

## **COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD MEETING**

DATE: April 13, 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 and Hope White (Diversity Initiative), Jane O'Rourke and Terry Perlmutter.

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

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Dilla called the meeting to order. Dilla individually polled members of the board and each affirmed their presence.

**Approval of minutes:** Dilla made a motion that the LCOA minutes of March 9th, 2021 be approved, and all board members present voted unanimously to approve these minutes.

### **Liaison Reports:**

**Report on recent trips and trips planned for the future** – Donna Rizzo  
Donna said, "nothing new, we're still on hold."

**Report on Minuteman Senior Services board meeting** – Wendy Kusik  
Wendy reported that Minute Man has set up a friendly connections pilot program to address the social isolation due to the pandemic. The volunteers are going to meet with each consumer both in person and telephonically one to two hours per week or every other week to maintain a social connection and take care of light errands.

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

Don said that all the Minutemen counselors are engaged in their annual re-certification process. So far during the pandemic, we've been doing everything online by Zoom or facetime or telephone. However, Abigail has arranged for Don, Rhonda and Craig to have in-person appointments if that is needed at the COA building on a scheduled basis.

**Report on Diversity Initiative** – Florence Montgomery/Hope White

Florence reported that the Library has started another series of virtual meetings, Reading for Racial Justice. She showed the first two books, *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander and *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning* by Cathy Park Hong. Both are available from the library in hard copy and electronic forms. The COA Collection already includes materials on Passover, Easter, Ramadan, Earth Day, and April Fool's Day. April is National Poetry month. The poets mentioned were Mary Oliver, Amanda Gorman, Richard Blanco, Naomi Shihab Nye, and two recent poet Laureates of the U.S. One is Tracy K. Smith, an African

American who has published a biography as well as several books of poetry; another recent Laureate is Joy Harjo, a native American by birth, a musician and poet. The COA will have something from Joy's book, *An American Sunrise*. Because there is so much death around us due to the pandemic, Florence presented a children's book, *Annie and the Old One*, a story about a Navajo child who learns to accept the coming end of her grandmother's life and begin her own 'next stage'. Florence related this to her own grandmother and the poem that was found in her Japanese Bible after her death. That poem expressed the same theme as the Navajo story.

Florence also mentioned the anti-Asian attacks which are receiving some publicity currently. She chronicled historical events against Asians and suggested that a broader historical perspective which included injustices against all groups was needed. She also raised her objection to the term 'underprivileged' which a town official had used. She thought it was in the context of making Lincoln less 'white'.

Dilla asked Hope if she had things to add to this presentation on diversity. Hope responded that she wanted to mention that last week she was interviewed by the Lincoln Squirrel regarding what happened during our meeting that was zoom bombed. Hope said the focus of the interview was on what should people do when they witness a situation where someone is being racially attacked. Should they be silent, or should they interact? "I really made it clear that a lot of people during the time in the meeting did not know what was happening." In the interview, we just talked about racism in general and talked about my experience as a Black woman living in Lincoln.

Hope added that the African American community has really been following the Derek Chauvin trial. Something that was so blatant in your face is being twisted to show that it wasn't murder. "I really haven't been able to watch it on TV lately because it's just such a real travesty of justice. You see it over and over and you have proof and you have witnesses and still you know people don't believe certain things are true. In the last week, two unarmed black men were killed by police. It does not stop. As a Black mom who has a Black son who's taller than me now, he can be threatening to some people. To see and hear of these things happening every day, it is brutal. I just pray."

### **Report on WIDE training – Jane O'Rourke**

Jane invited other board members who had attended the WIDE training to assist with this board presentation because she "had lost her very copious notes." There were a few things that we read and watched before the training and one of them was segregated by design. I highly recommend it to all of you and to anybody you know, in love, because it really talks about the Institutional Racism that has been propagated by our government and in the most insidious way through education and that 40 years

later schools are now more segregated than they've ever been. Which is just an amazingly painful thing to think about.

There was another video about a group representing all the different ethnicities led by an Asian psychologist. In the group there were two Caucasian men, one of whom was a gay man who self-identified as a racist, even though he didn't want to be, but then there was another Caucasian man who said he wasn't a racist and he was of course the most obvious racist in the group.

Board Members from the COA and the Friends of the COA who had attended the WIDE training were supposed to get together and have a discussion before the next meeting. Sally asked whether this get-together had been scheduled. Abigail responded that the task was on her notepad and it would be scheduled tomorrow. Sally said, "I have found this this whole training to be very beneficial and very good and I just wish the whole town was taking part in it". Florence added, I think it's good to talk about this kind of thing any place." Dilla pointed out that over 100 people were participating in the WIDE training so there was significant Town Committee representation.

The next session on April 29 is titled *Anti-Racism in Theory and Practice*: understanding the language and systems and structures that are necessary to dismantle the root causes.

### **Announcements/Director's Report – Abigail Butt**

- **Annual Town Report:** Abigail included the annual town report in her email to board members. She tried to focus the report on the COA's response to the pandemic and how we managed to keep things going and moving in light of major challenges.
- **Demographics:** The zip code 01773 does not include Hanscom, so it's possible using the American Community survey, to exclude Hanscom from the rest of Lincoln in measuring demographics. Lincoln has a total population of 4844, not including Hanscom, and a senior population of about 1776 according to the American Community survey. So, the total town population of seniors age 60 plus is over a third of the population. We're overwhelmed because we're trying to serve one third of the population, all the time in terms of transportation, outreach, nutrition, exercise activities, and then on top of that, the Council on Aging is also the location you go to for social services, regardless of age.
- **Interns:** Anna Fitz is a junior at Endicott College with a background in psychology and art therapy. She will be our art instructor throughout the summer. We have also begun the process of recruiting Kelly, a 28-year-old first year MSW student candidate at Salem State for the entire academic year. She previously worked in the development department at Boston Medical Center, and from that work in a hospital setting made the decision to go to social work school. Jane will provide her with an

hour and a half of clinical supervision per week, plus both Jane and Abby will be preparing the midterm and final evaluation.

- **Tax Aid volunteers:** A huge thank you to our tax aid volunteers (Greg Stathis, Leslie Turek, and Packy Lawler) for some very creative problem solving that let us run the tax aid program this year.
- **Zoom bombing incident:** Abigail also wanted to comment on the zoom bombing incident at February's COA board meeting. She said the Select Board was very positive about how the Council on Aging board handled this traumatic event. However, after the zoom bombers left the meeting, board members had sat in stunned silence, confused by what had just happened. Hope was aware that she was being abused because she could read the text messages, but others were unsure of this. It is unfortunate that nobody spoke about this abuse, because you need to say something because if you don't, the person who has had to take the abuse feels very isolated and lonely.
- **Noteworthy Programming:**
  1. In-person exercise starting up at Pierce House tent beginning end of April/beginning of May:
    - Tuesdays and Thursdays: Stretch and Flex and Active Aging, Terri Zaborowski.
    - Fridays, SAIL Balance class, Derry Tanner
    - Wednesdays, Line Dancing, Katrina Rotondi
  2. Legal Clinics have returned and offered in person with Attorney Sasha Golden once a month during April, May and June.
  3. SHINE Office hours will be held on Wednesdays.

#### **Virtual programming**

- Mondays, Chair Yoga will continue.

Many groups have voted to stay virtual at this time and we will offer outside space for groups with limited numbers as the weather gets warmer.

We are looking to integrate some activities to offer in-person and zoom combination. Michael Dolan (IT) will be involved in helping us with equipment for this project.

#### **Noteworthy April events:**

April 15<sup>th</sup> BC/BS webinar-Food for Thought: Superfoods to Boost Memory, Mood & Mental Functioning

April 20<sup>th</sup> Cyrus Dallin Museum webinar: Cyrus Dallin's Quest to Create Boston's Paul Revere Monument

**Bemis:** We've been working a lot with building maintenance, to make the building a safer place given the pandemic, so storm windows are being removed to create an opportunity for ventilation. However, Bemis Hall doesn't have screens. We are trying

to figure out ways to get screens into our windows, so that we can achieve cross ventilation to lower viral load. We're just going to do our best and work with what we have and bring activities back to Bemis, especially social service programs. Don asked where the SHINE counseling would take place in the building, and Abigail responded there's very little ventilation in the basement so it's going to be in the map room upstairs.

- At the same time, Abigail is developing some hybrid programming capabilities. Town hall is ordering us some iPads and the equipment that we need so that we can conduct programming via zoom as well.

## **Old Business**

### **Report on and discussion of potential new board member.**

In the past we had a Council on Aging board member from Lincoln Woods because we do so much with the Lincoln Woods community. We are using their space for meetings and counseling sessions, but also a lot of people from Lincoln Woods are seniors and use our services. The previous board member who used to live Lincoln Woods was Cathy Ramon, so Abigail reached out to Cathy and she agree to serve as a board member once again. Abigail said, "Just to remind you, she has been an avid volunteer for a long time, and she is a volunteer link driver, so she knows a lot of our clients.

Laura responded, "sounds like a perfect candidate." Sally said, "let's go for it." Dan proposed a vote, "to endorse Cathy Ramon as a potential COA board member, subject to approval by the Board of Selectpersons". Sally seconded the motion. Board members votes unanimously in favor by roll call.

### **Status update of new bench: Laura Crosby**

Laura said the bench has been ordered and we bought a plaque to put on it and the plaque says, "In recognition of Dot Taylor COA board chair for her many years of COA service." The Friends of the COA have agreed pay for the bench, so when the bench arrives, Laura will write them a thank you note, on behalf of the Board. Laura said it's a very good quality bench and we are going to be putting it inside the front door at Bemis Hall. Eventually we will move it to the new Community Center.

### **Status update of new community center**

Abigail said, "I had a meeting with Tim Higgins last week and he reaffirmed that he is absolutely moving forward with the progress of on the Community Center. He said to let all of you know that in about a year we need to start working again on getting this done, and that we would not be redoing all the studies that we have already done three times." Dilla asked, "Do you think we'll be able to go back and use Marianne Thompson again?" Abigail responded, "She was fantastic, but the plans will need to be different now that we're in a post pandemic world. Things like corridor widths, things we never thought about before."

Sally said, "I hope we're all still alive by the time it gets built."

**Status update of COA name change**

Abigail said the status of the name change (Council on Aging and Human Services) is that it will be on the ballot at the annual town meeting, (May 15, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. - Hartwell Parking Lot.) so everyone will please need to go and vote.

**Adjournment:** Dilla made a motion to adjourn, Don seconded the motion and all board members voted unanimously by raised hands to end the meeting.

NEXT MEETING: May 11, 2021

ARTICLE XV Council on Aging and Human Services There shall be established a Council on Aging and Human Services for the purpose of coordinating and carrying out programs designed to meet the needs of older as well as younger citizens, pursuant to the provisions of MGL, Chapter 40, Section 8B. The Council shall consist of not less than nine (9) nor more than twelve (12) residents of this Town to be appointed by the Selectmen. Terms shall not exceed three (3) years and shall be staggered so that no more than four appointments shall be made in any calendar year, except the first year. Officers of the Council shall be elected by the Council from its membership.