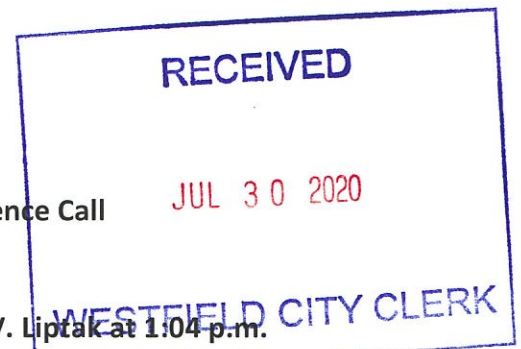


City of Westfield  
Council On Aging  
Monthly Board Meeting ~ Zoom conference Call  
July 13, 2020



I. **The meeting was called to order by the Chair, James V. Liptak at 1:04 p.m.**  
Board Members Present: Elizabeth Boucher, KerryAnn Kielbasa, James Liptak, Eileen Rockwal, Alan Sudentas, and Barbara Taylor. Also present was Tina Gorman, Executive Director, Westfield Council On Aging.

There were no guests. This COA meeting was recorded as it is a legal meeting available to the public and was broadcast on Cable Channel 15. Mr. Peter Cowles recorded the meeting.

II. **Approval of Minutes of May 11, 2020 meeting:**

Upon Motion duly made by KerryAnn Kielbasa and seconded by Eileen Rockwal, it was unanimously VOTED: To approve the Minutes of the May 11, 2020 Meeting.

III. **Public Participation: None**

IV. **Items for Discussion / Information**

A. **Highland Valley Elder Services (HVES):**

Mr. Liptak provided the following HVES Report: HVES is still providing all services. They have issued PPE's to all staff. Their Human Resources Department has advised that there are two vacancies: Coordinator and Accounting Clerk. They have a new telephone system which costs less but provides better service. Under the Cares Act, HVES has competitive \$3,500 Grants to offer Councils On Aging. The Ombudsman advised that volunteers cannot enter Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) to let residents know they are available to field grievances and concerns. Home delivered meals are increasing and are in excess of 200 per day. This is due to Seniors not being able to get out of their homes due to COVID. The 'alternate meal plan' (offering meal recipients a choice of two meals) is on hold. Barbara Taylor asked if Westfield's COA got one of the Cares Act grants. Tina Gorman advised she applied for and will receive the \$3,500 grant. The reimbursement grant will be spent on a handheld MySeniorCenter scanner, a laptop computer for the COA staff, and almost \$900 for takeout containers for the curbside meal program.

B. **Update: Current COA Services and Programs**

We continue to expand our Channel 15 fitness programming. We're getting positive feedback from the many seniors who are participating in the comfort of their homes. We have a new Chair Yoga class and we added a Zumba Gold class in July.

Beginning this month, during the monthly Brown Bag food distribution program, participants will remain in their cars. A COA staff member will put the box or bag of groceries directly onto the back seat or in the trunk. Gloves and hand sanitizer will be used. Participants had been required to get out of the vehicle and retrieve the box or bag off a table in the parking lot. However, that method created a long wait line and then interfered with our curbside lunches. Masks are required by all involved.

We are seeing a significant uptick in requests for durable medical equipment. Scheduled surgeries, especially hip and knee replacements, that were put on hold as result of COVID-19 have been rescheduled for this summer.

The COA staff is looking at expanded alternative programming, especially utilizing technology. Keeping in mind that we provide programs and services for older adults who range in age from 60 to 100+, that 40-year range includes those with abilities and disabilities of varying degrees and magnitudes. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Guidance from The Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Massachusetts Association of Councils On Aging can be overwhelming as we consider various scenarios with this very unique population.

The reality of the duration of the disruption of 'normalcy' is beginning to take a toll on some of our seniors, especially those who are prone to depression and those with any level of dementia. Our Outreach Coordinator, Joanne Ortegas, is providing more crisis intervention and the COA staff as a whole is doing more telephone reassurance. The process can be extremely time-consuming.

### **C. Considerations for Scaling Up Operations**

Mrs. Gorman told the COA Board that Senior Center Directors have been advised by MCOA to not use the term "re-opening." They feel people will be counting on services returning to normal as soon as possible. Instead, MCOA is advising COA Directors to use the term 'scaling up operations.' This may refer to services and programs being offered within the Senior Center building, by telephone, virtually, or outdoors. Westfield has been adding fitness, educational, and entertainment programming on cable Channel 15. Joyce Peregrin, Companion Program Coordinator, is working on a newly developed 'phone buddies' program. This would temporarily replace the friendly visits that volunteers have been conducting for years. The program will start with a limited number of both clients and volunteers. Volunteers will be trained regarding the specifics of their role. Any red flag issues will be referred to an appropriate COA staff member. Joyce is also planning a personal shopper program, but there will be no transportation provided to seniors to stores or appointments at this time. Volunteers will purchase basic groceries for these clients and leave them at the door.

### **D. Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program, FY20 and FY21**

After careful review of the FY20 tax work-off program, Mrs. Gorman advised the Board that because of the city-wide shut-down of schools and other City Departments, some of the tax work-off participants could not complete their hours. More than half of the participants completed all of the required hours prior to the COVID shutdown. Almost all of the other participants were on track to complete their hours before the June 30, 2020 deadline. Two participants had extenuating circumstances that were unrelated to the pandemic and worked very few hours. In discussion with Mayor Humason and Councilor Figy, all participants except two will receive the full \$500 tax credit for FY20.

Mrs. Gorman asked the Board for input regarding the FY21 Program. She reviewed a variety of considerations:

- First and foremost, older adults in Massachusetts should be following the Governor's "Safer at Home" guideline during the pandemic.
- Several City Department Heads will not accept tax work-off volunteers this year because of a space issue. In some cases, departments are staggering shifts in order to keep City employees physically distant from each other. It is not feasible to add another person to their office space.
- The vast majority of our tax work-off volunteers work in the VIPS program. Several who have come through the lunch line have confided that they would not feel safe in the schools this year and will not be applying to participate in the program. Based on our knowledge of the spread of COVID-19 and the comorbidities that most of our tax work-off volunteers have, that may be a wise decision.

Mrs. Gorman has considered utilizing the volunteers for other tasks, but for a variety of reasons, the COA staff doesn't think any of them would be feasible. EOE has been surveying COAs in cities and towns across the Commonwealth about their tax work-off program during the pandemic. Many are still up in the air.

All of the Board members agreed that there should be a one-year moratorium on Westfield's Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program. Mrs. Gorman will discuss the Board's recommendation with Mayor Humason and Councilor Figy.

#### **E. City and State Formula Grant Budgets, FY21**

On the City side, everything that Mrs. Gorman sent in her FY21 Budget was approved by the City Council. It was a bare-bones budget this year. Because the Center has been closed to the public since March, there was no need for many of the supplies that are used during regular operations. There is, however, a great increase in the number of 'to go' containers for the curbside lunch program.

State Formula Allocation: The amount that the State will be funding for each senior is not yet known. Mrs. Gorman hopes we will know in early September. She budgeted for \$10 per elder which is \$2 per elder less than FY20.

#### **V. Items for Action**

Completion of Signature of Authorization Form

This form is signed annually by the Council On Aging Board of Directors and gives permission for Mrs. Gorman to sign contracts and all transactions on behalf of the COA. Board members are being asked to contact Mrs. Gorman and advise when they can stop in at the Senior Center to sign the form. Mrs. Gorman requested that all Board members sign the form by July 24, 2020.

## VI. Director's Report

### Review of Programs

- *Brown Bag Program*
  - o Drive-through pick-up on the Wednesday after the second Tuesday of the month
  - o Although the traffic is smooth, the process is too lengthy because it is time consuming for participants to get out of the vehicles to retrieve their food box/bag from the table in the parking lot
  - o Beginning this month, staff will put the groceries in the backseat or trunk of the vehicle
  
- *Westfield Council On Aging Presents series*
  - o A new topic each month, hosted by Harry Rock
  - o Aired on Channel 15 on Tuesdays at 2:45 p.m.
  - o June topic: *Beating the Blues*
  - o Presenter: Tina Gorman (a 'how to' approach for dealing with mild or situational depression)
  
- *Mother's Day 'Parade of Hats' Curbside/Television Luncheon*
  - o Ham dinner; Entertainment at 1 p.m. on Channel 15: Noah Lis
  - o Each female received a handmade card
  - o Most got into the spirit by wearing a hat (even the men)
  - o 131 participants - Successful in every way
  
- *Volunteer Recognition Curbside Brunch*
  - o Invitations and Certificates of Appreciation were mailed to those who had done 30+ volunteer hours
  - o Entertainment at 1 p.m. on Channel 15: Ed Bentley (Ed donated his time and talents)
  - o 95 participants
  
- *Father's Day Doo-Wop Curbside Television Luncheon*
  - o Light lunch with large classic ice cream sundae for dessert
  - o Entertainment at 1 p.m. on Channel 15: The Keepers (Marion Dunk and Chip Arnold)
  - o 90 participants

### Upcoming Programs

- *Senior Center Refund Day*
  - o Friday, July 17 from 1 to 3 p.m.
  - o Drive through format
  - o Cash refunds for those in February/March pay-in-advance fitness classes
  - o Cash refunds for those who purchased tickets to the Friends of the Westfield Senior Center Jimmy Mazz fundraiser concert

- *Moolicious Curbside Ice Cream Splurge*
  - o George's meatloaf and Moolicious ice cream for dessert
  - o Joe Deedy will have the Moolicious ice cream truck on site
  - o Sold out at 150 in 35 minutes
  - o Event sponsor: Matt Garlo
  
- *July Fitness Programming on Channel 15*
  - o Male Call: Monday and Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.
  - o Moovin' and Groovin with Dr. G and Grace: Monday and Wednesday at 2 p.m.
  - o Zumba Gold: Tuesday and Thursday at 10:30 a.m.
  - o Chair Yoga: Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m.
  
- *July Educational Program: Westfield Council On Aging Presents series on Channel 15*
  - o *Nutrition and a Healthy Lifestyle*
  - o Presenter: Jennifer Giffune, RD and Nutritionist
  - o Tuesdays at 2:45 p.m.
  
- *Cooking Video: Chicken Francaise*
  - o Shared by the Southwick Council On Aging
  - o Link is in the *Voice of Experience* July newsletter

#### **Miscellaneous**

- *Pride Flag-Raising at City Hall*
  - o Friday, June 26, 2020
  - o Pride flag was flown for a week
  - o Event: Coordinated by Councilor Kristen Mello and Denny Akins
  - o COA Director was asked to be an 'Ambassador' at the event
    - Distributed masks and encouraged physical distancing
    - Judge Greaney raised the flag
    - Speakers: Mayor Humason, Senator Velis, two members of the LGBTQ+ community
    - Denny felt that the COA's 'Leap Out to Breakfast' event on February 29, just before the pandemic hit, paved the way for this historic flag-raising in Westfield

**VII. The Chair reminded the Board that our next meeting is scheduled to be held on Monday, August 10, 2020. Location TBD.**

At this time, Mr. Liptak announced that he wished to commend Mrs. Gorman and her staff on their ingenuity and flexibility in operating the Senior Center at this very difficult time. They are doing a tremendous job. Mrs. Taylor concurred. Mrs. Gorman said she will pass those sentiments on to the COA staff. Mrs. Gorman also stated at this time that Mr. William Brown has resigned his position on the Westfield Council on Aging Board due to health issues.

**VIII.** There being no further business to come before the Board, upon Motion Duly made by Barbara Taylor and seconded by Alan Sudentas, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 2:10 p.m.

List of Exhibits: Director's Report

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Elizabeth Boucher, Secretary