

COMMISSION ON ELDER AFFAIRS

Minutes of March 26, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Theresa Eckstrom, Chair; Robin Bahr Casey; Margaret Coffin; Christopher Evans; Nancy Greenberg; Paul Johnson; Ngia Le; Richard Shea; Caroline Sullivan

STAFF & GUESTS PRESENT: Amy Waters; Patty Hainsworth; Linda Wincek-Moore; Ron Motta-Friends of Worcester's Senior Center, Mike Cahill-Central Mass. Housing Alliance, Paul Morano-Economic Development Office

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elizabeth Nguyen; EXCUSED: Tom Cullinane; Dick Pinkes.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. Members were encouraged to sign up to attend two volunteer recognition events in April - 4/10/18 5:30 pm at City Hall and 4/25/18 12 noon at the Senior Center.

Mike Cahill from the Central Mass. Housing Alliance Elder Home Repair/Maintenance Program spoke about the program and answered questions from members. The program provides non-technical home maintenance assistance for the City's senior homeowners. The labor is free and donations are accepted.

Paul Morano, Assistant Chief Development Officer for the City, provided an update to the Commission regarding the Request For Proposals (RFP) for the development of the vacant nurses wing of the Senior Center. His update included: he expects the RFP to be released in April and it will call for development of 60,000 square feet for a use that compliments and supports the senior center while preserving the nurse's building structure; It will note that 4,500 square feet will be retained for a theater for the Center.; The City is committing to abate and demolish the Anderson building to create more space for potential developers; aside from meeting minimum criteria, the following comparative criteria will be used to judge proposals--#s of residential units and/or jobs; sound financial plan; who will be the end user; strong development plan and project schedule; The minimum bid will require \$10,000/year rent for a 60 year lease, and a minimum donation of \$25,000/year to support the Senior Center for 10 years, as well as generating tax revenue; It is expected to cost \$10-\$14 million dollars for the renovation and the developer may need two years to obtain grants and historical credits; the Senior Center's amenities should draw in developers; in June/July we should know if there is a viable bid.

Key points in the Commission's discussion included: Dick Shea noted that affordable housing would be the best use; Theresa Eckstrom reviewed input from the Senior Center Committee meeting of 1/9/18 including the importance of compatible use, adequate entrance, parking & storage arrangements, access to grounds, maintaining the ground floor space off the main elevator for the Senior Center use, and addressing the need for additional space by building out the 4th floor for the Senior Center; Paul Johnson asked for and received clarification on the funding requirements; Ron Motta asked about the parking and it was agreed that it might be a shared lot and possibly the developer will build decks; Paul J. asked about recouping the funds used for renovating the parking lot and demolishing the Anderson

building and Paul M. clarified that this would come out of the annual rental funds; Dick S. recommended the use of HUD funding and Paul M. said yes this will be explored; Paul M. noted that the roof and structure are sound and that he thinks 50-60 housing units could be created; After hearing that the developer may negotiate to use the smaller elevator for access to the nurses wing, Amy Waters noted the importance of security and adequate staffing; Chris Evans noted there is a trend now for congregate housing which might be appropriate at this site; Theresa E. noted that certain senior service providers are recognizing the need for housing and may bid; Paul M. clarified that as soon as the bid is awarded, the developer will be responsible for the maintenance of the property they are leasing.

Paul M. said he will be arranging some walk-throughs for interested parties and that we are welcome to talk to bidders about Senior Center programs but not answer questions pertaining to the RFP; Developers must submit their questions in writing as part of the bid process; and the chosen developer will be invited to a Commission meeting to present their plans prior to signing the contract.

The minutes of Feb. 26, 2018 were approved as mailed. m/s/a

The next meeting is scheduled for Mon. April 23, 2018. Since the 4th Monday in May is Memorial Day, the Commission meeting for that month will be held on Mon. May 21st.

Amy gave the Goals and Objectives Report, thanking those who participated in the announcement of the \$1.5 million grant award. Ascentria will be presenting at the April Commission meeting on their Arabic Elder Program. A new Senior Aide has been hired to support the front desk with various tasks. Wei Shi is the new Chinese Elder Group Coordinator. The Latino Elder Group Coordinator has resigned after six months due to the offer of a full time position. The position will be re-advertised. The shared Public Health nurse will be starting in April for 2 mornings a week. The State Secretary of Elder Affairs will be visiting the senior center in April. The Homelessness Task Force is currently meeting in the lunchroom.

Linda reported on the April 11th Health Fair. A Vietnamese Matter of Balance program has started. There was discussion on the Worc. Housing Authority van that brings residents to the senior center for activities.

Patty reported on programs and encouraged members to sign up for the Volunteer Recognition lunch. The Regional Environmental Council is working with the senior center again, this year on the community gardens.

The meeting adjourned. (m/s/a)