

Minutes of the Council on Aging Meeting

12/18/14 at the Senior Center

Present: COA: Kathy Staropoli, David Steindler, Michelle Harwood, Helen Johnston, David Smith Jr, Dorris Van Deusen, Dick Magenis and Patricia Hardisty

Others: Nadine Hawver, Interim Director, Rhonda LaBombard, Town Administrator, Rene Wood, Selectman, Cliff Hawver, Claudia Martin and Nannette Wells

Chairman Staropoli called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM

The minutes: of 11/20/14 were presented for review, Motion to accept the minutes was made by Helen Johnston and seconded by David Steindler. The motion passed unanimously.

Expense Report: Nadine presented both the COA budget and the State Formula Grant budget. We are likely to be over on the office supplies, we will however have excess in the payroll which will be used for the shortfall. Dick Magenis questioned the 5% remaining on the Formula Grant budget for the printing of the newsletter. Nadine will investigate moving money around for other line items to pay for the printing of the newsletter going forward. SBETC will need to be paid before year end. Michelle Harwood asked about using My Senior Center to email newsletters – My Senior Center is not there yet – Mrs. Harwood has offered to assist Nadine with getting the emails loaded into our email program to save on some postage expenses. Motion to approve the expense report was made by Dorris Van Deusen, 2nd by Dick Magenis the motion passes unanimously.

Interim Director Report: Mrs. Staropoli asked about the item Use of Senior Center. Nadine presented the draft copy of the rules the BOS is working on. Discussion about the Red Hats using the Center for their meetings, they are having difficulty with the facilities at the rectory. Nadine asked the board to review the proposed policy for her to take back to the BOS. Nadine thanked the members of the COA and the Friends for stepping up to assist in the running of the senior center during this time of transition. Mrs. Staropoli thanks Nadine for stepping up and for making the transition as smooth as possible. Nadine also announced that she and Kathy S. have worked on the FY 2016 budget.

Chairman Items:

Ad for Director: Rhonda let the board know that the Ad for the new director ran in the Shoppers Guide and on the MCOA website. There has been 3 applicants thus far with one more expected by Friday. She will review these with Kathy Staropoli and if the board is not happy with the applicants the town can expand their search. She did try to get it on the Mass Municipal site but that it would not have gone on until January. Question from the board about the COA involvement in the interview process – Rhonda said Kathy Staropoli would be involved, Kathy asked if Claudia could be included as the President of the Friends – Selectman Wood said this would need to be discussed by the BOS.

Dick Magenis questioned discussing the email from Annie Ryder. Mrs Staropoli is concerned about the mis-information that is creating chatter out in the public. Magenis requested to know if there had been anyway to resolve the issue. LaBombard said there had been some negotiations to allow for increase in salary with education. Magenis questioned that it seemed that the health insurance was the sticking point. Rhonda explained that the insurance offered was what every town employee is offered. The package offered was the same as every other employee.

Selectman Wood spoke about the process the BOS went through to move towards a full-time director. She spoke about the time and energy that was put into the process. There have been intense discussions while the BOS negotiated for the full-time director. Wood said it was JA and Jeff Browne who put the original budget together for this position, she expressed her concern that the boards went through all this work and John-Arthur ultimately said he could not afford to take the job. Wood went on to express that the COA did not ask the BOS to come up with any other offer and that John-Arthur never came back with a counter offer. The BOS did what they thought was expected of them. She expressed she was truly sorry for the final outcome.

Staropoli spoke of the special meeting held on November 12th that Annie Ryder did not attend and she did not make her feelings known to Kathy – We all wanted him to stay, Kathy presented at that meeting a possible step increase but the rest COA that night felt that the offer was fair and they did not want to go back to a part-time position and that the position should not be catered to an individual's personal needs. We felt a full-time director was needed to grow the center.

Mrs Harwood read the following into the record:

In response to the actions taken by John Arthur Miller

The COA realized that the Senior Center needed more operating hours to do the job for the Seniors of Sheffield .We worked hard to convince the Selectmen and put together documentation that was requested, and rightfully so.

I think the COA was instrumental in both the full time directorship and even having John Arthur Miller in that position for a trial basis at least.

I was elated and thought that the subject would be closed.

John Arthur Miller is a good man. He did a wonderful job for 8 years in the part time directorship of the Senior Center.

After fighting for John Arthur and a full time directorship for so long, I feel disappointed and deserted by John Arthur Miller. However, it was his choice and he refused it. I wish him well.

Mrs. Staropoli asked if everyone had read Annie's email – everyone responded yes. Rene Wood asked if she could speak. Ms Wood said in some ways she felt slandered by this letter. She felt that there has been some confusion, the COA voted that the COA wanted to move forward. There seems to be a feeling that John-Arthur was mis-treated, treated rudely. Ms. Wood wanted the board to know that she came with Town Administrator Lombard as a witness to tell him that the job had been abolished and that it was time for him to leave his position. That the Selectman were giving him a severance package, 2 weeks administrative leave. There was some question as to if it had been Selectman wood that asked him to leave. She was silent except to ask him if the picture on the wall was his because she knew it was. He went to get his keys, took his jacket and a few things from his desk, a few folders very little. He went to get his keys from the truck. They were left with the question, do we wait or do we wait for him to come back, which might be more embarrassing for him. Or do we follow him out. They stepped out the front door and waited for him to come back with his keys. She hopes that people will take the time to look at both sides of the position. Kathy asked the question, I assume this is the policy, that when a position was abolished. Rhonda answered that she was acting on advice of town council. She also said that they were trying to be respectful of John-Arthur – there were people in the lounge playing cards. She felt it would be more awkward for JA to have come back into the building to return his keys. Several others mentioned that this is the way these things are handled in the corporate world. Mrs. Harwood mentioned that no one playing cards was even aware that anything was going on.

Mr. Steindler spoke that at the special meeting on November 12th the COA was in agreement that it was time to move forward. Dave Smith spoke of a situation in the past that the town had and he wished that the BOS had acted in that situation the way they did with JA.

Helen Johnston said that the COA and BOS supported JA until he stated he could not afford to accept the position. She shared her own personal experience of having given notice at a job and how she was walked to her vehicle. This is the way things are done.

Staropoli feels we need to let the chatter die down. Dave Smith Jr said there have been a few people that have spoken to Rhonda about the situation and when they hear the other side of the story they left with a totally different feeling when they left. Mr. Smith continued to say that he supported JA for this position even after he and JA had had harsh words in the past he supported the COA in their desire to have JA as the director. Nadine mentioned that there have been a few people questioning the process but really no one is stampeding in. We are moving ahead with the care of our

seniors. The general consensus is that we should just handle things on a one on one basis. Mr. Smith said that any specific questions should be referred to the town administrator.

Lower Level Update: Claudia Martin announced after receiving information from Rhonda who had requested info from town council as to how the Friends could get this project done, the Friends have decided to take on this project in 2015. They will be setting up a task force to do major fund raising.

Activities: Mrs. Staropoli mentioned that our plan is to stay the course with some updates to the Activities programs. Nadine explained that we have added several new things for January, consisting of Men's exercise program, Poker Club, Travel photos and Qigong. All of these programs will take place during the current hours of 9-2:30.

Transportation Update: Mrs. Staropoli explained that she Nadine and David Smith had attended the SBETC board meeting and then she attended a meeting of TRIAD that was having a speaker on transportation. Mrs. Staropoli asked for volunteers for our transportation Committee. Mr. Steindler and Pat Hardisty will join Staropoli and Hawver.

Advertising: Nadine mentioned that we can add advertisers to our My Senior Center that would be on a scrolling screen. Some concerns were voiced about having control of who advertises. Hawver to explore in more detail.

Friends Report: Claudia mentioned a few of the upcoming events Soup and Salad fundraiser in January and Breakfast for lunch in February with a chocolate swap.

Public Comment: none

Next Meeting Date January 15, 2015 @ 6:30 PM

David Steindler made a motion to adjourn at 7:35PM, seconded by Helen Johnston. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted

Nadine A Hawver