Town of Dunstable

Council on Aging Board Meeting

September 11, 2024

Grange Hall, 9:15 AM

1. Meeting called to order at 9:22. Members present: Mary Dow, Jean Haight, Barbara Martin, Joan Simmons, Chuck Raffoni. Also present Town Administrator Jason Silva.
2. Public Comments: The closure of Nashoba Hospital has raised concerns in the community. Ambulance availability and ambulance response times show evidence of already causing issues. It was reported that one person chose to drive themselves to the hospital because of the longer response time. Firemen and EMT's can only do limited medical help, due to their particular certifications. To have our own ambulance would require a significant financial investment. One ambulance is available from Lowell/Chelmsford and Pepperell can assist if needed. The closure of Nashoba Hospital has brought communities together to have conversations about services, which is a positive for all towns affected. Some questions: can Nashua help? Are their certifications the same as Massachusetts? Can dispatchers be regionalized? Dunstable is a small town which does not have much to contribute to a regional program. Dunstable does have a good group of on call firefighters who will respond.
3. The minutes from the June 19, 2024 meeting were read, corrected and approved unanimously. The corrected minutes will be sent to Sue Fayne for posting.
4. Chuck Raffoni wanted to hear from the board any expectations or feedback about how things are going. Some points:
    a. He is communicating well with the seniors in town.
    b. His use of social media is positive
    c. Bone Builders program is growing, there may be space issue, could it be moved to Town Hall? Will need to move both days, have equipment available at the Town Hall, will folks be willing to move?, parking availability?
    d. We need to respect what is currently happening, but also need to adapt to change as well.
    e. The issue of loneliness in the senior population is increasing, how do we address this in Dunstable?
    f. Can the Community Room in the Library be used outside of Library operating hours? Can we use it for more sessions of bone builders or other activities?

Barbara Martin will contact Carol Bacon to find out if there is an answer to this, as it seems to be the current "rule" is that it cannot.

g. Chuck will meet with the Library staff to forge a new relationship.

5. Senior meals: Healthier options should be made available, it may attract more seniors to attend. We discussed the upcoming calendar of meals. Barbara will contact the Greater Lowell Vocational School for a possible date for us to go there for a meal in October. With 5 Wednesdays in October, we will also contact Dinner Made Simple to cater a meal.
6. Chuck will create a survey to find our senior interests and find out ways we can more fully support them. This will be a town wide survey. He mentioned the PACE program which can provide a group of services for seniors.
7. Transportation: Walter Alterisio will continue to provide transportation for seniors as long as he is able to. The co-pays may need adjustment, as more seniors are using the service. Dariti Transportation rates are very high and not feasible for most seniors. The LRT Transit will provide a vehicle through a grant program, but we would need to pay a driver, get insurance, and maintain the vehicle. This can take up to a year to put in place. Are there other ride companies that we can set up as "preferred vendors", with the possibility of getting discounts?
8. Chuck expressed an interest in trying to match willing volunteers with seniors who need assistance. The goal would be getting a core group formed.
9. We need another member on the Council on Aging Board. Some names were suggested, Barbara and Mary will reach out to them.
10. Chair Yoga: will be held on Thursday, October 10th at 4 PM for a one time session. The cost will be $10.00. This will be held at the library.
11. Meeting adjourned at 10:30AM. Next meeting to be held on October 7, 2024 at 9:15.

Meeting minutes submitted by Jean Haight, Secretary