



COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES, VETERANS, CULTURE, AND RECREATION

Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Chair

Councilor Alisa F. Klein

Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra

Meeting Minutes

Monday March 16, 2015

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street

Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building, Northampton, MA

1. **Members present/absent:** Councilor LaBarge and Councilor Sciarra were present. Councilor Klein was absent.
2. **Meeting Called to Order:** Councilor LaBarge called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.
3. **Announcement of Audio/Video Recording of Meeting:** Councilor LaBarge announced that the meeting would be video and audio taped.
4. **Approval of Minutes of January 21, 2015:** Councilor Sciarra motioned to approve the minutes; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 2 yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Klein).
5. **Public Comment-None**
6. **4:05 p.m. – Judith Roberts, Executive Director, The Literacy Project**

Ms. Roberts gave a brief introduction about The Literacy Project and she showed a brief video about the program. Two students were present to share their experiences with the program.

The Literacy Project offers free classes to adults in Western Massachusetts in beginning literacy as well as GED preparation. Ms. Roberts explained that 1 in 7 adults in the Pioneer Valley do not have a high school diploma. If a high school age person comes to the program for help, the advocates will first try to re-introduce the student to the high school setting as this is where the most resources are. The Literacy Project offers academic classes in adult literacy and GED preparation as well as Transitions programs to help students pursue college, vocational training and work.

The Literacy Project has five sites: Northampton, Amherst, Greenfield, Ware and Orange. Funding for the program is received through many sources, including: the United Way, the City of Northampton and other cities and towns, grants and other charitable sources.

7. **5:00 pm Patricia Shaughnessy, Director of Senior Services and Crystal Cote, Assistant Director of Senior Services**

Patricia Shaughnessy provided background information about Seniors Services of Northampton. The name of the department changed as a result of the Mayor's new administrative order. The organization offers programs and opportunities for community members 55 and older. The department works with local, federal, and state agencies to address specific concerns about and for seniors. The department is a good resource for information and referrals. The Senior Services has a code of conduct for participants who utilize the facility. The goal is to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all who visit the facility.

Funding sources for Senior Services include: city budget appropriations, programming administered via a revolving fund, grants, and contributions from local businesses and community members. Coordinated events established for the purpose of fund raising include the Holiday Craft Fair, the annual appeal through the city census, the annual shred day, the Memorial Brick Project (bricks go into the meditation garden), the ongoing tag & book sales, the "just because" sale, bake sales, coffee shop and/or dining services, paid advertisements in the Conz Street Chronicle, building rentals, and more.

Ms. Cote talked about a grant awarded from the Mass. Association of Councils on Aging. The grant calls for a Benefits Councilor to help seniors 60+ to review their budgets and find ways to save money. Application assistance is free and confidential; the service can be provided at a person's home or at another location. The benefits counselors are volunteers and are trained and supervised by Northampton Senior Services.

The department has a long standing practice of working with other departments or agencies (such as the Veteran's Services, the Salvation Army, etc.) to help area elders find important services they may be lacking. Some examples include: working with PVRTA to get photo ids for bus transportation and identifying resources for nutritional and food security needs. The Public Health Nurse is on-site once or twice a month at the Senior Services Center to offer health counseling, educational programming and wellness clinics. Where possible and practicable, the department will work with other Senior Service agencies throughout the Pioneer Valley to bring elder services into other communities.

Senior Services staff includes six full-time (35 hours per week) employees and four part-time positions (less than 20 hours per week). There is an active volunteer program in which volunteers do fund raising, provide clerical services, and staff the book shop, coffee shop and front desk.

Senior Services provides a calendar showing events and programming that is available at the Center. The Conz Street Chronicle publishes the calendar; this newspaper is delivered to about 60 locations, including many city buildings.

Senior Services is currently raising money to purchase two vans for a transportation program. One van will be paid for via the City's Capital Improvement Program; the second van will be purchased using fundraising donations. The fund raising effort is called the "Kick the Tires" campaign".

- 8. NEW BUSINESS – Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed-NONE**
- 9. ADJOURN-At 6:00 pm Councilor Sciarra moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor LaBarge seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 2 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Klein).**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2015

Respectfully submitted by:
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