

Northampton Council on Aging Meeting
Thursday, April 8th, 2021, 3:30 pm, Due to the Covid-19 emergency, this meeting was conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing

April COA Minutes

Call to Order: Cynthia Langley called the meeting to order @ 3:30 pm

Present: Cynthia Langley, Michael Ford, Jeanne Henry Hoose, Marie Westburg, Jae Casella, Laura Scott, Bob Dionne, Gerriann Butler, Ben Capistrant & Dennis Helmus

Excused: Kathie Bredin, Aurea Domenech

Public Session: No public attended

Review and Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve March Minutes-Dennis Helmus 2nd-Michael Ford

Announcements: Following Jae's announcement that they are leaving the area, Cindy thanked Jae for their work at the Senior Center and noted that they will be greatly missed. Gerriann thanked Jae on behalf of the volunteers who worked directly with them over the past couple years.

Director's Report: Marie reiterated Jae's final day before relocating out of state (April 21st) and how much they would be missed by all of the staff. Marie continues her work on the budget and proposed new full-time staff positions. She was pleased to announce that Kevin Martin will return as a full-time chef for the Center in the upcoming fiscal year. A reopening date has not been determined yet. The "Live Your Best Life Workshop" will not likely be happening due to lack of applicants to teach the workshop and low enrollment. The \$6300 incentive grant to reach 600 isolated seniors is moving forward with help from Highland Valley Elder Services, Northampton Neighbors, Grow Food Northampton, and our food distribution lists. Marie is also trying to enlist donations/coupons from area businesses. Marie is working with the City on a plan to upgrade aspects of the building with Covid Care/FEMA money after its use as a vaccine clinic. Additional money will need to be raised through fundraising/Friends Group. Last winter, Jae worked with Cynthia and Dennis to develop a focus group to help inform us about what makes for a warm & welcoming Senior Center. The group, who met in March 2020, was represented by a broad cross-section of the Senior Center population including Senior Center

volunteers. Cindy & Dennis, co-facilitators of the meeting, decided the results needed to be shared before the reopening. The group's remarks were kept confidential as promised. It was noted that Marie is already addressing many of these issues with her staff restructuring, building renovations, plans for volunteer ambassadors/greeters, customer service consistency, credit card processes, architectural study for building flow, acoustics, & clear sightlines to entrances, and creating more outdoor spaces. Staff continues to work on reopening plans. A survey conducted recently shows (so far) opening the fitness center & fitness classes are the priority followed by a movie, grab & go lunch, coffee shop & prepared dinner to go. Most participants would like to see the continued use of zoom programs along with in person classes.

Assistant Director's Report: Jae, along with Nancy Yesu, spoke on the YMCA fitness classes. Currently they are holding classes Mon-Thur via zoom. Nancy is proposing a Friday morning outside class at Maine's Field to facilitate a safe in-person class. A recent Senior Center YMCA class participant survey concluded the need & desire for both zoom & in-person classes. Jae reported that the grant funded pilot for a taxi service to fill the need for an interim transportation program has given us the necessary information to conclude that this model works very well for us. Utilizing the taxi service along with PVRTA could save up to \$31,000 per year based on the findings when comparing past expenditures to current and projected costs going forward.

Old Business: The Black Lives Matter statement will be included in the next issue of the Chronicle prefaced by a short paragraph written by the Chair, Cindy Langley.

New Business: A discussion surrounding the *A Welcoming Senior Center Focus Group Summary* allowed council members to express their thoughts on the findings. It was agreed that Jae had done a great job picking this cross-section of members. It was nice to hear how much participants really cared for their center and how personal it was to each of them. Jeanne mentioned how important it is to connect with members and make them feel welcome. Greeting people using their name means so much to people. Bob asked about utilizing more of the outside space at the center when we are allowed to reopen. Could we set up tables in part of the parking area to allow patrons to sit together in a safer environment? Ben spoke on the difficulties regarding the new Covid rules & regulations and how the staff will need to address these issues with patrons in a consistent manner. Nancy voiced her concern about the rules as well saying we need to rethink them especially with all the new ones we will have to enforce. She also apologized on behalf of the staff for losing sight of the importance of connecting one on one. She mentioned that it is too easy to get caught in the busyness of work and not take a few moments with our members. The focus group discussion really brought that home to her. It was decided that there needs to be more discussions of this kind (maybe even with this same group) as it was a very positive & enlightening endeavor. The mayor's office will be reaching out to board members whose terms end this year to see if they would like to continue for next year. Dennis mentioned that he will be stepping down at the end of his term due to his role on the Friends of Northampton Senior Center Board. Elections will be held in July and the board hopes the Mayor will fill more of the open positions.

Next Meeting: May 13th, 2021, 3:30 pm, Northampton Senior Center (via Zoom)

Adjournment : Motion to adjourn was made by Dennis Helmus, 2nd by Michael Ford

Meeting adjourned @ 5:15 pm