

Northampton Council on Aging Meeting
Thursday, September 10th, 2020, 3:30 pm, Due to the Covid-19
emergency, this meeting was conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing

DRAFT Minutes

Call to Order: Geriann Butler called the meeting to order @ 3:36 pm

Present: Geriann Butler, Dennis Helmus, Kathy Bredin, Cynthia Langley, Michael Ford, Jeanne Hoose, Marie Westburg, Jae Casella, Nancy Yesu, Michele Dihlmann, Bob Dionne

Excused: Donna Park & Ben Capistrant

Public Session: Ben Breslow, member of the Vote 16 Northampton Youth Committee spoke on his involvement with this 20 member under age 18 group. They are advocates for lowering voter age to 16 to foster accountability. Looking for organizations to join their cause.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Minutes from previous meetings will be brought to vote in the Oct 8th meeting

Announcements: None

Director's Report: Marie reported on updates on programming innovations and changes due to Covid 19. We are adding PVTA's NOHO Senior Shuttle Service on Sept 21st to further assist our patrons with shopping & errands. Even though there were layoffs, our remaining staff has really pulled together. Marie has been involved with the food distribution programs which has led her to meet with many of our patrons in person. Our membership has grown during this time as well with our online offerings. Marie also mentioned that the building remains closed and informed the council that other centers are taking a variety of different approaches to providing services and programming under social distancing guidelines. We are working on various grants to further help our seniors.

Assistant Director's Report: Jae spoke on lessening the digital divide with our new Technology Loan Program. This is important with telehealth vs in person doctor's appointments. Also lessens the isolation patrons may feel during the Pandemic if they are able to join our Zoom programming via the tablets/Chromebooks. We have two

volunteers to provide guidance to these patrons. We have unveiled the new PVTA NOHO Senior Shuttle transportation and non-emergency medical appointment taxi service program utilizing funds from a MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Commission) grant. In addition to these services, calls are being made to patrons weekly to check in on their well-being, both physically & mentally. Thanks were expressed to Northampton Neighbors for their part in this service.

Program and Marketing Coordinator Report: Nancy is gathering information to be published in the broadsheet which has become more important than ever during covid to reach those without digital access to resources. She also continues to edit the Chronicle which is back to its normal schedule. Nancy has been busy with program development, Facebook posts, Constant Contact and creative partnerships. She is working to provide programs on local access TV which has been a major challenge and still not resolved. Bob Dionne asked whether any changes were needed with Daily Hampshire Gazette outsourcing (answer was no changes). Dennis Helmus said that early voters gave positive feedback on online programming.

Social Worker's Report: Michele has been giving assistance with access to benefit programs and onsite food distribution and deliveries. Food insecurities are a huge issue and the Center has been able to alleviate some of the worry. Brown Bag & Nutritional Outreach have added over 40 new subscribers. Medicare Open Enrollment will be coming in November and Michele will be helping people over the phone with this program. She will have no extra assistance with the enrollment but feels confident she will be able to handle all of the calls. The Farmers Market \$25 coupon booklets were mailed or delivered in person to those seniors who requested them. Michele also mentioned the resource list which was started at the very beginning of Covid. The list, which is on our website, has been constantly updated and can be shared with seniors who call with a need. The list has also been shared with some of our housing authorities and included in the Brown Bags. YMCA, Commonwealth Care Alliance and area individuals & teenagers have helped us during the summer with food deliveries.

Old Business: The council currently has 9 members with the secretary position open. Jeanne Hoose would like thanks extended publicly to those who have left their positions. Marie mentioned that the Mayor does send thanks to members who leave the council. Board agreed that at present they will not make changes to that process. Michael Ford would like council members to encourage others to apply so their names may be supplied to the Mayor for recommendation to the board. Nominating committee chosen: Jeanne Hoose & Michael Ford

New Business:

- Dennis Helmus mentioned that Elder Vision has legally changed its name and is now called "Friends of the Senior Center".
- Kathy Bredin asked if the committee can write up a statement regarding Black Lives Matter in order to show their support as a board. Marie spoke on the diversity statement in our guidebook. We may need to revise the statement to reflect a broader scope. Kathy will write this statement

- and submit at the next meeting. Marie asked the council to reach out to us with ideas at any time.
- Michael Ford would like to find ways to help seniors with balance issues such as “Balance Matters” class. Marie mentioned that we regularly offered this class while we were open and it is in our online offerings. Area medical collaboratives have spoken on this issue and offer support services to seniors after a fall. Lifeline can be obtained through Highland Valley at no or low cost. Isolation can also attribute to muscle loss further compounding the issue. VNA & Northampton Neighbors are also aware that balance loss can be an early sign of dementia.

Other:

Next Meeting: Oct 8th, 2020, 3:30 pm, Northampton Senior Center (via Zoom)

Adjournment : Motion to adjourn Kathy Bredin, seconded by Michael Ford. Meeting adjourned @ 5:45 pm