

THE WINCHENDON COUNCIL ON AGING

Date: March 19, 2024

Minutes of the Meeting

*Accepted
4/16/2024*

WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK
RCUD APR 18 2024 AM 8:28

MEETING OPENED AT: 9:44AM

PRESENT: Judy Mizhir, President, Rita Amenta, Vickie LaBrack, AnnMary Smith, Jean Joyal, Brenda Kosakowski, Miranda Jennings, Director, Olivia Tarlton, Anne Coderre, Phil White, Diane Alexander

ZOOM PARTICIPANT: Nancy Romanowski

EXCUSED: Lynn Murray, Gail Casavant

MINUTES from 2/20/24 accepted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Paper report submitted. Appreciation was expressed for support of the Senior Center activities. Finances and grants updated. The 'My Senior Center' equipment is operating and giving us data to track participation in activities as well as rides and finances, etc.

*We will be putting a rides schedule through that system as well.

*Survey results are now available.

*My vision is always tied to wants and needs of the community.

*Between February and March we have 50% more people coming in. February average was 23 people/day and in March we have an average of 34 people/day so far. We are able to track duplicated (same people) and unduplicated people (new to the Senior Center), which is what we want to see more of.

*Current classes as seen in the report are exercise, yoga, line dancing, pickleball, nutrition (meals served here), socializing, public and social services, entertainment, etc.

*Ages of people coming in to the Sen. Cntr. are now being tracked as well as coming from various surrounding towns, Royalston, Ashburnham, etc. Word is getting out that this is the place to be.

*The newsletter with activities is being delivered to all housing authorities, libraries, health center, etc. It is also digital through the Town website.

*A trip is scheduled to go to the Groton Musical Center. Six out of the ten tickets are gone for transportation. A gospel choir showcase will be presented. We will be doing a lunch or brunch for bus riders. It is free and open to the public. I will be the driver so I will be sure to go.

*As stated in the survey, the areas where volunteers are needed include Answering phones, drivers, preparing deserts or breakfast pastries, serving, sponsoring a monthly lunch, delivering food, running a program such as sewing, exercise, or cooking, cleaning/sorting for Yard Sale, prepping for the Cake Auction, piano tuning.

*The survey results were presented and discussed.

*The survey indicated a desire for community events like concerts, town meeting, and group trips, exercise classes and movie screenings. A license to show movie screenings is \$350.

*Bingo is being held twice a week, crocheting, Mah Jong, paint nights, zumba salsa, and grandparent/grandchild activities.

*Social programs and services: This is providing assistance with applying for food stamps, accounting, health insurance, and food stamps, that being the most pressing one asked for. We are addressing that and other services. Medical rides, food pantry, lunches and community dinners was popular.

*Volunteer opportunities are many and are listed in the report. It was brought up that homebound people also desire a visitor/helper. It can become complicated, but if we go through Central Mass

Aging it is a possibility. We have submitted a grant to the Elderly Mental Health Outreach grant program. In partnership with other senior centers in the area, it would provide funding for mental health outreach. It was noted that there is a need for grief counseling also. There is volunteer course available in some places for a caretaker's support group for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and more. These people can be very isolated and in need of support. It was noted that we can learn a lot from other groups. Ms. Jennings noted that she is now working with a lot of elderly who want to volunteer. We will follow up on them.

*We are getting a lot of phone calls for tax preparation. We are looking to train people to do tax preparation. Representative Zlotnik is coming in at 11AM today to talk about senior taxes. There seems to be a huge need for tax help now. We have previously referred people to Gardner and that is now full.

*Pepperell found that their people receiving Meals On Wheels wanted more home cooked food, so they are holding 'charity dinners'. We might consider doing that once a month or so.

*Education: We have 4 working computers and are looking for someone to teach a class. Music and art were asked for as well as cooking classes which was a big one. A sewing class is on the horizon. Intergenerational Skillshare might be a good way to get instructors to teach classes.

*There have been a few requests for gardening classes as well as providing community gardens.

*Some craft classes were requested.

*Some thought has been given to language classes and outreach to different cultures.

*It has been brought to my attention that the town sees a large building here that is not being used as much as it could. Part of my vision is to provide more programs that cater to the wants and needs of the seniors. So many elders have varying wants so that we want to have a good variety of programs. My other vision is to make this center a place that the community treasures and sees as a cornerstone and heart of the community. In many ways it is the most well-known building in town. Being creative and prioritizing our programs for seniors is my desire and also making this building the star of our community because all the young people are going to be seniors.

*My goal is to make the best use of this building, make the Senior Center work financially, and bring in more people to love and use this building. I have spoken to the Town Manager about having people use the building, not move into the building, but use or rent the building with appropriate security and locks. There is a building use policy which is required to be applied for in the town. Updating of this policy would be beneficial.

*Ms. Mizhir presented that it would be good to have a close relationship with other community establishments like the YMCA and library to facilitate some of these programs.

*Ms. Jennings informed the group that she included in the budget for next year, to provide a job for a community help worker to help people fill out applications and do social service assistance and putting on workshops. Doing that well requires a concentrated effort. Many other senior centers have such an employee.

*We need to do some Spring events like the yard sale, cake auction, and perhaps a barbecue to bring people in and welcome them to Murdock as a part of the community.

*Ms. Mizhir suggested doing the cake auction in the Fall to set it apart from the open house activity.

*At the open house we might have the Garden Club provide a plant sale. Ms. Tarlton stated that she would help do something with gardening and help with planters.

*Ms. Jennings stated that the After School Program that meets here on Wednesdays from 3-5 wants to do a fundraiser for the Senior Center, particularly for senior who are homeless.

*The yard sale on May 11th was discussed and donations will be forthcoming. Suggestions and plans for the event were suggested. A raffle was suggested.

*Ms. Romanowski suggested that the upcoming Summer Solstice, Fall Festival, and voting day to showcase the Senior Center too. Plant sales were discussed. The Garden Club will hold a large plant sale in May also.

OLD BUSINESS: A few of the committees need to meet to review and update their policies and packets.

NEW BUSINESS: An auctioneer is needed for the future cake auction.

MEETING CLOSED AT: 11:23 AM.

Respectively submitted:
Diane M. Alexander
Secretary