



Minutes of Special Board Meeting January 18, 2023

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, Melinda Morle, Kristina Gallant

Call to Order by Chair Pete Hoagland at 10:05 a.m.

To guide this meeting, Pete handed out a prioritized ranking of Community Needs Assessment goals/objectives based on Board member and staff feedback.

Ken raised the issue of the original goal of the survey relating to a new building. Sue responded that we were trying to determine whether the needs could be met with more than one building and what the future required, particularly as seniors aged in place. Jim shared Ken's memory of questioning where a building fits into the overall needs of Seniors in town. Lori remembered we felt that this was not an issue for the Board to decide, that it was important to understand what residents want.

Pam asked what will be available in the new Library. Sue responded that there will be a small meeting room and a large gathering room. Sue has already requested a few dates to reserve the large room for the Caregivers Resource Fair.

Sue handed out a sheet showing how the **Town of Carlisle** broke up their goals and established a strategic plan. Gerri said that she has the entire report and reviewed their format. In it they outline each goal, specify actions and who is responsible for accomplishing each. She said this could be a very helpful starting point for us.

Sue reported on the Select Board Meeting that took place this past Saturday, January 14th, regarding the **2023-24 town budget**. Elderly Housing wasn't there so CoA went on earlier than expected. Marian Neutra, the Vice-Chair, was not supportive of our request; she has an issue with the benefits of approximately \$12,500 associated with these salaries that the town would have to pay. Because there does not seem to be general support for CoA's budget increase, Sue encouraged Board members to attend the March 18th Select Board Meeting. Gerri noted that in the Carlisle report, they show similar demographics as Sherborn and yet employ five staff for their Council on Aging: a Director, Coordinator, Part-time Transportation Coordinator, and two part-time Admins, as well as a contract part-time Social Worker.

Pam noted that there were two members of the Advisory Committee who responded to ROI on the CoA increase and we're only a half a percent of the town budget. Gerri said that the Teachers' contract is up for renegotiation this year so Advisory and Select Board are in a defensive mindset.

Moving on to the **Community Needs Assessment work**, Pete asked how we should approach this, and questioned whether we should take one goal or prioritize a set of goals.

Sue said she asked the Assessor's Office for a breakdown of residents with certain factors like low home value, thinking this would provide us with more targeted data.

Jim asked whether it makes sense for Sue to make a first pass at the goals so we are informed about all the Staff efforts underway. Gerri concurred and suggested adding frequency to the format. Lori recommended focusing on the Highest Priorities. Melinda offered to help with the Caregivers and Housing goals.

Ken asked whether people turning 65 know what's available through CoA, like transportation, etc. Sue said that our services like JFK and Dial-a-Ride are well advertised and on demand. Ten people attended the recent Dial-a-Ride presentation and there were six immediate applications which are now up to eight. Also the library used to distribute materials that she provided. Lori said that residents commonly contact CoA about SHINE counseling and wondered how we might leverage off the connections created there.

Sue suggested the Board look at the *CoA Mission Statement* which was created 50 years ago. She recommended taking out the word "elderly". She can call Carlisle about what they're doing and how they're positioning "aging".

Pete felt that we should take Physical Space off of our focus list, since those underlying objectives were not highly rated in the Board/Staff prioritization. Jim said that he made "Acquire Additional Space" a #1 because of the idea of "Ken's Café". Ken said he can envision what café space would be like in the Community Center. Sue has reached out to Doug Furbush, President of the Sherborn Community Center Board. Sue suggested we also look at reaching out to the 60 and under crowd. Melinda thinks it's a great idea to have intergenerational space/activities. Ken said that the Community Center has so much to offer and remembered when Jim's wife, Thurza, did a lot to make it wheelchair accessible.

Jim suggested that it might be helpful to correlate our Priorities with the Town of Sherborn's. This would inform our process to know what we're already doing.

Regarding our **Budget Increase Request**, all felt it important for the Board to provide active support for the March 18th meeting. In fact, we should advocate with Town residents to support the increase. We need to determine our message. By looking at what the survey told us; Sue said this gives a pulse on what people want and we should continue to follow residents' desires.

Jim suggested that a course dealing with *Current Political Events* could attract a greater range of residents and be a key part of changing the CoA image. Gerri knows Toby Berkowitz, Professor of Advertising at B.U. and he may be a good choice. Lori suggested finding someone who is balanced so there would be broad appeal. Sue reminded that it takes a lot of time to find and engage professors. Kristina offered that she has a presenter coming in February for a late afternoon session who is an expert on Ukraine and Russia. She also reported that Lifetime Learning's 8 upcoming classes are full. She had contacted Frank Villa about speaking on Current Events and he said he was hesitant because of the "unkind culture" he has encountered. Jim remarked that he has attended all of Frank's lectures and doesn't recall any unkindness. Sally wonders if other COAs have done this and Sue responded that most COAs don't touch this topic and usually other COAs call us for ideas and recommendations. Members agreed we should reach out to Alan Schechter and Gerri should contact Toby Berkowitz.

Pam noted that she has explored other COAs and found that there is often a charge to join, e.g. \$35.

Ken asked if Sherbonites can take advantage of the OLLI program (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) at UMass Boston. Sue said many local colleges are offering programs like this for seniors including Bridgewater State and Framingham University.

After this far ranging discussion, Pete refocused the group by asking where are we/**what have we decided?**

Gerri recommended that we work on the goals by dividing them up among Sue, Melinda and the Board based on the Board's discussions and the survey results. Sue offered to make a template for this so everything is consistent. Jim felt we should start with the High Priority items. Sue offered to send a spreadsheet that reflects all individual comments of survey respondents so that the Board has more details than just data,.

Ken would like to take on **Physical Space/Ken's Café** and asked if we have funds available for this. Gerri said there is a line item in our budget for Rental Space, the bulk of which goes to Pilgrim Church for Senior Cafe. Ken asked if there is space at Sherborn Meadows for a café, to which Pam responded that there really isn't anything, just a small room with access issues and she felt their Board might push back on this. Ken also noted that if we use the Community Center we may have to get approval from the UU Church for overflow parking.

Lori asked if we should first look at what Sue and the staff are doing on items on the plan, get a framework in place, then decide how to fill in the gaps.

Ken felt Home Assistance should be undertaken and suggested we compile a list of recommended contractors.

Gerri said she found it curious that such a high percentage of respondents said their homes don't need modification.

The Board decided to compile all the information gathered and meet again in a few weeks. The **next meeting was set for Wednesday, February 8, at 10:00 a.m.** in the CoA office.

Regarding our budget increase request, Pam asked if it would help to send a signed letter from our Board to the Select Board for their March 18th meeting. Gerri recommended positioning it as a **Letter of Endorsement** and getting it signed by residents in Town not just the Board. Presenting the Select Board with a huge pile of signatures would have greater impact. Pete suggested the letter might include an argument against an additional part-time staffer, although they can argue that two positions give more stability and backup, especially if one leaves. Pam will create a first draft of this letter for the Board's review and input. Members felt it should be "short and sweet", to the point. Sue offered to prepare a Fact Sheet to have on hand when getting residents' signatures. Gerri suggested that once the letter is final Board members get as many signatures as possible by the end of February and give these signed letters to Sue by February 24th.

On that note, Pete thanked everyone for their participation and **adjourned the meeting at 11:30am.**