

COMMISSION ON ELDER AFFAIRS

Minutes of February 22, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Theresa Eckstrom, Chair; Sandra Bisson; Meg Coffin; Tom Cullinane; Chris Evans; Ursula Hanus; Paul Johnson; Richard Pinkes; Gail Schuyler

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elizabeth Nguyen; Matthew Fonseca; Excused – Elaine Wrubel

STAFF & GUESTS PRESENT: Amy Waters, Patty Hainsworth, Linda Wincek-Moore, Laura Pearson-African American Elder Group Coordinator; Lisa Brennan-Ascentria; Lauren St. Pierre-intern

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Theresa Eckstrom. The minutes of January 25, 2016 were approved as mailed. (m/s/a) Sandra Bisson was welcomed back.

Laura Pearson reported on the activities of the African American Elder Group which meets weekly at the Senior Center. Sixteen new members joined to make a total of 30. Besides socialization, they welcome educational presentations, are creating a cook book, and support the public schools.

Lisa Brennan reported on Ascentria Care Alliance Refugee Resettlement Program and the PEERS program which focuses on isolated elders who have recently arrived to the area. She also reported on how they are integrating into senior center programs, and the many funding sources for the program, as well as answering Commission members' questions.

The Senior Center Committee Report of Feb. 9, 2016 was approved as mailed. m/s/a
A letter to State Legislators and Governor was reviewed by Members and approved for mailing.
m/s/a

Amy gave the goals and objectives status report including: the Governor has proposed level funding for the FY 2017 Council on Aging Formula Grant; A budget meeting will be held at City Hall to plan for the Elder Affairs FY 2017 budget; Two new full-time positions will be requested, a Transportation Coordinator and an assistant to work with the Vietnamese elder population; A Shared Worlds Forum will be held in the spring at the Senior Center; Staff were trained on how to handle an emergency (fire/intruder) and also how to administer Narcan; The third floor office will be rented to Fallon Health and there's a new potential developer for the 1926 wing; Elder Affairs is co-sponsoring a protective services forum for elder and disabled in the spring and members were encouraged to attend;

Patty reported on the popular Aging Well series events held to date and upcoming. She also reported on the ongoing AARP tax appointments, new and ongoing support services, and the multiple Lunar New Year events held. The Mobile Market will be starting up again in March. Volunteer Recognition events will be held in April and members were encouraged to attend

both the event at City Hall and at the Senior Center. Regarding Building Services, various leaks have been repaired as well as kitchen equipment which broke down.

Linda reported the Spanish version Matter of Balance has started, and other Evidence Based programs will be starting in the Spring. The attendance at the monthly Healthy Living Support Group has increased. The Senior Support Team met recently and statistics revealed that out of the over 16,000 calls reported to the SST, only 116 have been non-English speakers. The SST will try to find out where/what the non-English speakers do in an emergency.

The next meeting date was confirmed for March 28th at 4 pm. The meeting adjourned.

February 23, 2016

Dear Senator Chandler:

The Worcester Commission and Division of Elder Affairs is one of 349 Councils on Aging (COAs) dedicated to promoting healthy aging in the Commonwealth. Funding from line item #9110-9002 provides essential grants to COAs statewide. On behalf of Worcester's 29,000+ seniors, we express our gratitude for the legislature's FY'16 increase of the formula for COA grant distribution from \$8 to \$9 per municipal resident age 60 and older. We are also grateful that the Governor's mid-year 9c reduction did not impact this funding.

The FY'16 grant of \$262,628 to our COA provides substantial support for the operation of our vibrant, multi-cultural, focal point senior center. It helps to fund senior services, program development and coordination. In addition funds are targeted to multi-cultural services, home maintenance assistance as well as job search support. We provide cutting edge services such as evidence-based programs including "A Matter of Balance," "My Life, My Health," and "Healthy Eating for Mature Adults." Further, we continue to maintain the Senior Support Team, an innovative collaboration between public safety, health and human service organizations which outreach to thousands of vulnerable seniors identified through their involvement with 911 emergencies. This Team, as well as multi-cultural outreach, will be strengthened further with increased training via an additional \$9,888 Service Incentive Grant from the COA line item. We are particularly excited about this grant enabling education through Clark University's "Shared Worlds" project on local immigrant and refugee experiences, so that we can better serve and maintain a welcoming environment for the hundreds of Vietnamese, Latino, Bhutanese, Iraqi, Chinese and Albanian seniors who participate at the Worcester Senior Center.

Worcester and all of the State's municipal Councils on Aging rely on the continuation and expansion of the Formula and Service Incentive grants. The Commonwealth's partnership is a cornerstone to the Worcester Senior Center's success, supplementing core municipal funding as well as the assistance of over 250 organizations and instructors to provide hundreds of programs and services annually. Senior Centers promote healthy aging, lessening the need for more costly health and long term care services. **With the growing senior population, it is prudent that the legislature continues to make a cost-effective investment by increasing line item #9100-9002 over the next three budget cycles by \$1.3 million per year.** This would bring the formula for grants to Councils on Aging to \$12 per elder resident by the year 2020, helping to keep up with minimum wage increases and growing needs statewide.

Thank you for your continued support of Councils on Aging and their Senior Centers, thereby helping to ensure the health and independence of our aging population. Please feel free to contact Amy Waters at watersa@worcesterma.gov or 508-799-8063 for further information.

Sincerely,

Theresa Eckstrom, Chair
Commission on Elder Affairs

Amy Vogel Waters, Director
Elder Affairs/Worcester Senior Center