

Northfield, Mass. Council on Aging

Meeting Minutes: Dec. 19, 2023

Meeting called to order at 1:03 p.m. at the Northfield Senior Center in the lower level of the Town Hall.

Attendance: Deb Lanou, Debby Wiesen Kelly, Colleen Letourneau, Betty Whitcomb, Jim Whitcomb, Chris Harris, Pete Vearling, Meg Livingstone.

Absent: None

Minutes: Based on a review of the minutes for Nov. 21, 2023, a motion to accept the minutes as written was approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Betty Whitcomb reports that the first, 50% installment of the Formula Grant has already arrived. Everything else is looking good. The budget was unanimously accepted as written.

Chair's Report

Non-renewal of Debby Wiesen Kelly's term ending December 2023: Chairman Deb Lanou announced that Debby Wiesen Kelly will not be renewing her term on the Council on Aging. Wiesen Kelly explained that she will move over to join the Friends of Northfield Seniors, which is the fundraising arm of the COA and assist there.

In thanking Wiesen Kelly for her service to the COA, Lanou noted that Wiesen Kelly played a positive role with the success of the COA. All agreed that Wiesen Kelly will be missed but that she will still be supporting Northfield seniors in her new position.

Director Colleen Letourneau agreed that Debby's move to the Friends of Northfield Seniors is a natural segway what with her fundraising experience she will bring additional support to the COA.

New liaison: Consequent to Wiesen Kelly's departure, the board needed to find a new liaison with the Friends of Northfield Seniors. Lanou appointed Jim Whitcomb to fill this role.

The Year in Review: Lanou enumerated some of the accomplishments of the COA in the past year, including (in no order of importance): • We've had members leave, we've had new members join us; • we've had bylaws approved by the town; • we've updated policies and procedures; • we've had budget increases; • we've implemented "Hear, here Northfield;" with the hearing enhanced senior center, library's conference room and selectboard room • we've completed the recreation shed project, with the new grill; • we've welcomed a new program assistant; • we have a new logo; • we held the MCOA Walk Challenge Kick-off event and won one of the prizes of \$250; • we participated in the Memorial Day and 350th parades placing second for our wagon pulled by draft horses; • we have new benches in the pavilion and updated landscaping; • we've done a lot with LifePath and FRCOG in the Age and Dementia Friendly Regional Action Plan by increasing our presence there, including yesterday's dementia training; • we've met other Councils on Aging to collaborate on services and activities; • we've started the Memory Cafe; • we can resume food events because Robin is ServSafe-certified; • we've participated in RSVP's volunteer recognition event, Colleen and Linda put on the annual CoA's volunteer appreciation event at 4 Star Farm; • we've attended the Annual Fall MCOA Conference; • we've attended Open Meeting Law and Public Records training; • plus ongoing activities such as knitting, Healthy Bones and Balance, Yoga, Bridge and Samba classes, brunches, technology help, Foot and Blood Pressure clinics, drop in Nursing clinics and the Happy Feet and Happy Little Feet intergenerational walking programs.

Outreach Committee: At our next meeting, the board may consider a more formal outreach committee. Part of that might be a membership effort.

Looking forward: Lanou said that, looking forward, our biggest piece is the new Memory Cafe set for Wednesday, Dec. 27, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Director's Report

Memory Cafe: Colleen reported that she has registered us with the Dementia Friendly list of Memory Cafes in Massachusetts, which is another group through the Alzheimer's Association. Colleen reviewed many promotional and networking efforts for the new memory cafe and the board discussed who will help as a volunteer at these cafes and when. FRCOG's nurse Meg Ryan will attend the first Café.

Successful grant award: We were awarded \$4,770 out of a possible \$5,000 grant, which is the amount Colleen asked for. This will be used to support the Memory Cafe in many ways until the end of this FY.

Update on the Mass. Walk Challenge: We got one of the third-place prizes of \$250. This is our third year winning a prize.

Recap of Dementia Training for COA Board: Nurse Meg Ryan of the FRCOG did a nice job and more trainings would be helpful for people at future coffee socials with presentations.

Program updates, new and old: Happy Little Feet walks will resume in springtime. We're going to do two Happy Feet walks in January: Down by the canal at the Cabot Station access road in Turners Falls. We are going to start something new, an easy stroll (weather permitting) on Historic Main Street.

Community Meeting: On Jan. 17 from 1 to 3 p.m., there's going to be a community meeting, the FRCOG staff, Seniors and the community are invited to a meeting here in the senior center space on digital equity. Additional evening trainings to be announced with FRCOG will be offered to the public.

New Men's Group: We're also going to start a men's social club and it's going to be a breakfast social from 9:30 to 11 a.m., the third Tuesday of every month, which is the 16th in January. It's going to be facilitated by Matt Aversa LICSW our outreach worker. He's started a men's group in Bernardston as well. We're inviting Bernardston's men's social to our Men's breakfast group and Matt's office hours will be offered in Bernardston instead of in both towns starting in January or February 2024.

Tech Support: We've got our tech support going twice a month. We're also encouraging people to go to the library for their tech support hours.

Other: Wii bowling: Colleen announced that the COA has ordered all the equipment for Wii Bowling (virtual bowling), the third Wednesday of the month, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Around town

Legislative update: From the Beacon Hill Roll Call on Nov. 25, an item on long term care changes. The House approved and sent to the Senate bill H-4178 that supporters say will take a comprehensive approach toward reforming the long term care industry by supporting and expanding the work force, enhancing oversight of facilities and ensuring greater access, all while prioritizing quality of care. Voting yes were Reps. Natalie Blais, Aaron Saunders and Suzannah Whippis.

Neighbors at Home: Betty reported that N@H is still working on revamping its administrative technology. Also, N@H is wondering what to do about sand buckets for its members. No one responded to a call offering sand buckets. So, N@H board members wondered if they could work with the Senior Center on sand buckets, perhaps by helping to deliver them. Jim Whitcomb has been working with Steve Roberto and thinks that probably we'll just keep the buckets here and maybe work with the Neighbors on distribution. They haven't worked that out yet.

Friends of Northfield Seniors: They will be voting today on a new member, Debby Wiesen Kelly.

CPC (Community Preservation Committee): Meg announced that the CPC will not meet until all of the applications for its money are in. A meeting is planned for January.

Motion to adjourn: So moved and voted.

Approved date: 1-23-2024

Approved by: Christine Harris

Christine Harris, recording secretary