

**Rochester Council on Aging (RCOA)
Board of Director's Meeting
67 Dexter Lane
Rochester, MA 02770**

December 13, 2023

In Attendance: Pauline Munroe (President), Eric Poulin (Director), Carol Galante-Dias (Administrative Assistant), Sandy Charron, Marjorie Barrows, Michael Daniel, Sue Norton (Vice President), Pat Joy, Mary Bessey (Treasurer), Margorie O'Brien (Secretary)

Absent: Lorraine Thompson (Outreach Coordinator) Excused – conducting inspection with Boston Food Bank, Andrew Revell, Excused (Dr. appt.)

Guests: Andrew Daniel (Rochester Facilities Manager)

The meeting was **Called to Order** by Pauline Munroe at 9:01 a.m. with confirmation of a quorum (8 of 9 Board members were present).

I. **Acceptance of the Minutes:** A **MOTION** was made by Margie Barrows to accept the minutes of the Board of Director's Meeting held on November 8, 2023; Sue Norton **SECONDED** the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion **PASSED** by unanimous vote.

II. **Treasurer's Report:** Mary Bessey reported that the balance in the Sunshine Fund had not changed since last month. Eric Poulin reported that our beginning balance for the fiscal year was \$364,667.00, expenditures thus far into the FY were \$140,411.99, leaving an ending balance of \$224,255.01 through June 30th. A **MOTION** was made by Sue Norton to accept the Treasurer's Report; it was **SECONDED** by Sandy Charron, and with no further discussion, the motion **PASSED**, unanimously.

III. Director's Report:

1. FY25 Budget (for review and possible vote): (Eric Poulin) There will be a Special Town Meeting on Jan. 22nd @7pm at the Rochester Memorial School. All budgets are due by Jan 12th. All departments are being asked to keep a hold on budget increases. Eric hopes to hire Kenny Viera as a Grade 4/Step 4 Breakfast Program Manager utilizing funding from the unfilled Program Assistant/Activities Coordinator position. That would be a wash resulting in no net increase to the budget. In addition, although Eric wishes he could hire a custodian for 30 hours per week, it has been challenging to find someone to work those hours at the current rate of pay allowed for by the town. It looks like he will be able to hire someone at 15 hours per week, potentially from 2-5pm, Monday through Friday. Since that is not enough time to get everything done, especially in the warmer months, in the FY25 budget he is asking for funds to have a cleaning crew come in about once per week to supplement.

The current cleaning company has been doing a wonderful job. Going from 30 hours to 15 per week for a custodian position plus a cleaning crew in the next budget results in no net increase. Eric then reviewed the proposed FY25 Budget line item by line item. In summation, the FY24 Budget was \$364,667.00, the proposed FY25 Budget is 371,379.04, leaving a net increase of only \$6,712.04 due to employee step increases (COLAs are added in later by the fiscal department). There are no major changes, this is simply a maintenance budget and unfortunately not a growth budget in keeping with the advice given by the Town Hall. At the last Department Head meeting they described the next 2-3 budget years as potentially being challenging/difficult. Sue Norton made a MOTION to accept the FY25 Budget as proposed, Sandy Charron SECONDED it, and with no further discussion, the motion **PASSED**, unanimously.

2. Grants & Capital Requests: We have some masonry repairs to be completed and the first quote we received was quite high. However, Andrew Daniel (Rochester Facilities Manager), was able to get additional quotes. The Board is recommending that the Town supply \$7,000 in funding for this work through capital funds. Andrew Daniel is submitting this request on behalf of the COA. Sue Norton made a MOTION to support this capital request, it was **SECONDED** by Margie Barrows, and with no further discussion, the motion **PASSED** unanimously. Andrew Daniel also made a capital request for \$5,000 to cover the cost of repairing the flat roof over the walk-in kitchen. Sue Norton made a MOTION to support this capital request, it was **SECONDED** by Mary Bessey, and with no further discussion, the motion **PASSED** unanimously.

Van #2 (2006 model) will be retired next year/summer 2024 when we receive the new 14-passenger van that we were awarded through a grant application with MassDOT. Van #3 (2013 model) is getting close to 100,000 miles. It will need to be retired within the next 2 years. Eric would like to submit a grant to allow that to happen. Minivan #5 has received a lot of use and is over 90,000 miles right now. Eric plans to ask to replace both vehicles in that same grant as he found that you can ask for more than one vehicle. Sen. Rodrigues and Rep. Straus have forwarded letters supporting our request. Additionally, Glen Cannon forwarded a letter stating that the town anticipates covering \$37,920.80 toward the cost of the 2 new vans which will cover the 20% matching funds requirement of the grant. The state grant should cover the other 80% of the cost. There is no guarantee that we will be successful with this grant application but all our previous applications for vehicles have been successful. We hope that this continues. The van grant applications are due by Dec. 22nd. Also due by Dec. 22nd and already submitted by Eric was a report to the MBTA so that the town can get a para-transit credit on its cherry sheet. (This was particularly important to do as prior to hiring our current Director there was at least 1 year where this MBTA report was not filed, and the town missed some funding.)

3. Update on Custodian Search: This item was covered under “Director’s Report, Item 1”. In addition, the Director provided the COA Board with information from legal counsel regarding CORI checks. In summary, an employer cannot ask questions about non-convictions and can only ask questions about convictions occurring within the last 3 years.

4. Building Duct Cleaning Scheduled: In response to public input and at the Director’s request, Andrew Daniel has scheduled a commercial air duct cleaning. SERVPRO will be at the COA on Saturday, Jan. 13th and Sunday, Jan. 14th for this cleaning. The quoted cost was \$4,267. (Very expensive but we do not believe that one has been done since the building was opened making this long overdue.)

5. Transportation & Triad: (Carol Galante-Dias) Carol would like to thank Jeff Eldridge- he has been outstanding at helping us to make repairs to our vans in a very timely manner. Costs, thanks to Jeff, were reasonable as well. This is a busy time of year for van use- Carol has been doubling up on our riders whenever possible. Drivers cannot be thanked enough. They always go above and beyond to help our seniors get where they need to go! Eric also thanked Carol for taking the time to enter the data regarding van usage/rides into our computer system. This has made things much easier when preparing reports to the state and for grant requests. Our ***Tuesday Cruise*** continues to be ***much*** enjoyed. The seniors, some of whom needed gentle nudging to get out and socialize, are now becoming more comfortable and talkative. Thanks to our chefs not only do they prepare the meals to be enjoyed at the COA, but they also send each of our “Cruisers’ home with a “to-go” meal!
***TRIAD-** We had a GREAT 2023 and have already made plans for 2024! We will continue with the Health Fair and the Block Party. We will try to have TWO Car Shows (May and Sept.) with Johnny Angel (remember that inclement weather prevented us from having the Car show this year). We will begin Women’s Self Defense Training in 2024. Using grant funding we will be purchasing fleece vests with an embroidered COA insignia (in color) to be given to our staff and Board Members.

6. Outreach Report: (Lorraine Thompson) Lorraine submitted her Outreach Report for the month of November to the Board and there were no questions.

7. Monday Lunches for November: Our Monday Lunches continue to be a draw for seniors! Most dates fill up quickly. Our net profit from lunches in November was \$404.99.

8. Check-Ins for October: There were 301 unduplicated check-ins for the month of November. This is a new attendance record for the month of November! (Our records go as far back as June 2009.)

9. December Trips/Events/Activities: We cancelled planned trips to Lasalette and Frugal Fannies due to a lack of interest. We now plan to hold off on scheduling additional field trips until March when the weather improves. Our November Veteran’s Dinner, our Thanksgiving meal, Pancakes with Santa, and our Dec. 11th Holiday Luncheon were all hits! Breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and our daily activities continue to have a strong turnout. We are on pace

to have our best overall year, attendance-wise, in the history of the COA. (We are hoping to set an attendance record for December, but we will review December 2023 and the year 2023 overall at January's meeting.)

10. Form an Events Subcommittee: Eric is interested in getting a group of interested people to form an "Events Subcommittee". This committee would plan for the upcoming year/2024. We already have many things in place. Thus far, Mike Daniel and Pat Joy have volunteered.

11. Senior Tax Work-off: At our last meeting, members had been asked by Eric to consider what they thought would be reasonable changes to our Senior Tax Work-Off Program. In his absence, Andrew Revell asked Eric to share that he was in favor of raising the monetary figure to \$2,000 and the number of people able to participate to 25. Eric said that seniors have been reading articles in *Senior Scope* and elsewhere where it is stated that the state allowances have risen to \$2,000, so of course, questions have been coming. Based on Board feedback, Eric amended our program details by putting in \$1,500 and 25. He is also adding in verbiage mirroring the state law stating that an individual can work in someone's place if that person is physically unable to do so. In addition, the previous language limited a household income of no more than \$47,000 to be considered for the program. The Board expressed interest in raising that to \$70,000. In doing research on tax programs at other COA's, Marion appears to have no household limit, Mattapoisett has a \$79,000+ limit. Mansfield, who visited our center recently, has 60 people in their workoff program, and allows volunteers to earn up to \$1,500, and there is no household income limit. Eric presented an updated "Tax Work-Off Application Packet" that included the Board's feedback. Discussion centered around the fact that the average home value in Rochester is now \$500,000, which is advantageous if you are looking to sell but many of our seniors are looking to stay in their homes for the remainder of their lives. We have fixed income seniors with property tax bills that are often at or beyond their means. These folks are not looking for a handout but simply a chance to work for town departments and in exchange receive a small break on their property taxes in keeping with the senior tax workoff abatement program that is in state law and that the town adopted many years prior (although our town policy hasn't been updated in some time). The COA has had work (like painting offices) and other projects completed, and the running of the COA is often tackled by **volunteers**. We have volunteers serving as receptionists Monday through Thursday. Hiring painters, receptionists, etc. would be costly to the town if not for these volunteers. After discussion, there was a feeling that the proposed FY25 workoff policy was a good compromise keeping in mind all the varied factors involved with such a decision. Sandy Charron made a MOTION to approve the new wording for our FY25 Tax Work-Off Abatement Program Policy, Margie O'Brien SECONDED it, and with no further discussion, the motion **PASSED**, unanimously. The Select Board will have to review the policy next. (If they pass something it would then go to Town Meeting in May for a vote.)

12. Annual Evaluations: The Director is beginning employee evaluations at this time. They will be submitted to Town Hall by the end of January. The COA Board reviews the Director. The COA Board's reviews of the Director will be turned in on January 10, 2024.

***Mail/ Correspondence-** None

***Acceptance of Donations-** There was a **MOTION** made by Sue Norton to accept donations to the COA (with special thanks to the Firefighter's Association and Artisan Bakery) and it was **SECONDED** by Sandy Charron... with no further discussion, the motion **PASSED** unanimously.

***Volunteer Update(s)-** Sharon Hartley repeated that we desperately need volunteers for our Breakfast Program. The Breakfast Program raises funding for the COA. Our Building Subcommittee met on 12/12/23. Andrew Daniel will be working with Stu Norton on the next steps and when that is completed another meeting will be scheduled.

***Public comment-** Andrew Daniel shared his concern for our seniors in the "big room" as our dividing panels have malfunctioned, and the panels are extremely heavy. We are being asked NOT to use them for now and Andrew has someone coming to look at them (and hopefully make repairs) after the first of the year. The Board offered a big thank you to Andrew for trying to get this fixed ASAP and for his work to get additional quotes on our masonry project. Select Board Member Paul Ciaburri thanked Eric and the COA Board for allowing the Select Board and other town committees to use the COA building for meetings. Eric stated that he has been staying after hours for these meetings and is happy to help whenever possible.

***Adjournment-** With no further business a **MOTION TO ADJOURN** was made by Sue Norton, **SECONDED** by Margie Barrows and **PASSED** unanimously. The meeting **ADJOURNED at 10:10 a.m.**