

Council on Aging Minutes for Virtual Meeting of February 14, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m. COA members introduced themselves to the guests and guests Jessica Makepeace and Nancy Logan, both prospective COA members, were welcomed.

A roll call of those present: JoAnn Bernhard (JB), Martha Favre (MF), Janis Gray (JSG) and Susan Millinger (SM). Absent: Jeanette Stockton (JS)

The co-chair, JB, *moved that co-chair Martha Favre become chair of Shutesbury COA. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved in a roll call vote.*

Minutes of the Meeting of December 13, 2023: *A motion was made to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting. It was seconded and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.*

Minutes of the Meeting of January 10, 2024: *A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2024 meeting. It was seconded and passed unanimously by a roll call vote.*

Business:

Financial Update: January began with \$4,981.43

Expenditure to date;

Foot Clinic (January): \$220.00 _____

Leaving unspent: \$4,761.43

Remainder available to be spent:

Remaining funding less anticipated expenditures: **estimated: \$1,559.43**

N. Logan asked the source of our funding, which was then identified as a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). How EOEA calculates our grant was explained. Our committed or anticipated expenditures for the remaining months of FY24: for some of the physical activity classes co-sponsored with the Library; for Foot Clinic; for the COA newsletter, *The Geezette*.

Next Issue of *The Geezette*:

Contents of upcoming issue of *The Geezette*: Interviews with the Public Health Nurse, and the nurse provided by FootCare by Nurses. JSG indicated that she also plans to include a reminder about the Police Chief's Sand for Seniors program and a reminder to sign up for Code Red and Town Announce. MF explained the Peace of Mind "binder", which will also be included. This is intended to be a 12-page issue, not our usual 8 pages, with The Peace of Mind "binder" the middle sheets which could be removed as a separate unit.

Date of issue: The COA tries to produce its newsletter distant in time from the Town's *Our Town*. It is hoped that *Our Town* will be out by April 20, so *The Geezette* can be sent out in March.

Mailing list delay: It takes time to construct a new mailing list. We are dependent on the Town Clerk having the time to check last year's list of Town residents for departures from Town and for those born in 1969, and are thus now considered seniors. The list also needs to be checked to remove duplicate mailing addresses for multiple residents in a household.

J. Makepeace asked whether we were doing any of the work of producing the newsletter in-house. It was explained that we used to prepare it for mailing in-house but stopped during the pandemic. She also asked whether we had considered having space for paid ads in *the Geezette* to help defray costs of

production. JSG pointed out that we are not permitted to accept money; we would need to have a Friends of the COA organization to receive funds for our use.

Transportation initiatives: JB noted that there are bills before the Legislature which would provide more money for rural transportation: S 2277 & H 3272. Each title is “An act to increase regional transit accessibility in the Commonwealth.” There is coming to be more emphasis on service to the communities and less on profit-making.

Explanation of research and actions on transportation: For the benefit of our guests, JB explained that we’ve been looking into what opportunities and options exist for getting public transportation in Shutesbury. As a start, the COA has asked the Select Board to approve Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA)’s OnDemand service, which is handicapped-accessible. FRTA and PVTA (Pioneer Valley Transit Authority) do not cross county lines. This creates a challenging situation for us, since while the town is in Franklin County, most residents shop and have medical appointments in Hampshire County. However, the two Transit Authorities are applying for a Transportation Innovation grant to let the two cross county lines.

Local transportation: Our MedRide program stopped with the pandemic, and has not been restarted. We have been told that according to State regulations, we would not be permitted to ask the vaccination status of those requesting rides, and the COA felt uncomfortable about asking drivers to transport people whose status was unknown. Moreover, there are alternatives: Village Neighbors (VN) has been available for medical rides for its members, and FRTA does provide rides to medical appointments out of the county: which means to Amherst and Northampton. LifePath also provides med rides for its members.

Should we restart our MedRide program? We should find out whether it is still forbidden to ask for vaccination status. Should we send out a survey to see how many would be willing to use MedRide if both driver and rider were masked? Note: we have recently discovered that riders as well as drivers need to have CORI-checks.

Unanticipated items:

Request to support Library programs: The Library Director asked the COA for money to support museum passes and an art program. After discussion, which included the guests as potential new members, the COA decided that given the \$500 cost and the limitation of size of the painting class to eight people, we weren’t sure it could attract enough seniors for the COA to sponsor it. The COA has supported museum passes in the past, but usually at the end of the financial year, when we knew we had funds available for the passes. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed in a roll call vote *that the COA let the Library Director know, first, that we won’t be funding the painting class. Second, the COA will take up the matter of the museum passes in the spring, closer to the end of the FY24 budget year.*

Honorary member: Former member Melissa Makepeace-O’Neil said she would be happy to be made an Honorary Member of the COA. *The motion to make Melissa Makepeace-O’Neil an Honorary Member of the COA was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.*

Medical Questions:

Possible program: ask the Public Health Nurse, Sarah Fiske, if she would like to do a program about accessing medical portals.

J. Makepeace commented that her mother and grandmother, former members of the COA, had one or more programs with Triad, describing their programs. This will be explored as a possible program.

For the Next Meeting: The visitor from LifePath will be asked to address the Action Plan if possible.

Next Meeting: March 13 at 5:30 p.m.

Adjournment: *Motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded and passed by a unanimous roll call vote.* The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Millinger, Secretary