

Concord Council on Aging Board meeting minutes

August 10, 2020

The Board Meeting took place using Zoom. The meeting was recorded.

Present: Michael Rudd, Ann Schummers, Patty Keane, Andrea Zall (finance committee observer), Ginger Quarles, Margaret Hoag, and Carol Ann Hannan (Chair)

Absent: Arthur Alcarez, Milton Cohen, Kristin Nelson, Carole Cushing, Christina Kendrick, Theresa Stokes, and Terri Ackerman (Select Board Liaison)

The meeting was called to order at 4:08pm.

The minutes from the February meeting could not be approved because a quorum was lacking. The matter was tabled for the next meeting.

COA Director's report:

The COA closed on March 13, and the building is still closed. Everyone had been working from home through June. Now the staff is on a team staffing approach. The staff has two teams which alternate the days they are in the office and they work from home the other days. This is a method to avoid having to quarantine the entire staff if one person becomes sick. This system is working very well.

Originally, the staff did not realize how long term the quarantine would be. Once they realized how long it would be, as many programs as possible were moved to a Zoom platform. Not all seniors have the internet or are comfortable using Zoom. The COA has refurbished computers that can be given to seniors.

The COA continues to loan out durable medical equipment.

One van went back on the road a month ago, for a single passenger and only for medical appointments within Concord. Driver and passenger must wear masks. Ridership is on the low side both because not all doctors are accepting in person visits and because the seniors are nervous.

The staff did a lot of coaching on ordering groceries online and curbside pickup. There were volunteers who pick up groceries for seniors.

When the COA closed down, the social work staff divided up a list of 800 active seniors and have been calling and checking on them during the pandemic. The staff has made literally thousands of phone calls to check in with people. Isolation was a very large problem. However Ginger is impressed at how resilient the seniors have been.

There have been some drive through events recently. One event was a give away of an herb garden kit. Also there was a give away for adult coloring books. It is possible that personal visits in a driveway may resume.

Wednesday lunches have been reinstated as a "grab and go" lunch. Last week was the first one and there were 36 meals served.

There is no time frame for re-opening. The state continues to recommend that seniors continue to shelter in place. It is likely that the COA will not reopen until everyone is vaccinated.

The flu clinic will be a drive through event on October 6th. It will be by appointment only.

There is a special interview room with protections which can be used when it is absolutely necessary to have an in person meeting.

The COA has set up various protections such as plexiglass in front of Laurie's desk and not allowing people to share offices.

Joyce McSweeney resigned as an outreach coordinator. This leaves two open positions. The COA has 75 applications for the two open positions. Ginger feels confident that she will find two people who will work out.

The COA is having conversations with the town TV station to tape programs and also to replay previous programs. It is also possible that they might show movies which would appeal to seniors during the day rather than late at night.

Patty commented at how successful the Zoom programming has been.

Budget Discussion

Major difference with the FY21 budget is that Ginger worked hard to raise the wages of several low paid positions in the office. The current wages are not competitive and so the COA struggles with recruitment and retention. Kate Hodges supported Ginger in her request. Ginger is hoping for a raise for all van drivers, the nurse, the outreach coordinators, the activity coordinator, the social services supervisor, and the volunteer/public relations coordinator. Many of the positions are partially grant funded and do not get a COLA increase each year.

New Business:

Patty asked about the person who had claimed discrimination because he/she was not allowed to attend a program because he/she is under 60. The current policy is not to allow persons under 60 to attend at all. Patty and Michael commented that they thought it would be appropriate to allow such people to attend a program if they are accompanied by a senior, and if there is room in the program, and no other seniors want to attend. It was also discussed that seniors from other towns are not presently allowed to attend events at the Concord COA even if space permits after Concord seniors have signed up in a program where other senior centers will allow that. Ginger said she would revisit the policy.

Concord over 60:

The group has been doing some Zoom meetings. They are planning to have an event in September.

Concord Housing Authority:

Patty spoke with Mary Ann Nelson, the Concord Housing Authority head. She is retiring and the Housing Authority is trying to find a replacement for her. They have been discussing finding a replacement for her at most of their meetings.

Minuteman Senior Services:

There was a large decline in services provided to seniors due to the pandemic. Seniors were cancelling their home health aides unless they had no other options. At the same time, it was very hard to find workers due to school being out and workers being afraid. There is a budget surplus now, but the surplus is restricted and must be returned to the state if not used. Fundraising boomed and \$150,000 was raised for an emergency fund. The money can be used to help seniors with technology in their homes so that they can have telehealth visits with their doctor etc. Discussions continue about how to bring staff back to the office in person.

Tax Program:

Carol reported that the COA tax volunteers prepared 62 tax returns before they closed down and had to turn away 53 others. They are hoping to run the program next year.

Starmet Site:

The Committee was disappointed because they have had very little input from the community. Not sure how they will move forward.

Next Meeting and Board Appointments:

Arthur is going off the Board. Milton's first term is ending but he has missed too many meetings and must step down. Terry Stokes has been appointed as a member. If any members know of anyone who might be interested in serving on the board please let Carol Ann know.

Carol Ann will schedule a meeting on September 21, 2020 at 4pm and we will discuss at the meeting how often we want to meet going forward.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:24pm.