

Meeting Minutes

Harwich Council on Aging Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 11 AM

Remote Participation Only

Meeting Attendance:

Board Members: Chair Richard Waystack, Carol Thayer, Joanne Lepore, James Mangan, Angelina Raneo Chilaka, and Lieutenant Justin White (alternate)

COA Staff Member: Director Emily Mitchell

I. Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Richard Waystack at 11 AM

II. Approval of Minutes

Carol Thayer made the motion to approve the minutes from the September 2, 2020 COA Board of Directors meeting. The motion was seconded by Joanne Lepore. Unanimous vote to approve.

III. Public Comments: None

IV. Chair's Comments (R. Waystack)

- Richard emphasize the importance of keeping communication open and ongoing within the community through the pandemic. Particularly important to reach out to our older adult neighbors and community members.
- Expressed thanks to all COA staff, volunteers, and Board members for their work.

V. Director's Report (E. Mitchell)

A. Overview of COA COVID-19 Operations – all operations have been overhauled to maintain safety and prioritize essential needs (meals, grocery/pharmacy support, transportation)

1. Community Lunch Distribution – Distributing between 60-70 meals per day and currently serving 85 unique individuals. Special thanks to Town Chef, Linda St. Pierre and to the volunteers delivering meals.
2. Transportation –Transportation on the van is provided to grocery stores, pharmacies, the Post Office, town buildings, and to essential medical appointments. Enhanced safety/sanitation protocols are in place and a maximum of two riders per trip are currently authorized. The COA van will be providing transportation to Town Hall for early voting and for seniors to drop off completed absentee ballots. The van will not provide transportation for voting on Election Day (November 3, 2020) due to capacity and sanitation restrictions.
3. Resumption of limited 1:1 onsite appointments with staff and professionals (elder law attorneys, podiatry nurses, dental hygienists, etc.)

4. Emily continues to explore options for resuming small group programming, but current guidance recommends against resuming senior focused group programming at this time.
 5. Outreach services are expanding. This is a very busy time of year for Fuel Assistance, other benefits applications, and other professional supports.
 6. Julie Witas, Social Services Coordinator, is still serving the essential functions of her current and former roles, as the Program Specialist 1 position remains vacant. She is finding ways to continue oversight of core programs while also meeting outreach needs, but this limits the department's ability to resume additional programs and services even in a modified format.
- B. Anticipated future programming – the department is not planning to resume additional programming in its traditional format due to health and safety concerns. They continue to explore options for alternative or remote programming, but it is beyond the capacity of current staff and resource levels.
- C. COA Staffing Updates – the Program Specialist 1 position remains vacant. Emily is having ongoing conversations with the Interim Town Administrator to move forward in addressing this vacancy.
- D. COA Volunteer needs, recruitment, and training
1. The COA is still in need of additional volunteer support, particular for reception area coverage and lunch delivery. The recruitment video discussed at the September COA Board meeting is on hold in light of limited staff resources and the need to prioritize other essential programs and tasks.
 2. Richard suggested advertising this need in the newsletter, on Channel 18, and for Board members to share within their own networks.
- E. Updates re FY 21 COA Newsletter procurement process and contract
1. The initial bid process revealed an issue with how postage has been paid. In past years, the COA has paid the non-profit postage rate. New information indicates that the COA is not eligible to pay non-profit rate. This created two problems – the project needs to be rebid and the department does not have sufficient funds to pay the standard postage rate, as they planned to pay the non-profit rate during the FY 21 budget process.
 2. The September/October edition never went to print. It was put on the website, shared to social media, and made available by mail (printed and mailed from the COA) to anyone who requested a copy. Emily anticipates the procurement and payment processes will be resolved in time to print the November/December edition.
 3. Carol Thayer suggested that Emily request a reserve fund transfer from the Finance Committee if needed
 4. Emily plans to seek support from the Friends of the Harwich Council on Aging to cover the cost difference. Richard reiterated that plan.

- F. FY 21 COA Budget Update following Annual Town Meeting on 9/26/2020 – the FY 21 Town operating budget, including additional funds in support of the expanded COA lunch program and additional van driver hours to support medical appointments, was approved as part of this budget.
 - G. New Title IIIB Project Grant – The COA was awarded a grant for \$1,250 for a creative outreach project. The COA will be creating booklets that capture Harwich seniors’ experiences living through the pandemic. Seniors will contribute stories, poems, recipes, photographs, or anything else that describes their experiences. Content will be compiled into a booklet, printed, and distributed to seniors and public venues. Details will be shared in the November/December newsletter and through other media to encourage broad participation.
- VI. Old Business
- A. Volunteer Recognition Event – Options to recognize planned Volunteers of the Year – the COA had planned a Volunteer Recognition Luncheon for March 2020 which was canceled due to COVID. With no options to hold a comparable event in the near future, Emily raised the idea of finding an alternate way to recognize the two planned Volunteer of the Year award recipients. Richard suggested planning time at the next Board meeting to invite and recognize these two recipients. All Board members agreed that was a good idea. Emily will contact them in advance of the next meeting to invite them and express the department’s and Board’s gratitude. A special thank you to all the volunteers who support the COA and seniors in our community!
- VII. New Business
- A. Update from Elder Services Board Liaison (*J. Lepore*)
Elder Services held their September meeting remotely on September 22, 2020. Elder Services members discussed the contactless delivery of Meals on Wheels. The number of seniors needing this service has gone up significantly. Meal delivery also provides a safety check, as drivers still see the recipient even though they do not come into direct contact. Next meeting: October 28, 2020
- VIII. Member Comments
- All members thanked Emily, the full COA staff, and the volunteers for the work they are doing, particularly during this difficult time
- Richard reiterated the need for everyone to reach out to their neighbors and community. He recommended the concept of “adopt a neighbor” – continue to check in on each other, offer to share resources, provide that connection and continuity.
- IX. Adjournment
- Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 PM by Joanne Lepore. Seconded by Carol Thayer. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 4, 2020, 10 AM, by remote participation only.