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# CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

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## SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Date and Time: January 17, 2024 at 5:15 p.m.

Meeting Location: In person and via Zoom

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chair), John Russell (JR, Vice-Chair), Kristin Macek (KM, Secretary), Eliud Alcala (EA), Michelle Bettencourt (MB), Michele McHugh (MM) and Patricia Small (PS)

Absent were: Abigail Butt (AB) and George Barbuzzi (GB)

Also Present: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA), Councilor John C. Harvey and Cathy Hoog (CH), Director of the Salem Housing Authority

Clerk: Joanne M. Roomey

### I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

LC called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

### II. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 20, 2023 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by JR to approve the December 20, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes. Seconded by PS. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

### III. OLD BUSINESS:

#### a. Salem Housing Authority Update

Cathy Hoog, Executive Director of the Salem Housing Authority, gave an overview of the housing units. She said in addition to units, they also provide supportive services and programs to residents. They have a part-time social worker during the day, contract with health aids and provide congregate meals every day.

The Board's main concern was that some of the units are being used for administrative staff and storage and are offline, therefore, there are less units for residents. The Board wanted to know what percentage took advantage of the supportive services and how many residents there are at Charter Street. They also suggested using existing space and modifying it, which would be cost effective. Councilor Harvey said he will look into some spaces and the parking situation.

Ms. Hoog said there are over 100 units at Charter Street and there is a large number of residents that take advantage of the supportive services. She has secured a rental on Canal Street for 19 to 20 people for trainings and workshops. The housing authority needs a solution for office space as soon as possible. Ms. Hoog will get back to the board with more statistics with the help of Age Span.

b. Senior Day Update

TA updated the Board and confirmed that the Senior Day Celebration will be on Saturday, June 1, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at Forest River Park. She said attendees must register in advance and pay \$5.00. The committee will invite 12 vendors to have resource tables for seniors and are looking into outdoor music. They also recommend a 20' x 30' tent with tables and chairs for about \$2,000. Dave Gilbert from Winter Island may let the COA use chairs for the day which will save them around \$300. The estimated food cost is about \$500 or less. The committee is trying to get sponsorships to defray some of the costs. Seven awards will go to outstanding older adults and TA will ask ward councilors for their help in circulating the nomination form and perhaps nominating someone from their respective wards. The committee is open to suggestions and will discuss them further at the next Senior Day 2024 meeting on February 1, 2024.

c. Kitchen Update

JR said that the biggest challenge is to make sure the design team chosen is clear on where the stove and hood vent are going to go. Once that is determined, everything else should fall into place. Councilor Harvey suggested looking into the Essex Agricultural & Technical School for volunteers that are in the Culinary Arts & Hospitality program. There is no date for certain when everything will start. TA also said the kitchen enhancement is being paid for largely by ARPA funds that must be dedicated this year.

d. Meeting with Mayor Pangallo

LC and JR had a meeting with Mayor Pangallo and discussed separating the COA from Park, Recreation and Community Services. Lisa Cammarata, HR Director, Trish O'Brien and Chief of Staff Lisa Peterson were also there. LC said we did make our case and asked if they could just consider this. She said, "we are not talking about the person, we are taking about the future." She also said similar cities are paying up to \$25,000 more for the position. Mayor Pangallo said he is doing a salary survey and will get back to them. JR mentioned that they neglected to remind Mayor Pangallo of the 2017 ordinance separating the COA from Park, Recreation and Community Services that the City Council voted on and approved. Councilor Harvey said he will confirm this.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS:

##### a. Friends of the COA Report

JR spoke about Senior Day and told the Board members that the direction of the event is up to the committee. The Friends of the COA approved giving \$2,000 for a tent on Senior Day which includes \$1,000 for the deposit. They also paid for some fitness room supplies and are also giving out two \$50 gift cards a month for Market Basket. The first raffle will be on Valentines Day. The social workers will discern who could really use the other gift card and it would be given privately to someone in need. The Friends are focusing on the annual letter that goes out to about 7,000 people. They are also working on a business appeal letter and are considering some type of Facebook Go Fund Me account. The first time they did Go Fund Me they raised \$5,000 but the next time it was only \$100. The Friends are trying to figure out some way to reach younger people.

##### b. Advocates for Positive Aging Seminar Series

LC said that this group meets monthly and have discussions about aging issues that people encounter. Seniors need advocates; what can we do to help seniors prepare for the future as well as their caregivers? This group wants to sponsor a series of seminars on topics like elder law, Medicare and more. LC proposed that the Council on Aging Board co-sponsor such events.

JR made a motion to approve cosponsoring workshops with the Positive Aging group. This was seconded by KM. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

##### c. SHINE Housing Initiative

MB spoke about the new housing initiative called SHINE. (This is not to be confused with the SHINE insurance program which is administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs in partnership with elder service agencies like the COA.)

Please refer to this link for more information:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Z\\_V0n-ohRtskEiGsHWx6mVjrA74ITCZOvoY0ywU7-NU/edit#slide=id.p](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Z_V0n-ohRtskEiGsHWx6mVjrA74ITCZOvoY0ywU7-NU/edit#slide=id.p)

MB said we should support, take advantage of and focus on bringing in additional housing units. 30% of the city has multi-zoned housing for so called “in-law” units.

##### d. Spanish as a Second Language

PS is trying to organize a regular gathering for Spanish and English-speaking folks to get together to create some type of dialogue, maybe a cooking class. She believes this would encourage more diversity and Spanish speaking people would come to the CLC.

MM spoke about the MetroBridge Program (more information in the Director’s report below). MM, TA and Julio Mota from the Mayor’s office are working with Boston

University students in an effort to define the barriers that keep Spanish speaking older adults from using COA services.

e. Director's Report

**Social Services:**

Services provided between 12/01/2023 and 12/31/2023

Category	Duplicated	Unduplicated
OA Case Mgt/advocacy	109	62
OA General info	157	115
OA Health Benefits Counseling	115	93
SS Durable Medical Equip Loan	27	26
Totals	408	225

**Programs/Activities:**

- We ended 2023 with a rousing New Year's Eve Event on December 27th. As always, live music and dancing is what everyone loves.
- We will be collaborating with Salem State's Occupational Therapy Department to provide a 6-part Spring Wellness Program. Students and Faculty will be offering important topics of discussion for our members to take part in. Each workshop can take 20 participants. These workshops will be offered in February, March and April.
- Due to popular demand, we are adding a second Low Impact Cardio Class to begin on Mondays in February.
- Senator Joan Lovely was here on January 8th to celebrate monthly birthdays. She will be sponsoring the cake each month.
- The Food Pantry will be at the CLC every Wednesday from 10:00-11:30am. All are welcome.

**Dining Services:**

- In the past, on the *From Our Kitchen* days there was only that option. We noticed some preferred to not pay and went without lunch. To better serve our folks, we introduced "Lunch Choice" this month on three dates. A guest may opt to prepay with their reservation for the \$5 *From Our Kitchen* meal or opt for the Title III-C Federal donation program meal. Our first effort was Thursday, January 4th. There were 17 people selecting *From Our Kitchen* and 12, the Title III-C meal. The decision to go with \$5 flat fee is based on other COA in the area charges, to support food costs and to keep it simple.

- We have a few volunteers trained in reservation explaining and making sure that they are comfortable handling cash.

#### **Transportation:**

- Transportation is being impacted by the Salem Pantry pop-up events. Drivers are noting an increase in the number of grocery bags seniors are transporting as well as increased weight. In an effort to support the driver's concerns and make sure folks are receiving their desired amount of groceries, we would like to find volunteers to help with bags on the Wednesdays when the food pantry is at the center.
- We are still waiting for the announcement regarding the grant for three new vehicles.
- Discussions continue reading EV charging stations for the new vans.

#### **MetroBridge Project:**

- TA, LC, MM have met with the BU professors who steer the MetroBridge program. Yesterday, Julio Mota, Constituent Services for Latino Affairs joined our Zoom meeting with MetroBridge and will be assisting us in identifying Spanish speaking older adults to be surveyed or participate in focus groups. This study is to help us identify barriers as to why more Spanish speaking seniors do not participate at the COA.

#### **Enhancing Tech Literacy Grant:**

- No one responded to the first RFP. Purchasing Agent Anthony Delaney is crafting a revision and TA is awaiting this to share.

#### **Memory Café and Reiki Clinics:**

- The monthly cafés are still going well. Yesterday, Kelley Annese introduced a Reiki Clinic as part of her wellness offerings. There will be another in February.

#### **V. OTHER BUSINESS: N/A**

#### **VI. NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, February 21, 2024**

#### **VII. VOTE TO ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Council on Aging Board this evening, JR moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by PS. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at **6:25 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey  
Board Clerk