

WESTON COUNCIL ON AGING
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS COMMITTEE
Minutes – February 22, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am on the Weston COA Zoom application.

Present: Marge Ackerman, Kristen Frady, Vida Goldstein, Frank Hillery, Peter Mitsakos, Mignonne Murray, John McCahan, Prather Palmer, Shirley Small-Rougeau, Dianne Sullivan, Susan Wagner, Teresa Young.

1. John read the following statement:

“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Weston will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. We will strive to provide access to such meetings via a link to call in, or other similar option. In the event we are unable to accommodate the same, despite best efforts, we will post recorded sessions of the meeting as soon as possible following the same. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings.”

2. The minutes of January 11, 2022 were approved as written.

3. There were no residents’ comments.

4. Old Business

4a. Follow up on the ‘Surprise Billing’ act. Prather has been in touch with Jay Higgins in Representative Katherine Clark’s office. Mr. Higgins had promised to refer a knowledgeable speaker to us, but that has not as yet happened. Prather will follow up.

4b. Social Justice Working Group. Shirley described the last two meetings, January 3 and February 7, at which the group had met by Zoom with Ms. La Toya Rivers, METCO Director and High School Liaison at the former and with Ms. Brenda Meservey, a prior METCO student and Weston parent, at the latter. The group is expecting to meet again with Ms. Rivers at its next meeting on March 7. At its April meeting, the Working Group is expected to address the planning and implementation of Race Amity Day scheduled for the 12th of June. Shirley explained that this is a country wide event that encompasses all people, especially all marginalized people, in an effort to bring everyone together in pursuit of justice. Last year the Working Group participated in a prayer vigil that recognized the issues of justice integral to the murder of George Floyd and that honored as well the expressions of multiple faiths. Susan noted the suggestion by Ms. Meservey that after school jobs in Weston might be one means of better including METCO students in the community. Shirley opined that this suggestion might best be considered by the Boston Weston Parents Organization that has been working with similar issues for many years. Vida wondered if, once Covid is contained, a ‘Weston METCO Grandparents’ organization might be useful. Mignonne responded that efforts of this kind were usually taken up by volunteer organizations because public agencies like the COA could encounter increased liability issues. The Friends of the COA are a volunteer, non-profit group but, as their focus is on raising funds for supplementary programs, they are probably not a suitable entity through which to organize a hands-on program. The next SJWG meeting is March 8th at 3:00 pm.

4.c. Housing and housing finances. Mignonne and her staff had reviewed recent programs relating to housing and described one that had been successful: it had approached the issue of older adult housing from a financial planner's point of view. The program featured a set of scenarios faced by an older couple, Frank and Mary, and how they might make decisions based on different sets of financial circumstances. A general discussion ensued that involved a number of approaches to housing issues that are summarized as follows:

1. A housing fair during which representatives of various housing options are present to describe their facilities and answer questions. The committee has discussed this in previous meetings and a fair of this kind is projected for next fall.
2. A presentation that describes a variety of financial situations and personal values and how these may be translated to appropriate living situations for our constituents as they age. This is the 'Frank and Mary' program described by Mignonne.
3. A panel on housing options composed of Weston residents who have made alternative housing decisions in recent years. It has the advantage of neighbors/peers talking to each other.
4. A presentation on 'aging in place' that includes ways of retrofitting homes to be safe and accessible as their occupants age.
5. A demonstration of technologic solutions to assist older adults who may have physical and/or cognitive challenges in living independently.

The committee agreed that all of the approaches had merit and also agreed that we would currently pursue the first two. Mignonne noted that a 'Frank and Mary' program might be the easiest to arrange and could be scheduled this spring. Marge noted that attention should also be given to single adults who were facing the same decisions as Frank and Mary. A housing fair will continue to be considered for the fall.

4d. Discussion new programming. Susan noted the success of the cryptocurrency presentation – more than 40 attendees. We should continue to identify subjects like this that are topical and timely. Prather suggested that the Ukraine constituted was just such an issue. An April program is planned.

5. Scheduling and administrative matters. There was no business under this item.

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 am on Tuesday March 22, 2022 by Zoom. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Submitted by John McCahan