

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING *DRAFT* MINUTES
Thursday, December 12, 2019
10 – 11:30 AM
South Meeting Room 101, Bangs Community Center

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rosemary Kofler (Chair), Sue Dierks (Secretary), Norma Hallock, Richard Kofler, Ivette Palacin, Pat Rector, Barbara Slovin (Friends Treasurer), Jack Wollensak

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Beth Ogulewicz (Director/Program Director)

GUESTS: Gregory Bascomb, John Magarian (past COA member), Tim Neale, Michele Wolf (HVES Representative on Personal Care and Homemaker Services)

WELCOME

Rosemary opened the meeting at 10:00 AM with a welcome to all and a special welcome to guests.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rosemary invited anyone from the public to express his or her views for up to 3 minutes. No comment.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION

MICHELE WOLF, HVES REPRESENTATIVE on Personal Care and Homemaker Services spoke about the widespread coverage of these services in the Pioneer Valley. She works with vendor partners so that elders can age in place. She sets up connections with the need of elders and vendors who can help. On the national level there are not enough helpers. Home health aides are on the lower salary level. Because Amherst is a more costly place to live, vendors are not as available, whereas places like Holyoke, Chicopee, etc. have more access to vendors. Another local deterrent is the heavy traffic on Route 9 to Amherst. So the question is: Is there a way to attract workers to Amherst?

Mary Beth reported that the social workers have encountered difficulty in getting care for local elders. Michele stated that it might be easier if more hours were needed at a given time. Mary Beth asked if they have thought about job recruitment, training and requirements needed for such a job. Michele stated that the agency needs 6 to 10 part time employees in a given area. One type of help is to have a parking placard. They currently have 13 Home Care Agencies working with them, plus some other providers. They are all based in Hamden County, except for one. Mary Beth added that there are

some local vendors who are not on the HVES list and that most come from Medicaid. Mary Beth suggested the issue might be put before the State Legislature. Michele stated that this is already in discussion at the State level, but the agency doesn't want to wait. They are looking for more immediate solutions. Pat asked if it would make sense to have an open session to make this need known. Also, one could look at communities of faith and students who might want a part time job. Michele replied that with students, the difficulty is that they are on a school year schedule and gone in the summer and holidays. Consistent help is needed. Another idea is to reach out to high school students and inspire them. Mary Beth suggested that we put an article in the Gazette to put forward the idea of the need and to do it in multiple languages. She has received numerous calls from families of elders who cannot get the home care that their elder needs. Mary Beth thanked Michele for her diligence and concern and stated that we would communicate further about starting up a campaign to make this need known. Tim and Gregory expressed their interest and concern in this issue.

A Brochure about the Highland Valley Elders Services "Services and Resources" was distributed to all present.

PAT RECTOR reported on the **Diversity Workshop**. Pat stated that it exceeded her expectations. Pat distributed a sheet about "Why are we asking about pronouns?" She explained that it deepens our welcome to consumers who are involved in our programs. It is a small step in battling sexism and trans gender situations. This was a multi-cultural activity. How can we respond to micro expressions and the messages we send? We want to be more welcoming so that all feel respected. What actions for us? One way is to use our pronouns on our name cards. Another is modeling cultural competence. We should try to integrate multicultural practices in all our agendas and activities. How do we move from a limited presentation of multi-culture? We can start to create a multi-culture think tank to discuss how to implement this to enrich our experiences. Pat also distributed two sheets from the Workshop on " Tool: Recognizing Micro aggressions and the Messages they send".

FRIENDS OF THE ASC TREASURER'S REPORT.

BARVARA SLOVIN reported that we are receiving donations continually. As of December 11, 2019, General Account has **\$24,096.78**; Program Account has **\$967.38**; Travel Account has **\$789.15**; Investment Account (Edward Jones) has **\$63,712.57**; Total funds are **\$89,565.88**.

FY20 Friends of the ASC Donations are **\$5,835.00**. FY20 ASC Annual Census Fund Donations are **\$750.00**. The Treasurer's Report was accepted.

ACTION ITEMS

Letter on Safety to Amherst Town Council: **Rosemary** distributed copies of the letter she would like to submit to the Amherst Town Council Members. She highlighted two major safety concerns: the connecting walkway leading west from the Senior Center and the walk light at the main intersection of Pleasant Street and Amity/Main Street. She pointed out that Massachusetts is the second state in the US to have Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly designation. We would like to see Amherst work on becoming an Age-Friendly town with sidewalks and crossings that are safe for older people and those with disabilities. The motion was made and passed unanimously that the letter be sent to Town Council. A suggestion was made that a copy be sent to Guildford Mooring, Head of Public Works Department.

Convalescent Equipment Safety: **Stacey Gordon** reported that this item would be ready for the next meeting.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Convalescent Equipment: **Jack** reported that we have wheelchairs without foot rests and he is ordering some to equip those chairs that are missing them. They have been sanitizing some equipment, beginning this next week, with wipes. We want to work on strengthening the sanitization and proper usage of the equipment.

HIGHLAND VALLEY ELDER SERVICES

Norma Hallock reported that there is no new report since the meeting last month.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Minutes of November 7, 2019 were approved as corrected. Page 4: Stop and Shop did not give out bags, but instead information. Also, under Public Comment, the message needs to be stated.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Health and Safety: **Pat** reported that she will go through the Cooley Dickenson Health Report and others to see what is missing for Amherst area seniors and what action plans might we take.

TOPICS NOT ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR: Mary Beth stated that in future she would present information on various programs so that we are better informed.

A question was posed: Has Lisa White's Nurse position been posted? Yes, it was posted last week.

NEXT COA MEETING: THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2020 AT 9:00 AM

The Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Dierks, COA Secretary

DOCUMENTS LIST

The following Documents were made available to all members of the COA during the meeting. They are available for review at the Amherst Senior Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, MA.

1. COA Meeting Agenda for December 12, 2019
2. Minutes of the COA Meeting for November 7, 2019
3. Friends of the ASC Treasurer's Report
4. Proposed letter to Amherst Town Council Members
5. Highland Valley Elder Service Brochure on Services and Resources
6. "Why are we asking about pronouns?"
7. "Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send"
8. "Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions"