

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Harwich Council on Aging Board of Directors**  
**Wednesday, November 3, 2021, 10 AM**  
**Harwich Community Center**  
**100 Oak Street**  
**Harwich, MA 02645**  
**Channel 18 Studio**

**Meeting Attendance:**

Board Members: Vice Chair Carol Thayer, Angelina Raneo Chilaka, Joanne Lepore, Ralph Smith, Justin White

**COA Staff:** Director Emily Mitchell

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Carol Thayer at 10 AM.

II. Approval of Minutes

Ralph Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 8, 2021 Council on Aging Board of Directors meeting. The motion was seconded by Joanne Lepore. Unanimous vote by members present to approve the minutes.

III. Public Comment: None

IV. Chair's Comments (Vice Chair Carol Thayer)

Carol Thayer thanked Emily and her staff for their hard work and the quality of the most recent newsletter. Carol also thanked Angelina Chilaka for her work preparing the monthly Board minutes.

Emily spoke to the updates from the Friends of the Harwich Council on Aging. The Friends have a new Board member, Jim Knickman, who has been elected as Vice President. The Friends are planning a retreat in the coming weeks, date due be determined, to get feedback from community members about needs impacting seniors in Harwich with the goal to identify a fundable project to help address those needs. The Friends intend to invite members on the COA Board to participate; Emily told members to be on the lookout for retreat details and invitations. The Friends minibus is also soon to be back up and running, as soon as November, after coming off the road due to COVID.

V. Director's Report (E. Mitchell)

- A. Overview of current and anticipated operations – there has been no change to the scale of operations since the last COA Board meeting. Emily reported that COA operations are largely running at their pre-COVID scope and scale, but with enhanced precautions in

place including capacity restrictions, preregistration requirements, program check in policies, and contact tracing protocols. For very popular programs, like Senior Fit, there are well defined and documented sign up policies to ensure equitable access. Other new programs are coming on board in the coming months including two new fitness classes.

Holiday programs – the COA is planning a variety of holiday programs. The COA is partnering with the Friends of the Harwich COA for a Veteran’s Luncheon. The meal has a 70 meal capacity and will be entirely grab & go. Ralph asked whether there will be delivery support for these meals. Emily responded that she would check with the Friends and report back.

The COA is also planning Thanksgiving (November 18<sup>th</sup>) and winter holiday (December 16<sup>th</sup>) meals – both will have a capacity of 70 meals and include a combination of onsite dining (40 person capacity), grab & go, and delivery options. The COA is looking for volunteer support to deliver meals.

The COA is working with Lower Cape Outreach Council to distribute turkeys and food boxes to local seniors for Thanksgiving. Angelina asked if Brax Landing was doing their Thanksgiving meal. Emily replied that she had checked with Brax several weeks earlier and they were still not sure.

Emily reported that she did not think Home Instead would be organizing the “Be a Santa to a Senior” program this year. In lieu, COA staff will be running a holiday gift donation drive to distribute to local seniors without local family or other supports. Last year, the COA collected and distributed presents to approximately 150 seniors; the department will not be able to replicate that size while running the current scale of onsite programs. The COA will be looking for gifts – Emily specified that the best gifts are neutral and can be given to anyone. Gift cards are helpful too, especially to local stores, with a maximum amount of \$50 with lower values welcome.

Ralph shared that he noticed that onsite lunches have not been very well attended. Emily responded that she thinks this is related to comfort with congregate dining. The department has put precautions in place, but there has still been hesitation. The grab and go option has been very popular. The majority of grab and go participants pick up their own meals; a very small quantity are delivered by volunteers. Some participants have friends, neighbors, or family members pick up on their behalf.

**B. October Nor’easter departmental impact and response**

The week prior to the meeting, the Town was impacted by a Nor’easter. Town buildings, including the COA, were closed on Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The building reopened on generator power on Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, but the generator went out mid-day and the building had to close to the public due to loss of heat and lights. Remaining programs for the day had to be canceled. The building reopened with power fully restored on Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>.

The Department followed the COA Emergency Policy. Staff contacted residents on the emergency client list. The Town Nurse and Social Services Coordinator did home visits for residents on that list who they were unable to reach by phone.

After the immediate impact of the storm, the COA is working to assist with residents who have SNAP benefits to replace any food lost as a result of the storm.

Carol asked whether the Community Center was a designated emergency shelter. Justin is going to check to see where the Town's designated shelter is located.

#### C. COA Newsletter procurement update

The COA had initially intended to contract for newsletter printing and mailing services for both FY 22 and 23 under one agreement. In May 2021, Emily had begun the process of soliciting quotes for the project within the parameters of M.G.L. c. 30B. She received several quotes. She identified the vendor submitting the lowest quote and was in the process of awarding that vendor the contract for the project. During that process, the vendor let the Town know that they would be discontinuing their business. Emily had to then solicit new quotes.

Because of the mid-year change, and in anticipation of a significant price increase, Emily revised the project specifications to include only the remainder of FY 22. She began soliciting new quotes for the revised project specifications. At the initial deadline, she had received no quotes. She extended the deadline to October 29<sup>th</sup> and still had not received any quotes. Because businesses may have been impacted by Nor'easter related power outages, Emily extended the deadline one more time to November 9<sup>th</sup>. Emily is hopeful that she will receive a viable quote. If not, she will have to work with the Town's procurement team to come up with a workable solution to get the newsletter printed.

Ralph asked whether the Tech School had printed the COA newsletter in the past. Emily responded that she didn't believe the Tech had worked on the newsletter project, but had done smaller scale projects. The newsletter is challenging both because of the size of the project as well as their very quick printing turnaround time. The turnaround time is important as it gives the department the maximum amount of time to plan and develop programs. Emily may explore the option again in the future if no other vendors quote on the project.

Ralph also asked if the size of the newsletter impacted whether vendors were willing to quote on the project. Emily replied that she had not heard that feedback from vendors. It would likely impact the cost of the project. Emily reported that when she's spoken with vendors in the past, the two barriers she's heard were the project turnaround time as well as the Town's 30 day payment policy which applies to all purchased goods and services townwide.

#### D. Staffing Updates

The Program Specialist 1 position, which has been vacant for about a year and a half, has been posted both internally and externally. They are available in local papers and on the Town website. Emily intends to post on web-based job search boards to maximize the applicant pool.

#### E. Volunteer needs, recruitment, and training

The COA is looking for volunteer support for holiday programs as mentioned earlier in the meeting. For day-to-day volunteer support, the COA is looking for volunteers to assist with lunch check in. The commitment is about 60-75 minutes per shift.

Ralph asked whether people were paying for lunches. Emily responded that most people are paying. The department has specifically exempted anyone receiving benefits like SNAP or Fuel Assistance from paying for lunches.

#### F. Revolving Funds

The Board of Selectmen had requested updates from all departments that operate Revolving Funds. The COA operates a Revolving Fund in support of programming. Revenue is largely in the form of class fees. Expenditures largely take the form of paying class instructors. Expenditures occasionally include the purchase of program related equipment. Emily presented the COA Revolving Fund report to the Board of Selectmen on October 25<sup>th</sup>. At that Selectmen's meeting, there was an overarching expression among members of the need for oversight of these funds. Comments specifically about the COA Fund were generally supportive. The report shared with the Selectmen is included in the COA Board packet for this meeting.

#### G. COA Board Chair Richard Waystack has an ongoing caretaking commitment that will consistently conflict with COA Board meetings traditionally scheduled on the first Wednesday of the month. Emily gauged the interest of other Board members in switching the regular COA Board meeting dates. It was the consensus of members present that a switch in meeting dates would work.

### VI. Old Business

Ralph asked whether the COA Board was full. Emily replied that Justin is still an alternate member. The full member vacancy previously filled by Lee Culver is still vacant. Richard mentioned this vacancy at a recent meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Interested residents, including Justin, should fill out the general committee vacancy form in the Administration Office if interested in becoming a full member.

### VII. New Business: None

## VIII. Member Comments

- A. Ralph gave an update on the Facilities Committee. The Committee has resumed meetings following a pause during COVID.
- B. Carol brought up the vacancy in the appointment to the Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands Board. Joanne Lepore was the previous appointment to that Board. The appointment has been vacant for several months. Emily will add this topic to the next COA Board agenda.
- C. Ralph inquired about a money management program that used to run through the COA. Emily reported that Elder Services operates a Money Management service, but that COAs largely stay away from the area for liability reasons. COAs refer to Elder Services for those types of services.
- D. Carol asked about the Volunteer Medical Driver program. Emily replied that Social Services Coordinator Julie Witas has been spearheading the effort to resume the program. There has been a lot of interest from people who had volunteered as lunch delivery drivers to transition to this volunteer role, as well as from volunteers who served in this role pre-COVID. The final step, DPW vehicle inspections, were impacted by the Nor'easter. They have been rescheduled. After that is complete, the program can begin – Emily expects it to be running by end of November.

## IX. Adjournment

Ralph Smith made the motion to adjourn at 10:39 AM. The motion was seconded by Joanne Lepore. Unanimous vote by members present to adjourn.