

**Minutes of Special Board Meeting December 7, 2022**

Respectfully Submitted by Lori Howe

***Voting Members Attending:***

Pete Hoagland, Sally Tipton, Gerri Hawn, Jim Campbell, Ken Adams, Pam Sampson, Lori Howe  
***Voting Members Absent****: 0*

***Non-Voting Associate Members Attending: 0***

***Staff Attending:***Sue Kelliher, Kristina Gallant, Melinda Morle

***Call to Order***by Chair Pete Hoagland at 10:00 a.m.

Pete Hoagland opened the meeting and reminded members that this meeting was being held to begin developing a set of priorities on the recommendations of the UMass Community Needs Assessment dated October 2022. This will assist in establishing needs, goals, and a timeline for action.

Sue distributed additional materials, including a guide entitled “Becoming an Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community” along with associated charts.

Prior to this meeting, Pete distributed a condensed list of the eight UMass recommendations which will form the basis for this discussion.

First, Peter asked members to share what they saw as priorities on the recommendations. Gerri stated that it was important to get to those isolated and economically challenged. Jim suggested that we may need two sets of priorities: one for the Board and one for Staff. Others felt that we should address those with difficulty meeting routine expenses, home repairs, and fuel assistance.

Pete directed members’ attention to his list and asked for comments on each item.

1. **COA Programs**
   1. *Increase staff and space* – why? Page 16 of the Assessment indicates that the senior population is growing, with 42% of Sherborn being 50+, while the State average is 37%. Residents 60 and older comprise 22% of our town population. This is expected to continue to grow in the next decade.

Jim asked how many of these seniors our Staff is aware of. Melinda replied not many. Last year she did 7 Fuel assistance application and 1 for Food assistance. While there is a significant need, some are extremely private and have pride in their independence.

* 1. *Space equipped with video conferencing*

Although ZOOM is available, OWL cannot be used for small meetings.

Pam asked how programs are advertised and was told LINK, Hometown Weekly, email blast, etc.

* 1. *Change image of COA* (Not just oldest & vulnerable but any older adult)

Sue said she felt we should educate about aging rather than change the COA name so that we don’t buy into the negative perception of aging. We should target different age groups to promote this message.

Gerri suggested we could do a brochure to segment ages and emphasize the services COA provides.

Kristina shared that Salem has a great resource guide for those 60+ which could inform what we decide to do.

Others said that it’s shocking how many respondents didn’t know who to call for a need. There was a suggestion that making a presentation about COA to the Pine Hill CSA could broaden understanding. Ken stated that it is too bad that there isn’t a place for people to gather, even just for coffee, to promote socialization and relationships. Members liked the idea of finding such place and calling it Ken’s Café. Ken also said that when they deliver firewood, they include a COA brochure to spread more information about us.

* + 1. **Physical Space**

1. *Acquire additional space* --- Given that we now have a spacious new office in Town Hall, most felt this was a lower need.
2. Expand programing a space is available
3. Advocate for more dedicated space
4. Host programing around Town and continue to partnership
5. Expand outdoor programing
6. Collaborate with local businesses

Jim said he sees 2 needs: 1) a kind of coffee clutch as Ken described, and 2) a private place for sensitive individual conversations. Sue said arises one or two times a week and they now use the Select Board Conference Room which is usually available. It was also suggested that staff do more Home Visits since there are so many individuals living alone; Melinda could do about 4 per week.

Sally suggested enlisting our local churches. She knows that Pilgrim Church likes to be part of the community and is very welcoming. What about St. Theresa’s and UU? Sue has reached out to St. T’s and COA has been using UU more recently.

It was also suggested that when the Library moves from the Community Center in the next few months, the first floor will become available and would offer space for gathering. Ken recommended we look into the possibility for COA use, where it could be set up as a coffee shop. Jim said that it would help achieve our goals to have a dedicated spot. Pam felt it would also help to promote intergenerational activities and use. We should find out what kind of rent the Community Center wants for that space.

1. *Collaborate with other towns and organizations*
2. *Identify visitable spaces*
3. *Stand-alone center at future date* – Members felt that given the Library situation and other factors, this was a lower priority for the foreseeable future.
4. **Economic** **Insecurity**
5. *Educate community re: programs to support aging in place on limited income*

One member asked if there were tax breaks for Seniors and another responded that there may be State Treasurer issues with that. We do have a tax work/write off program, which gets people out, socializing, and contributing, while getting a benefit. There is also a tax aid application as well as tax exemptions and a circuit breaker tax relief program.

We should look into grants for Home Repairs; Sue said that Holliston applied for one.

1. *Workshops on economic security and retirement planning* -- Can we incorporate these into Programming?
2. *Discounts for older adults* - Sue said we offer “scholarships” for Program and Trip fees.

To address this need, members recommended publicizing the Data from the Community Assessment to increase awareness; reaching out to Neighbors for help; and doing more Home Visits.

1. **Social Isolation** - 15% of Sherborn residents age 60+ live alone.
2. *Welcome first-time senior participants* - Pam suggested created a Buddy System to help get single people to events and programs.
3. *Develop reach out initiatives* – Covid is still a concern. Can we engage Neighbors to help?
4. *Explore op-in electronic system* – It was recommended that we ask Jackie to add an “opt-in” option on/with the Town census
5. *Workshops to avoid scams* – All have seen more and more scams; therefore it is important to educate on types and tactics.
6. *Surrogate grandparent program*
7. *Community education through quarterly breakfast for local organizations*

Gerri suggested introducing new guests at Senior Cafes to make them feel special/welcome. Also, use Name Tags regularly.

SEE more Recommendations on ***Page 6*** of full survey report.

**5. Caregivers**—Privacy is a very big issue for people in this situation.

1. *Host family caregiver "Resource Fair"* – COA has been offering the Memory Café which provides a lot of information and support. At last one, there were 6-7 people from Sherborn and the rest from Holliston and Natick.
2. *Host "Caregivers Night Out"* – Advertise caregiver groups so people can do what best suits them.
3. *Town staff to participate in Dementia Friends training* – COA Staff have done dementia training. All felt it was important for Town staff, especially Police and Fire, and Businesses to be trained as well.
4. *Provide referrals and transport to Memory Cafes* – Transportation can always be arranged.
5. **Housing**—There is little we can do about the lack of housing options.
6. *Distribute educational materials and hold workshops re: home safety.* The “Safe” grant will be advertised in an upcoming LINK.

It was shared that the Fire Department will cut off wedding bands/rings if needed.

One member asked if we could install grab bars and other safety items for high-need individuals?

1. *Identify sources of home assistance.* COA provides supports as needs are identified.
2. *Contribute to conversations about housing options*. Staff is always alert to these opportunities.
3. *Promote awareness of housing options.* There are very few at this time.
4. **Transportation** -- COA has already developed many options and feels we are well on our way to fulfilling Town needs. We have JFK and Dial-a-Ride; the AARP Driving Course; and the Walk Audit. However, all acknowledged that lack of transportation does contribute to Social Isolation. This is where a Buddy System could help too, not just for medical appointments but for Senior Cafes, Lifetime Learning programs, etc.

*See Figure 18 on Page 36 of the Survey Report* which shows the driving status of respondents. It is interesting to note that a low number, only 8%, don’t drive.

1. *Explore formal volunteer transport program* – JKF and Dial-a-Ride
2. *Collaboration with neighboring COAs*
3. *Investigate other opportunities for older adult travel*
4. *Car safety programs* -- AARP Driving Course
5. *Promote on-demand ride services* --Melinda asked if Dial-a-Ride would cover weekly grocery store trips?
6. *Conduct a walk audit* – Staff have done this.
7. *Offer "travel training" events*
8. **Communication within Town Departments**—There is not a lot of communication between Departments; Town is very siloed. Sue said that people don’t feel like they’re being communicated ***to***. Change has to come from the top and we are hopeful that the new Town Administrator will be this catalyst. There will be a Meet & Greet with him on January 6.
9. *Encourage COA users to promote COA programs*
10. *Provide education about role of COA and its services*
11. *Establish a "Citizens Civic Academy"*
12. *Fund liaison position* – All COA staff interact with Town Departments.
13. *Monthly meetings for reps from Town departments who interact Collaborative projects that support older residents, increasing communication* -- There are monthly meetings with the Town Administrator. With a new person in this role, we hope they will be more productive.

This ends review, comments and exchange of ideas on the recommendations generated by the Community Needs Assessment.

Pete stated that he would create a grid of the eight recommendations so that members could rank priorities. He asked members to return their completed rankings by 1/10/2023 so that they can be compiled before our next meeting on Wednesday, January 18th at 10:00 am to Noon at the COA office in Town Hall.

**Meeting Adjourned at 11:50 a.m.**