals to shut-in elders. This was an enormous challenge to those who prepared the food since the Senior Center kitchen is dreadfully inadequate. Four twenty-five-pound turkeys were stored overnight, and then prepared. To complicate matters, the outdated stove burners in the dining room no longer heat adequately. But in the end everything turned out well.
- The Tag Sale/Craft Show/Luncheonette netted about \$380.
- The Pasta supper was cancelled. Only eight people had signed up. It has also been difficult to get in touch with the Amherst College student in charge of the Ageless Program.

- Nancy has difficulty in finding volunteers who want to devote large numbers of hours to working in the kitchen or helping with food preparation. Most seniors have very busy schedules outside of the Senior Center. **This is a national trend—many volunteers who give relatively smaller amounts of time than in past generations.**
- The leaf-raking project was very **successful—13 lawns** were completed. Six fraternities/sororities and two individuals participated which is more than in past years.
- Amherst College students are conducting numerous research studies, some of which involve interviewing seniors.

Jack participated in four interviews recently. One involved a consulting firm and focused on how older people view technology. Another interview project focused on what it is like for seniors to move from **one place to another – what they bring, what they have to give up, what kind of experience the move presented to the elder and so on.**

Maura:

A student from Lisa Raskin’s Psychology of Aging class will be interviewing five elders from the Friendly Visitor program about their experience with the program.

The Community Innovation Challenge Grant that Maura, Helen and Nancy pursued with Pelham will not happen. Pelham has 344 people age 60 and above. Thirty-six of them participate in the Amherst Senior Center. Joan Hart, the Pelham outreach worker, is 87 years old and although very knowledgeable, she has difficulty doing all that is needed. **Pelham’s only source of money for senior services comes from the Formula Grant.** Between 2000 and 2010 there was a 43% increase in people 60 and older in Pelham. Pelham needs to look carefully at how to address the needs of their seniors.

Maura, Helen and Nancy have offered to help them in many ways – to include Pelham in our newsletter, to include information about Pelham on our website, to make home visits in Pelham, to help them apply for grants. Pelham has six COA members, one of whom is on the Board of Selectmen. Our SC staff left the door open to help if the Pelham COA decides they are interested in applying for the CIC Grant (or other grants) in the future.

The COA meeting adjourned at 11:52 AM, following which the members enjoyed a lunch together.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on February 7, 2013 at the Bangs Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the November 8, 2012 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.

Document List

The following documents were made available to all members of the COA during the meeting. They are available for review at the Amherst Senior Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst MA.

1. Meeting Agenda.
2. Minutes of November 8, 2012 meeting.
3. Friends of the Amherst Senior Center Treasurer Report.
4. Thanksgiving Dinner 2012 Financial Summary.
5. Friends of the Amherst Senior Center Expense Summary from 2010, 2011 and 2012.
6. COA November Memo to the Town Manager and the Select Board members.

