

COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD MEETING

DATE: January 10, 2021—1:30 pm

Virtual Meeting via ZOOM Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order
Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law

Board members present: Dilla Tingley (Chair), Laura Crosby (Vice-Chair), Dan Boynton (Recorder), Donna Rizzo (Trip Committee), Sally Kindleberger (provides humor at the meetings and volunteers for difficult tasks), Don Milan (SHINE services), Florence Montgomery (Diversity Initiative), Jane O'Rourke, Terry Perlmutter, Wendy Kusik (Liaison to Minuteman Senior Services), and Hope White.

Staff: Abigail Butt, COA Director; Amy Gagne, Assistant Director

Welcome and Introductions

Abigail individually polled members of the board and each affirmed their presence.

Approval of minutes: Dilla made a motion that the LCOA minutes of December 8th, 2020 be approved, and Sally pointed out that one word needed to be changed to "Metco". Dan said he would make that correction, all board members present voted unanimously to approve these corrected minutes.

Liaison Reports:

Report on recent trips and trips planned for the future – Donna Rizzo

Abigail mentioned that when we are able to schedule in-person trips again we would be invited to visit the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum. Laura added that after everything opens up and we can do things in person, it would be really great to be able to continue Lincoln Academy and these kinds of presentations online. Abigail said that she was reaching out to Jim Cunningham to see if he could help us with getting the video equipment we needed to accomplish this.

Report on Minuteman Senior Services board meeting – Wendy Kusik

At our last board meeting, one of the things we talked about is that some of our volunteers have been contacting donors and thanking them for giving money to Minuteman. This encourages them to give again. Wendy has volunteered to make some calls. Minuteman is also petitioning the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs for more funding for wages.

Report on SHINE counselors meeting and update on SHINE services – Don Milan

Rhonda Swain and Craig Donaldson are on board and have handled cases on an equal basis when referrals come in. Don said, "In the future, I'm going to be handling mostly past clients who contact me directly. I've been doing this for 15 years and it's time that some other people stepped in and they're doing so." Dilla said, "We're delighted that you have that help. It's a big job."

Report on Diversity Initiative – Florence Montgomery

Florence reported that the Lincoln Library is continuing with their second round of **Reading for Racial Justice** using the book *Me and White Supremacy*.

Florence also recommended *The Cooking Gene* by Michael W. Twitty. Florence described how Twitty approached his history of Southern Cooking, which is, of course, mixed up with slavery and that whole painful history. In the first chapter, Twitty compared it to the idea of taking broken vessels and putting them together with lacquer and then going over the cracks with gold. All of our lives can be like that, which are broken into pieces at one time or another. Florence said that her sister sent her a really beautiful video that takes less than 10 minutes, so she will send Amy that link. All you have to do is click on it.

Hope made an announcement (in a call from her car) that in reference to Martin Luther King Day, the Metco Coordinating Committee is having an online event on Friday, January 13th. It's the viewing of the movie *Selma*.

Announcements/Director's Report – Abigail Butt

Fuel Assistance: Last year we served 88 separate individuals for fuel assistance. This is a benefit that helps anyone who meets the income threshold get discounts on their energy bills. So even if heat is included in your rent, you're still paying for heat. This is for homeowners and renters. It covers Oil, Gas, Electricity and even wood heat. Each application requires a couple of hours or more due to the complexity and number of documents required. Right now, we're not seeing clients at all in person. We closed for in person services on Friday, unless it's an absolute emergency.

Sand Buckets: This is the third year that the Lincoln Girl Scouts have helped us with sand buckets for seniors. Last year it was 14 buckets and now the Girl Scouts have at least 20 households that they contact and deliver sand and salt.

Lincoln Rental Assistance Program: We are delighted to announce that First Parish Church in Lincoln has donated more than \$10,000 to cover the annual certification required of all LRAP recipients. Metrowest has agreed to take on this paperwork.

Holiday Gift Bags: This year 43 individuals from 34 households received gift bags full of basic necessities, such as postage stamps, soap, socks, and deodorant, which cannot be purchased with SNAP benefits (a.k.a. food stamps). People are just overwhelmingly grateful. Abigail has been getting thank you cards and emails and in particular people thanked her for not just the basic necessities, but the little extra things like fuzzy socks and Toblerone.

Medical Equipment Loans: Our medical equipment closet has been very busy. That's one of the biggest ways we've still been interacting with the community is by receiving and giving out donations of equipment.

Newsletter: Amy has crunched the numbers and by getting rid of collating and sending it out flat we're now saving \$41 per month on the mailing.

Mental Health: The need for mental health services within the Council on Aging is just going up, up, up. People are really anxious. They're fearful of being sick with COVID-19, and they know the vaccine is coming, but they don't know when they can get it. We are trying to combat the anxiety, a couple of ways, one of which is we've had a conversation with Claire Gerstein, who is our clinical social worker, and she is going to start a third support meeting. Then, in all three meetings, she is going to help people with the information that the Council on Aging has about the COVID vaccine.

Jane asked, "Is there an umbrella Council on Aging for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?" Abigail answered, "It's called the Massachusetts Council on Aging and they aren't giving us information either. Right before I was on the zoom meeting with all of you, I was on a call with them. Council on Aging and Group Home staff weren't assigned a priority level for getting the vaccine. We only got the email yesterday that we were included in Phase 1, but they haven't told us how to get the vaccine."

Laura asked, "Is it the Massachusetts Department of Health that's responsible for rolling out the vaccine?" Abigail confirmed that was correct and that the Town website had a COVID page which contained the latest information. Sally said, "Anybody can sign up for that page and I found it very helpful to know how many new cases are coming in. I thought that the way the Council on Aging did the senior flu shot was amazingly great up at Lincoln north. It seemed to go swimmingly, and it seemed to go quickly. Couldn't something like that work for COVID?" Abigail answered that it can't be a drive through because the vaccine is so new. It's probably going to be indoors, but all of this has to be figured out very quickly. Amy said if anyone has an opportunity to obtain the vaccine at another site, they should take advantage of this immediately, rather than wait for the COA program.

Our January **podiatry clinic** has been cancelled due to the increase COVID infection rates, we are looking to reschedule it and do a double month of clinics potentially in March.

Bemis Reopening Status: Waltham Pest Control came by at the end of last week, and they are very happy with the repairs that have been done to the interior and the exterior of the building. We don't believe any new rodents are getting in. We aren't finding any more droppings. Bait traps on the outside of the building are being licked clean but no new rodents are inside the building. Abigail said, "We're just waiting for the ones that are living here to, you know, go to the other side." Waltham Pest Control predicts that the building will be vermin free in another six weeks.

Cyrus Dallin Art Museum: Amy said we had great feedback from yesterday's tour on zoom of the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum and the collaboration within the town and thanks to Valerie Fox. The publicity was very well received, and we had 80 plus people that had gone on the zoom tour yesterday. So, we were happy about that.

Amy said we're having some other special Zoom events coming up for February that are noteworthy. On February 1st Wanda Paik is going to present a Classical Piano Music Recital, which we're very excited about. The Green Choice Energy has a new program that they're promoting for March. So, they asked to fit us in to fit them in on February 8th. And then on February 22, we have a new author, Ruth Mendelson, who's a Lincoln resident. She's written a book that is entitled *The Water Tree Way*. You can find information at the website: thewatertreeway.com.

Also, on February 16 we are going to offer an in-person drive through event for ice cream pickup that will happen across the street from Bemis Hall, just like we did the shredding event in the fall. It's going to be offered to grandparents and seniors and anyone who wants to pick up extra cups for grandchildren are welcome. Check the flyer that will be posted for scheduling details. February 17, Noon, Special Town Wide event with Rev. Liz Walker (generously sponsored by Friends of LCOA, and Friends of Lincoln Public Library)

Old Business

Status update of new bench: Laura Crosby

Laura said, "I was very fortunate to be able to be with the friends today on their call and without any hesitation THE FRIENDS SAID THAT IS A WONDERFUL IDEA THEY'RE ALL FOR IT and they agreed to pay for the bench." Laura was invited to attend the Friends of LCOA board meeting and reported that she was very impressed with their generosity.

Name Change: Don said in the past number of years, we have discussed the topic of the change of name of the Council on Aging. We have obviously greatly expanded the purview of the COA in all areas of social work. I just wonder what, if anything, is being considered regarding a more appropriate name. Abigail answered it had been planned for town meeting last spring. However, because of COVID they had to change the schedule of town meeting and only absolutely essential things were going to be raised and voted on. Now town meeting has been pushed back, I believe, six weeks so that they again can potentially do it in an outdoor setting. They are going to take up other non-essential items, so the Council on Aging name change is back on as the **Council on Aging and Social Services**. Dilla said, “And I believe the Select board is also changing its name to not be selectman.”

Status update of new community center: Abigail said that she had “a really great conversation” with Tim Higgins, in which he wanted me to let you all know that the new community center is something that he wants to build before he retires. However, Abigail recommends that we not lobby for funding while the school is being built and the pandemic is still here. He knows we're all committed, and he said that what we should be thinking about is shovels in the ground in about four years. Sally said, “I’d just like it to be before I die so the shovel in the ground isn’t digging my grave.”

Report on status of regional COA comparison – Sally Kindleberger

Sally has been creating a spreadsheet showing data describing the paid COA staff from 14 towns in the MetroWest area. The challenge is to compare all the different paid staff when each town has different titles, and these paid staff perform different roles. As Sally said, “It’s like comparing oranges to apples.” The purpose of this analysis is to determine if the Lincoln COA salary budget is underfunded in comparison to other towns.

Board members discussed specific details of the staffing situation in various towns and concluded that the Lincoln COA had neither the best staffing nor the worst staffing ratios. A critical factor is measuring the units of service that the various clinicians provide.

Adjournment: Dilla made a motion to adjourn, and all board members voted unanimously to end the meeting.