

COA Board Meeting Minutes, January 20, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chair, Sue Ruskin Friend. She read Governor Baker's Order, Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, which includes an extension of the March 12, 2020, Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. This meeting was conducted via ZOOM.

Present: Mignonne Murray(Director), Susan Ruskin Friend(Chair), Linda Johnson(Vice Chair), Marge Ackerman, Betsey Boyd, Jane Donnelly, Bob Froh, Vida Goldstein(Associate Member), Joan Heilbronner, Wayne Johnson, Jean MacQuiddy, Tom Nicholson(Associate Member), Carol Ott, Prather Palmer, Gerri Scoll, Shirley Small-Rougeau(Associate Member).

Absent: Alice Benson(Associate Member), Leslye Fligor, and Teresa Young(Associate Member).

There were no resident concerns or comments.

The December minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously.

Director's Report: Mignonne said the town is planning to host more COVID booster clinics. Of those age 65 and over in Weston, 79 percent are boosted and approximately 434 people still need one. Waltham has a 70 percent booster rate. The Federal Government announced that they will be sending COVID test kits to everyone requesting them. The test kits can be ordered on line at covidtest.gov. Some people living at addresses with multiple units have had problems because the site only recognizes 4 requests per address. People can contact the CDC Call Center, #1-800-232-0233 for assistance. Private insurance companies are required to pay for 8 COVID home test kits per month. Medicare has not presented its plan yet. Linda stated that people may not realize that the test kits have a very short shelf life. Vida said people also may not realize that although some of the boxes have 2 tests, they are both meant to be used 3 days apart, by the same person. The rise in COVID cases caused some of the COAs to dial back their programming or close their doors. Weston's COA has remained open. We don't have a lot of in person programs and those groups have been self-selecting. When COVID began rising, participants decided not to attend in person. The Formula Grant has not been received yet. Fortunately, Weston allows us to spend some of this money, if necessary, before it is actually received. The LGBTQ Training is available as an in person, group session with a facilitator. Mignonne has not heard if a group, ZOOM program has been approved yet. Joan reported that she completed the program, individually, on-line. She said it took her about an hour and a half to complete. Mignonne is working on the town annual report. The state annual report is also due in a couple weeks.

Treasurer's Report: Prather reported the Formula Grant in our budget is broken down into several categories. In the future, it will be a single category which we can spend as we choose. The state no longer requires an itemized, grant budget, as long as the money is spent on older adults. Last year we received a \$32,952.00, Formula Grant. When the new census numbers are released, that figure will change. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council(MAPC), was a grant used primarily for taxi service to medical appointments. That money has been spent. Mignonne has not stopped the program, but she has limited the service to 4 rides per month. A new grant is anticipated, but it will probably provide less money.

Brook School Addition: Carol stated that Brook Housing has a wait list of 150 people looking for subsidized apartments. Traditionally, there are 5 vacancies per year. The report from U Mass highlighted the need for affordable housing for people who would like to stay in town, but can't find reasonable alternatives. Sunrise, on Route #117, is still negotiating with the town. Apparently, there are complex legal issues involving zoning and other restrictions. Potentially, it could provide 30 apartments. There are currently 137 units of elderly housing in Weston and no new units have been added in 15 years. The fastest growing demographics in town are people over age 65. Many of these people find it increasingly difficult to afford to stay in their homes. Brook has 75 units and they are proposing adding an additional 14 units. The number of additional units is restricted due to wetlands and septic issues. There are 3 possible building sites. The current Brook director would also supervise the new units, and no additional staff would be hired. The total cost of the project is projected to be \$6.9 million dollars. The cost per unit would be \$493,000. An in-person meeting with the Brook School residents was scheduled 2 weeks ago, but the rise in COVID prevented it. Hopefully, that meeting can occur in the near future so that Brook School residents can ask questions and express their concerns. Shirley emphasized the importance of permitting the residents of Brook housing to share a number of issues they have with the proposed addition. Tom asked if the 14 new units would all be affordable or if some might be market value. Carol stated it would be the same mix as the current 75 units. The town makes the same amount of money on each apartment because HUD covers the difference for the affordable units. Carol said they plan to speak to as many boards in town as possible to build support for the project in advance of their presentation at Town Meeting in May. Sue suggested that Carol give an update to the board after the meeting with the residents and other groups before the COA Board formally votes to support this building project.

COA Board Representation on other Town Committees: Mignonne displayed a list of 34 groups that meet in Weston and said many intersect with our interests. She suggested forming liaisons with relevant groups and having a COA board member attend a few of their meetings and follow their agendas. She encouraged board members to review these groups and decide if they'd be interested in becoming involved. Mignonne will send a list to board members so they can respond to her, indicating their interests.

Community Connections: Vida reported on programs they have scheduled. Dave Balter, a 1989 Weston High School graduate and current CEO of Flipside Crypto, will speak about Crypto Currency on February 9th. Physical Therapist, Kevin Wagner, will speak about exercises for arthritis on February 16th. March, 16, Dr. Jane Fleishman will discuss sexuality and aging. In April, Dr. Krishinski, a dermatologist from Mass. General, will discuss skin issues. Prather is arranging for a physician to speak about Alzheimer's, but the talk hasn't been scheduled yet. Prather also reported on the "No Surprises Act", an unexpected medical expenses law which went into effect January 1st. He spoke to Katherine Clark's office about finding a speaker. A trip to the Ted Kennedy Library is being explored. A program on scams to be presented by the Weston Police Department was also suggested. Community Connections also talked about the financial considerations of housing and the possibility of holding a housing fair next fall. The social action group invited LaToya Rivers, the head of the Metco program in Weston, to speak to them

and she did an outstanding job. She will return March 7 to speak to the social justice group again. In February, a couple of Metco parents will be invited to speak to the group.

Governance: Linda said their committee met January 11th. In November, the board approved the new list of areas of interest. That list was posted by Mignonne in December, and can be found on our page on the town web site. Recruitment is a major focus because we will have 3 vacancies at the end of June. The vacancies will be posted by the town in March. The committee is continuing to update documents and expand access to them. Betsey, Wayne and Mignonne have been attending the MCOA Board Manual Task Force meetings. That group is putting together an impressive manual which will be very useful to all the COA Boards in the Commonwealth. Betsey said there is a lot of excellent information in the manual. Although COVID has caused some delays, the task force is hoping to have the manual available within the next few weeks. Governance would like to see brief bios of board members included in our new manual. Linda asked the group if anyone had any objections; none were expressed. Tom suggested that Linda provide her bio so people could use it as an example, and she agreed. Mignonne is working on the annual report and Governance will review her draft before it is submitted at the end of February. Linda reminded all the committee chairs to provide a mid-year report about their goals for the February board meeting.

Housing: Jane stated that Carol's report on the Brook apartments covered what they discussed at their last meeting.

FCOA: Betsey said that the FCOA meets quarterly ; the last meeting was December 17th. They are down to 3 members and are actively searching for new members. Ideally, they'd like to have 5 people. Financially they are in good shape. Their Fall Appeal generated \$14,000. They voted, and unanimously agreed to give the COA a block grant of \$12,000. Mignonne acknowledged their generosity. Carol suggested looking for new FCOA members from the population that attends programs at the COA.

Springwell: Wayne expressed his concern about the funds available to Springwell and our inability to connect with the people in town that need help. He met with the head of the police department who introduced him to Detective, Kelly Connerton, and Social Worker, Kathleen O'Donnell. Both of them have an amazing understanding about what goes on in Weston and they are very familiar with Springwell. The Fire Department is also involved in many problematic issues with town residents. Kelly Connerton and Kathleen O'Donnell also discussed the involvement of the churches and the Board of Health.

Other Business: Sue said Weston's new Director of Public Health, Kelly Pawluczonak, has been invited to attend our COA Board meeting in February. Brian Kardon, who has marketing expertise, will be coming to our March meeting. Linda announced the next Coffee and Conversation at the COA is Monday, January 24th. Carol requested adding a discussion about partnering with Waltham concerning the issue of food insecurity in a future agenda.

Next Meeting: 8:30a.m. Thursday, February 17, 2022

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Marge Ackerman