

Dover Council on Aging Board Minutes Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Present: B. Cocks, J. Connolly, P. DiSanto, M. Dilg, B. Hagan, C. Johnston, R. Townsend, G. Wise
Staff: J. Claypoole

Guests: J. McDonnell; B. Pettit; L. Pettit; F. Spaulding, Caryl Community Center Building
Committee; J. Kent-Uritam; J. Walsh; T. Walsh

Meeting called to order at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES -- Deferred until April Board meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Deferred until April Board meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

COVID-19 Vaccines – J. Claypoole reported the state has opened up the scheduling of vaccine shots to ages 65 and older. Our staff is coaching residents through this process. We check every day for open appointments. Last week we booked 16 people at CVS in Medfield. We have worked through our list of people who have asked for assistance in scheduling shots. The state data from last Wednesday indicates 1.5m doses of vaccine have been administered in MA -- 330,000 went to those 75 years and older and over 53,000 people have received their second dose. Needham Public Health is not able to continue with their clinics. They are no longer able to meet the criteria set by the state for regional collaboratives. Rep. Garlick and Needham Public Health have applied to the state to see if they can make some changes. They need to be open five days a week and administer 750 doses of vaccine per day and it cannot be limited to their town only. M. Dilg asked what happens to the people who only received their first shot at the Needham Clinic. J. Claypool responded they are holding clinics for second shots only. Dover does not have a system available to vaccinate homebound. We have developed a list of homebound individuals and continue to work with them. B. Cocks asked how are you finding the open appointments at the Medfield CVS? Are they through the state's website or are they through CVS itself? J. Claypoole responded you can use both websites. She goes to the CVS website first as it has fewer clicks than the state's website. CVS also books the first and second appointments at the same time.

COMMUNITY CENTER BUILDING UPDATE

C. Johnston has received questions for discussion at today's Board meeting regarding the plans for the future home of the Dover COA and the Park and Rec. Presently, the plans show the Dover COA on the 2nd floor of the new building. We wonder if the Dover COA Board has given any thought to the placement on the COA on the 2nd floor in the new building option? We would like the Board members to say how they feel about this. Is this an advantage or a disadvantage? J. Connolly stated we would like to first ask the Board members their feelings and interpretations about what is happening. R. Townsend will speak last and address any of the board's concerns. At this point, we will open it up to guests.

G. Wise – It is obvious that people with ambulatory problems, such as a walker, would find it easier to approach the office on the first floor as opposed to contending with an elevator. Wheelchairs would be even worse. Starting with a new building, why would you place services for the elderly on the second floor.

B. Hagan – She agrees with G. Wise. Based on the telephone calls she has received, the 2nd floor is not appealing to seniors. The 1910 drawing is confusing and several people found it difficult to understand. There were 147 responses to the survey in the paper. People did not take this survey seriously. Many took it as a laughing matter. Many people asked her why we cannot leave the building “as is” and renovate as needed. I think there are many things that the town is not doing. But this is our own fault as we are not participating. This does not seem like a town project.

B. Cocks – My understanding from the last Caryl Community Center meeting is that these are just proposals. We are moving toward plans and specifications that will be more detailed. During that meeting, the 2nd story location of the COA was pointed out and a number of people voiced their opposition. The committee acknowledged those sentiments. Hopefully, as they deliberate, we will see if there is a way for the consultants and architects to do what people have asked.

C. Johnston – After considering the objections of several people, looking over the plans and thinking about it, I have changed my mind that the offices and all the accoutrements should be on the first floor.

P. DiSanto - He has received seven calls in the last week and a half. People are beyond outraged. It is maddening to think a plan would be devised to put the seniors on the 2nd floor. It makes no sense. People are angry and upset. They are angry at us as Board members and asking, “Why are we not advocating for our seniors? Why do we not have a stronger voice?” I am upset that it was even considered to put the COA on the 2nd floor. This should not even be talked about – it is non-negotiable and preposterous.

M. Dilg – I am taking a different direction than everyone else. As you know, from the beginning when we started talking about a new Caryl Community Center, I wanted the current building torn down and a new building built. I have been totally straight out with that to everyone. But what I did was to take the two plans on the town’s website and looked at them very carefully. I looked at the amount of space we have, our location within the building, the kitchen area and the Community Room. The Save the 1910 building has 1,800 sq. ft. more than the new two-story building. This means that in the two-story building they had to constrict the space and were unable to provide the space shown in earlier renditions. We are now on the 2nd floor with a smaller area. Our kitchen has to be smaller so we are unable to have a full functional kitchen. I then went to the Save the 1910 option. We are on the first floor, we have a larger space, parking is in the rear where people will enter. The COA is to right of this entrance. The Community Room is down the hall. Because of the additional 1,800 sq. ft., there is a possibility that the kitchen can be a full kitchen rather than a warm-up kitchen. The location of the COA is in the new construction (F. Spaulding later corrected her that the COA location is in the 1910 building). I believe the Save the 1910 building is the best option for seniors.

J. Connolly – There is another component of this for the elderly and the COA offices. There is a lack of understanding of functionality. The COA staff is the eyes and ears of the seniors in this town. Every time someone comes in for a class or exercise, Nan and Janet can observe them on how they are doing. The seniors are proud and have a hard time asking for things. Both Nan and Janet are experts on assessing people. They can talk to people about their issues. By placing the COA on the 2nd floor, this will be totally missing. I understand we will have full use of the building during the day. But we need to be in a place that welcomes people, see how they are doing and chat with them as they come in on a very casual basis. We need to be in a place where seniors and others come in, are welcomed by us and feel comfortable with seniors. This will be taken away from us by putting us upstairs in the back. Maybe this is the better space in some ways as far as the architects are concerned. But for the well-being of the COA in the town of Dover it stinks. I believe everybody here is in agreement to a lesser or greater degree. The sense she is receiving from the people who are contacting her is the town does not really care about the seniors and they will put us where it is most convenient. The seniors feel they are over looked and not respected. We appreciate all the hard work. But on the 2nd floor in a new building is looked at as a slap in the face. J. Claypool has advocated for these same positions all along and clearly no one is listening.

R. Townsend – Thank you for all the comments and feedback. The architects are starting to look at ways to pull it downstairs. It means probably that Park and Rec area will be replaced in the design. It means that this might be a slightly smaller space but you will be at the entrance and people will walk by the COA suite. The COA will have full use of the community space for the day. You will still be able to see people at the front of the community room or cafe area. We are listening and hearing you and trying to look at a new build design to be developed.

L. Pettit – I have heard from numerous citizens who want a welcoming area. Once it is welcoming, more people will come. We need an open area for people to come in. We do not have room for expansion anywhere. People come not only for the flex rooms and exercise room but to socialize, talk to each other, to be able to sit, have a cup of coffee and talk to the COA staff. People come to get away from the isolation that they experience in their lives. This is looking at past numbers but should be looking at future numbers. It has to be a place where people can come in and be welcomed. The café area sounds great.

J. Uritam – I agree with everyone. The first floor is an absolute must and a large kitchen. A brick exterior is a big concern – nothing looking like the Charles River School or Protective Services – more like the Town House and the Dover Library. There are 1,500 seniors in town. We are the survivors. We aren't moving. We are the ones this building should be built for. We do not have a Senior Center like other towns. We do not have senior apartments or condos. We do not even have a Dover Library that offers programs for seniors. The Community Center should be designed primarily for seniors. I am really enraged as are all my friends that we have been marginalized in this town. From my point of view, there is no point in voting for either of these options if the seniors do not get what they want.

J. Walsh – I am one of the many seniors that was caught by surprise in the change in plan to the COA being on the 2nd floor. It is absurd. The rationale that I hear is that we will have a back-up

generator and an elevator. Elevators break down. I agree with J. Uritam. We should put some signs around Dover that say “GLM” – Grey Lives Matter. This should not happen.

F. Spaulding – I have also been receiving telephone calls. I am in agreement with Justine and Maureen. There is another option We are constrained by holding this to a \$13m project. If people want to go beyond the \$13m, there is a pathway to do that. This is why the two story looks the way it does. Save the 1910 option is a good choice – 1/3 renovated and 2/3 new. Renovation turns out to be new when done. The windows will be enlarged in that area. The de facto option is to stay with what we have now. I personally do not think this is a good option. We would need to put in approximately \$100,000.00 a year to keep it going. I invite you to think about the Save the 1910 option. The architect is looking at what it would be to move the COA offices downstairs. We do not know what that will look like right now. I suspect that if it goes where Park and Rec is, then they would go upstairs. The question then becomes who would manage this building. CMAC is working on the management plan that they will recommend to the Selectmen. We think it extremely important that this building be welcoming to all people. We hear you and appreciate your input. On March 18 at 2:00 p.m., Bob Springett and I will have tea (“BYOT”) with whoever wants to attend by Zoom.

A vote was taken by the Board of the Council on Aging to ask the Community Center Building Committee to revise the placement of the COA facilities to the first floor in all plans. There was unanimous agreement.

M. Dilg reported that based on last week’s Selectmen’s meeting, the Special Town Meeting would take place on Saturday, June 5. It is anticipated that over 1,000 town residents would attend this meeting.

J. McDonnell – I have been attending a lot of the meetings of the Caryl Community Center. I have been stunned that during so much of the meetings the talking has been done by F. Spaulding and B. Springett. I have not heard much from the other committee members. I don’t see anyone on the committee that has been thinking of the senior population which is 25% of the town. B. Springett, in my mind, does not care about how much space the seniors get. He is listed as ex officio attendee. I was wondering why he is the person who often goes out and speaks on the subject.

F. Spaulding – The committee was appointed by the Board of Selectmen. It has three people who are well over 65 on the committee. Speaking for myself, I am very concerned about the COA. First what the COA has done over the last year is incredible especially what Janet has done for the town. We are very concerned about all citizens in town and most of our discussions are about the seniors. I don’t agree with Jean’s perception. But that is her perception and perception is reality.

R. Townsend – When I have been in the meetings with this Committee, I have put my voice forward when I have been concerned about things. In terms of the survey, this is a pretty good number for a town survey. We also have more people attending these meetings via Zoom than we would have in person. I want to see something done with the building so that the seniors and all generations in the town have a much better place to meet to bring us together.

J. Claypoole– What she has heard today is what she has been hearing from many seniors. I have been in communication with Ford and Ruth often. We had a positive meeting last week where they heard our concerns about placement of the COA. We appreciate all the work they have done and we appreciate their looking at shifting some locations. I do think that placement on the first floor is imperative for the COA. As people enter, we should be able to communicate with them. We work very well together with Park and Rec in sharing rooms and this is the way to go.

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT – None

SENIOR TAX RELIEF - J. Claypoole stated the Assessor in January and February held office hours. One of the issues P. DiSanto raised was the impact of paying for the schools and how it is impacting the seniors. P. DiSanto stated that 72 cents on every tax dollar goes to the schools. Most people move into town for the schools and then move out once they have gone through the system. In other places, you do not have to pay the school tax once your child has gone through the system. The Assessor was not aware of any place in MA that splits this out. P. DiSanto stated this happens in a number of other states. The Town Warrant will have property tax deferral for seniors which would reduce the interest rate from 8% to 4% and property tax exemption for people over 65 increasing the amount of the exemption from \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 which is needs based. The state gives the town the option to increase the exemption.

FRIENDS OF COA REPORT – G. Wise reported the next Friends Board meeting will be on March 18. Our membership went very well. We will be sending out letters to those who have not renewed.

BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS – None

CITIZEN COMMENTS – None

ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made at 10:30 a.m. by P. DiSanto and seconded by G. Wise. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Dilg, Secretary