

Northfield, Mass. Council on Aging
Meeting Minutes: January 23, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 p.m. at the Northfield Senior Center in the Town Hall.

Attendance: Deb Lanou (chair); Colleen Letourneau (director); Chris Harris (secretary); Betty Whitcomb (treasurer); Pete Vearling; Jim Whitcomb

Absent: Meg Livingstone

Minutes: Based on a review of the minutes for Dec. 19, 2023, a motion to accept the draft minutes was made, seconded and unanimously approved without changes.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Betty Whitcomb reported a lag in the town's posting of our revenue, and an outstanding (since October) reimbursement request. The treasurer will meet with the town treasurer for an update. The treasurer's report was accepted unanimously.

Chair's Report

Memory Cafe: Chairman Deb Lanou recapped the first Memory Cafe on Dec. 27 as "lovely" and said that Colleen worked "extraordinarily hard" to complete that grant, which we got, and thanked her for all her hard work. Others present had only positive comments about the event, which was for people with varying degrees of dementia and their caregivers.

Outreach efforts: With Debby Wiesen Kelly leaving, we currently have six board members; seven would be even better. The chair urged members to think about recruitment. Suggestions included having a coffee social to introduce the board; we could solicit interest at the men's breakfasts, the monthly meal, other standing social events and at church coffee hours.

Other outreach suggestions include networking with other COAs and senior centers by visiting them, and brainstorming ways to increase participation in winter.

Director's Report

Memory Cafe: Director Colleen Letourneau presented the survey results from participants at our first Memory Cafe. All comments were favorable. One person requested a specific meal, so Colleen has purchased that meal; we will plate everybody's meals out in the kitchen so this person gets served in the same way as everyone else. Some attendees asked to be seated with friends, and another attendee asked to be seated further away from the entertainer because it was too loud for them; these requests will be honored, with place tags for them. These are examples of how to address any "bumps in the road" that might otherwise discourage people from returning. We will hand out a survey every time to comply with the requirements of the six-month grant.

Some of the ways we are spending that grant money: We bought 23 books on dementia for our lending library and we need a bookcase to display them; a stand-up microphone that will loop into the sound; the monthly entertainer; tuning the piano. When it is warm enough to go outside, we can use some of the grant money for flowers, bulbs, lawn games, etc.

New and continuing programs: In February, we have Greenfield Savings Bank doing a coffee social; we will have a food demo with the Franklin County Tech School students that 15 people can sign up for; they will make specialty coffees and crepes. The men's breakfast continues. The memory cafe, travel club continue.

Regarding Healthy Bones and Balance: Betty reported that Dottie Parrill will not be able to lead it while she deals with health problems. Betty approached Pete Vearling about taking RSVP training for this role.

Around town

Legislative update: Chris reported on a bill before the House that would address wheelchair warranty and repairs so that users would not be deprived of this essential mobility equipment.

Neighbors at Home: Betty reported that Neighbors at Home discussed whether or not they should reimburse drivers for gas mileage as a way to encourage new and current volunteers.

Friends of Northfield Seniors: Jim reported that they were going to have a 10th anniversary event on the 27th of January with a bonfire, skating, and raffle. That got postponed. The Friends have over \$3,100 in their account. Jim will propose that, since we need a new prep table in the kitchen, that they buy one for us.

CPC (Community Preservation Committee): Meg is not present to report.

Motion to adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Approved date: 2-20-2024

Approved by: Christine Harris

Christine Harris, recording secretary