

**City of Westfield  
Minutes of the Council On Aging  
March 13, 2023**

I. The Meeting was called to order by Council On Aging Director, Tina Gorman at 12:35 p.m. as Mr. Liptak was absent and Vice Chair, Eileen Rockwal, had not yet arrived.

**Board Members Present:** Ed Ekmalian, Barbara Taylor, Elizabeth Boucher, and John Greaney. Also present were City Council Liaison, Ralph Figy and Tina Gorman, Executive Director of the Council On Aging. Eileen Rockwal joined the meeting at 12:55 p.m. Jim Liptak was absent.

**II. Approval of Minutes of February 13, 2023 Meeting:**

Upon a Motion duly made by Ed Ekmalian and seconded by Barbara Taylor, it was VOTED unanimously: To approve the Minutes of the February 13, 2023 meeting.

**III. Public Participation:**

No public participation.

**IV: Items for Discussion/Information:**

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

Mr. Liptak was absent from the meeting. Mr. Liptak will provide both the March and April HVES Report at the April 10 Council On Aging Board meeting.

**B. Second Floor Renovation Project, Update**

Mrs. Gorman reported that the preliminary paperwork for the project is completed. The ARPA money remaining in the City Account for the project is \$77,000.00. The total cost estimate from Cornerstone Construction is \$139,497.00. The Friends of the Westfield Senior Center, Inc. submitted a check in the amount of \$75,000.00 to the City of Westfield, with the stipulation that any money remaining in the account upon completion of the project will be returned to the Friends group. Construction is scheduled to begin the week of March 20. Tentatively, the project will be completed at the end of May.

**C. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Update**

Senior Benefits Coordinator, Lynn Hills, reported to the Board that during the pandemic, the Federal Government allocated emergency SNAP funds to all recipients. That extra COVID-related SNAP payment ended on March 2, 2023, resulting in a benefits reduction of \$95 or more per month. SNAP beneficiaries may be eligible to increase their normal SNAP benefits by informing the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) about: medical costs over \$35 per month for those 60 and older; housing costs (rent/mortgage) that have increased; and/or disabled adult care costs. Mrs. Hills also

explained SNAP's 'Healthy Eating' incentive program. Beneficiaries with \$40 on their SNAP card, may purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local participating farms, and the \$40 will automatically be added back onto their SNAP card. Beneficiaries can especially take advantage of this program once the Farmer's Market opens in Westfield in June. Mrs. Hills also discussed Westfield's Brown Bag monthly food distribution program. Applications are available at the Senior Center. The program is run through the Western Massachusetts Food Bank. Unfortunately, COA staff are seeing a decrease in the number of food items in the bag as well as a decrease in the number of protein-rich foods. There is an increase in canned fruits and vegetables. Mrs. Hills reminded Board members that the Fuel Assistance program will end on April 1, 2023.

#### **D. MassHealth, Update**

Mrs. Hills explained that as the formal emergency status of COVID 19 comes to an end, so too does automatic continuous MassHealth (Medicaid) coverage for those currently enrolled in the program. MassHealth members will soon need to renew their health coverage through an application process. Those who are currently enrolled in MassHealth should make sure MassHealth has their most up to date address, phone number, and email so they do not miss important information and notices from MassHealth. If MassHealth is not able to contact someone, their coverage may change or they may lose their coverage during the renewal period. Mrs. Hills also explained that those on MassHealth must report any household changes. These include turning 65, a new job, address, changes to income, or a change in disability status. Those who are applying to MassHealth for the first time, are referred to Walter Valentin at Baystate Noble Hospital for assistance with the application process.

#### **V. Items for Action: None**

#### **VI. Director's Report**

##### **Review of Programs**

- *Retire the Fire!*
  - o March 6 through March 10
  - o Focus this year on Senior Safety Checklist, *File of Life* distribution and completion/updates, as well as falls prevention
  - o Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Prevention Officer Ben Warren, is the featured guest on this month's *Westfield Council On Aging Presents*, hosted by Harry Rock.
  - o Series of five fire safety articles appeared on the front page of the Westfield News last week
  
- *Baystate Hearing Aid Service*
  - o Rescheduled one-week because of inclement weather Senior Center closure
  - o All appointment slots filled on March 7 and April 25
  - o Jeff Halls is a Board Certified Hearing Instrument Sciences Specialist
  - o Evaluation of each participant's needs on an individual basis including accurate hearing screening, in-the-canal earwax inspection, hearing aid cleaning, and free minor repairs including tubing replacements

- COA / WSU Partnership
  - o Students from Dr. Roti's Exercise Science *Organization and Administration* class are developing an at-home exercise program for older adults
  - o They are responsible for marketing the program with posters, flyers, and a table at the Senior Center
  - o They will also work with Pete Cowles to tape the program for airing on Channel 15 as part of the Senior Center fitness class lineup
  
- Totally FUN Fitness Class Taping
  - o In an effort to update the Channel 15 fitness class programming, Ken Stomski did a special taping of Carol Palmer's TFF class on March 9
  - o Sixteen participants signed up for this no-cost special Channel 15/YouTube class
  - o Ken is editing the tape, which will be aired next month
  
- *March WCPC Performance: Irish Cultural Center Trad Seisiun*
  - o An Irish music jam session held weekly
  - o Shown on cable Channel 15 throughout March on Wednesday afternoons, and Saturday evenings
  
- *AARP Tax Appointments*
  - o As of 3-10-23: 187 tax returns completed
  - o As of 3-10-23: 151 appointments scheduled for the remaining weeks in March and early April
  - o Total appointments to date: 338
  - o We had 21 people cancel appointments that had been scheduled for a total of 359 scheduled appointments

## Upcoming Programs

- *Viewpoints Low Vision Support Group*
  - o Resumes this month after the group's annual winter hiatus
  - o Facilitator/Coordinator: Agnes Fleming
  
- *Curbside Customer Loyalty Luncheon*
  - o March 22: Surprise menu
  - o Invitation extended to our curbside "regulars"
  - o To date 83 participants
  
- *Spring Fling Curbside Luncheon*
  - o Wednesday, April 26
  - o Special menu and dessert
  
- *Monthly Legislative Office Hours*
  - o Rep. Kelly Pease: third Monday of the month, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
  - o Senator John Velis: fourth Monday of the month, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.
  - o Spreading the word so that older constituents take advantage

## Miscellaneous

- *Elevator*
  - o Elevator had been out of order for more than a month
  - o Failed fire alarm inspection and the State shut it down
  - o COA staff now knows that on the annual inspection date, the State Inspector, Otis Elevator, and FEI (fire alarms) must be present in the building at the same time

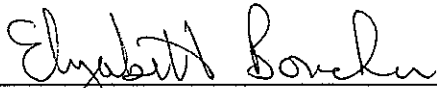
**VII:** Mrs. Gorman reminded the Board that our next meeting is to be held on **Monday, April 10, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.** at the Westfield Senior Center. The 12:30 p.m. start time will be in effect until the second-floor construction is completed and the Multipurpose Room is once again available for COA Board meetings.

**VIII. ADJOURN:**

There being no further business to come before the Board, upon Motion duly made by John Greaney and seconded by Ed Ekmalian, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 1:28 p.m.

**List of Exhibits:**

- Director's Report



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Elizabeth Boucher, Secretary



# Westfield Council On Aging

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## Agenda

Westfield Council On Aging Board Meeting

Monday, March 13, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.

Westfield Senior Center

**\*\*Call the Senior Center in advance of attendance because of COVID and other health-related room capacities. *Please note time change from regularly scheduled 1 p.m.***

- I. Meeting called to order
- II. Approval of Minutes of February 13, 2023 meeting
- III. Public Participation
- IV. Items for Discussion/Information
  - A. Highland Valley Elder Services (HVES) Report – Jim Liptak
  - B. Second-Floor Renovation, Update
  - C. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Update – Lynn Hills
  - D. MassHealth, Update – Lynn Hills
- V. Items for Action: None
- VI. Report – Director
- VII. Next Meeting: **Monday, April 10, 2023 at 12:30 p.m.**  
**Westfield Senior Center, 45 Noble Street**
- VIII. Adjourn