

COA Board Meeting Minutes, March 17, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 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 is being conducted via ZOOM.

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

Absent: Alice Benson(Associate Member), Betsey Boyd, Tom Nicholson(Associate Member), Gerri Scoll, and Teresa Young(Associate Member).

Residents: Cheryl Alpert present. There were no resident concerns or comments.

Guests: Chris Fitzgerald, Recreation Director and Brian Kardon, Marketing Expert.

The February meeting minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously.

Director's Report: Mignonne reported that the town has lifted the mask mandate in municipal buildings, so masking is now optional. The LGBTQ training has been completed by 7 of the 18 people required to do it. The training needs to be completed by the end of June. A group training session on ZOOM has been approved. Contact Mignonne for any assistance. The social work position has been posted. Applications have been slow because it's a tough social service hiring market now. The Finance Committee informed Mignonne that she would not need to attend their meeting tonight. The Signage Committee met and looked at current signs and will review their ideas.

Guests: Chris Fitzgerald, Recreation Director, and Maija Cirulis-Gooch, Recreation Commissioner.

Maija provided a power point presentation about the proposed, town pool renovation. The Memorial Pool is very popular with 25% of our residents utilizing

it. The pool is aging and hasn't had any major capital expenditures since 1993. The current filters are near the end of their life, and will need replacement. A 2.3-million-dollar capital improvement to upgrade the pool is proposed. In addition to a new filtration system, a group of accessible, family bathrooms and outdoor showers would be added. They'd also like to expand the shallow end water feature and reconfigure the sand play area. More shade structures, a splash pad, water play area, and a water slide would also be installed. Another goal is to increase accessibility entering and exiting the pool and improving the walkways throughout the site. Upgrading the life guard station and including a first aid room is also needed. Without improvements, revenues are projected to decline. Recreation will present this proposal at Town Meeting in May. Any questions should be sent via email to Chris and he will forward pertinent queries to Maija.

Guest: Brian Kardon, Marketing Expert.

Joan introduced Brian to the group, listing a number of his impressive accomplishments. Brian presented a power point identifying the COA's marketing needs. Using data from the Needs Assessment and a COA Data Dashboard he drew some conclusions. Prior to COVID, there was a strong set of programs which he felt were dramatically underutilized. 17% of residents, age 55 plus, had no awareness of the COA or its programs. 78% of people over age 70 liked the COA paper newsletter, but over half the people 55-69 preferred digital sources. Negative perceptions about the COA being for "old people with limited means" continues to persist. Brian thought we could expand participation by focusing on the 50-59 age group. He did not feel a name change would be helpful, but influencing people's perceptions would be beneficial. He suggested increasing awareness by bringing the COA into the 21st Century with a digital makeover. To change perceptions, he recommended forming an Advisors Group to engage influencers, broaden our reach and to continuously identify valuable programs. Participation could be enhanced by developing videos telling our story through the voices and images of current members. The Weston Town Celebration, scheduled May 21st, would be a good opportunity to provide a positive image of the COA by sponsoring Salsa Dancing instruction and a Drum Circle. Jean questioned why so few men participate in programs. Shirley stated that more

racial diversity needed to be addressed. She also suggested offering a couple of programs at the Brook School. Carol agreed and thought offering an ethnic cooking demonstration or holiday activity would draw more people. She also thought it would be good to offer intergenerational programming. Linda expressed the need for a support group for younger adults involved in managing the care of aging parents. Joan mentioned that evening activities might appeal to a younger cohort of adults. Leslye suggested getting the COA on Instagram. Mignonne said a major goal of the COA is to keep people connected and reduce isolation. Linda expressed the need to build community support for the COA. Jean felt a café at the COA where people could purchase food would attract more people.

Other Business: Linda reminded everyone to mark the May 21st, Weston Town Celebration, on their calendars. She also asked for the remaining bios from board members.

Next Meeting: 8:30 a.m. Thursday, April 21, 2022

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Marge Ackerman