

Northampton Council on Aging Meeting
Thursday, October 8th, 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 @ 3:32 pm

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

Excused: Donna Park

Public Session: No attendance requested

Review and Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the February meeting were approved with Ben Capistrant abstaining. Minutes from the September meeting were approved with Ben Capistrant abstaining.

Announcements: Gerriann Butler reported that Donna Park has resigned due to personal reasons. It was expressed that she will be missed on the board. Jeanne Hoose, along with Nancy Yesu, will work on soliciting artists for the coming year. Jeanne asked fellow board members to please share this endeavor.

Director's Report: Marie reported that she has met with the Mayor and she will not be requesting funds for any capital improvements this year. The building will be used for other purposes during the closure and revisions to the improvements previously planned will incorporate Covid standards once we reopen the Center. At this time, we do not have a timeline on reopening but our online programs continue to be very well received. We are currently working on age-friendly planning with PVPC in collaboration with UMass and under AARP directives. Northampton Neighbors has also sent out a survey about challenges older adults are facing and we are waiting on the results to help inform the age friendly planning process. Marie continues to help with food distribution onsite and has noticed that we have added new people to these outreaches. She noted that Deals & Steals seems to have added better choices in their Nutritional Outreach bags as well. Marie stated that the Board of Health is encouraging all employees and seniors to get their flu shots. The Center will be used for voting in the upcoming election.

Assistant Director's Report: Jae again spoke on lessening the digital divide with our new Technology Loan Program. Using the remainder of the grant money & programming funds, we have purchased 15 more iPads to loan out for 30 day increments. We have 2 tech volunteers, but more are needed to help the participants with learning to use the devices. Jae has reached out to Community Action who may have an intern to help with this program. To support patrons who do not have computer devices, more phone-in programs have been added. Over the course of the past 6 months, 300 new members have joined MyActiveCenter. Jae attended a zoom conference through Reach Out Massachusetts on combating loneliness. "The Little Things" task force is working to help community members who are dealing with being alone during covid. The staff & Northampton Neighbors continue to make calls to patrons in an effort to alleviate loneliness & meet their needs during this time. Transportation through Aaron's & PVRTA continues to grow. Patrons are happy to have these services available to them now.

Old Business: Bob Dionne expressed interest in topics that were brought up in the February meeting:

- Guidebook has not been finalized and will not be until after we reopen
- Credit card payments are now accepted and working well
- The transportation survey sent out by Sara to determine scheduling & rerouting has been put on hold. It should be noted that only a few surveys were returned prior to Covid
- The book exchange is also on hold. A lending library has been built by Smith Vocational High School and is at the Center. A 2nd lending library has been built in honor of Laura Scott's father through family donations. Both will be used upon reopening.
- Our Facebook page is managed by Nancy Yesu who monitors all content.

Kathy Bredin spoke on what the Councils' role should be in Black Lives Matter. She & Jeanne Hoose have been gathering information from various organizations. Cynthia Langley said we should all think about the treatment of seniors as a form of discrimination in our culture. The board members would like to see a diversity statement address agism & racism. Kathy asked if the staff could be aware of how they are combating racism and engaging different ethnicity groups. Marie mentioned a cultural grant, awarded before the Covid shutdown, for cultural programming - this programming was then provided online. More information will be gathered at the next meeting.

After a short discussion, the Vote 16 Northampton initiative was approved. This yes vote will allow them to use The Council on Aging in their endorsement list.

New Business: Dennis Helmus reported that there was an inadvertent error in figuring the terms for council members. Going forward, the mayor will keep them in a 3 yr rotation but cannot "undo" what has already transpired. 1, 2 or 3 yr will keep it in balance and he will be flexible with new members until it's resolved. Questions were raised as to the number of members needed to serve on the council. Admin Code (15 members)

is different from By-Laws (11-15 members). It was noted that there have not been 15 members in a very long time. Mayor will be asked to reconcile the differences. Dennis also mentioned that he would email the council members a copy of the Admin Code. The council would like to see a wider demographic group represented on the Council. Dennis Helmus stated that the current By-Laws require only a Chair & Vice Chair allowing the clerk position to be eliminated. Motions & approval were made to change the Annual Meeting from June to July and the Nominating from May to June. The nominating committee (Michael Ford & Jeanne Hoose) passed a motion that Cynthia Langley be considered for the position of Chair with Bob Dionne as Vice Chair. This motion was approved unanimously. Jeanne Hoose mentioned that they should have a Highland Valley Elder representative on the HVES Board and will look into it. Gerriann Butler thanked all the members for helping her during her term as Chair. Marie thanked Gerriann & Dennis for their service as officers on the council.

Other: Friends of Northampton Senior Center, formally Elder Vision, will begin fundraising events once the Center reopens.

Next Meeting: Nov 12th, 2020, 3:30 pm, Northampton Senior Center (via Zoom)

Adjournment : Motion to adjourn Jeanne Hoose, seconded by Michael Ford. Meeting adjourned @ 5:28 pm