

Commission on Aging

Date: April 5th 2023

Location: Heritage Center

Present: COA Commissioners: Ruth Moran (chair), Kathy Brandt (notetaker) Sarah Atwood, Sal Armato, Hilda Rhodes, Sarah Cummings, Garner Lester

Staff: Angelica Fontanez, Margherita Pilato, Kayla Seftner

Members of the Public: Jean Rexford, Peter Cody

First Selectwoman: Julia Pemberton. Also, Town Clerk Michele Grande, attended.

Meeting called to order: 9:04 a.m.

1) **Approval of Minutes:** Sarah Atwood 1st, Sarah Cummings 2d

2) **Public Comments:** none

3) **Social Services Report:** Angelica Fontanez: Really busy. Oil assistance up, but only one senior. Program now ended. Extra gift cards for 20 seniors. Caraluzzi's has an online gift card donation for food bank as an option. Van had 99 trips. No news about the van. Everything is back logged. Meanwhile, we are renting. Meals & Wheels issue: program has not been cut in neighboring towns, but it has been cut in Redding.

4) **Director of Programming:** Margherita Pilato: 80%. matching income to instructors' costs. Next month starting Italian, there are 2 classes with 16 students total. Volunteer canasta group informally organized. Mahjong will be made similar to bridge, informal. St. Patrick's was with bagpipes and well attended. Tech help sessions have begun with new person, a high schooler. Many people want his help. We have had meditations ongoing.

5) **Town Clerk:** Michele Grande: Membership in COA. 9 commissioners and 3 alternates: Set up in 1974. Minority representation must be maintained. Only 6 of the same party may be commissioners. Alternates also must have minority representation. (2 of one party). We currently have 4 Dems, one Rep and one unaffiliated. So, we can move 2 Dems up from alternate, also Peter can come on as an unaffiliated, then need 2 alternates. Currently Sarah Atwood, Mary Dale, Ruth, and Peggy all have to be sworn in again this year. Purpose is in the bylaws. Certain rules and regulations were set up as recommended by the State, when originally adopted. Commission members should be electors according to language in the ordinance. Name change requirements: in 2006 it was called the Commission for the Elderly. Commission voted by majority to change the name that October, and it was done by submitting a letter. Nov. 20, 2006, the Board of Selectman approved that change. Revisions to the bylaws reflected the new name and they adopted new bylaws. So, the process is, recommend, discuss, vote, send to

Bd of Selectman for approval. Michele says: keep the name short. Also, cannot call it a Board. It is a commission. Michelle also said: if we have a new event coming up she can put it in Town News for us. Must be formatted.

6). Old Business: Name change: Four names were under consideration. Commission for Senior Enrichment, Senior Resources Commission, Senior Services Advisor Commission, Senior Advisory Commission Also suggested: no change. We should consider this further. We should listen to what others think about the negative connotations of the words “senior” and “aging.” One neutral word “connections.” We will shelve this for next month. The perception of this place is what we are up against.

7) Chair’s Report:

There should be a formal vice chair and formal recording secretary. Will decide next month on who can be vice chair and vice recording secretary. Change of time was discussed, and decided to not change. Plan for Ruth to write to Julia and indicate that Peter Cody, Sal Armato and Peggy are recommended to fill the 3 available commissioner positions. Hilda will stay on as an alternate. Also need to let Julia know the names of those who are renewing this year, so Michele Grande can swear them in.

Thoughts on what we would like to see when we come to Heritage:

MD: warmth & coziness in the lounge, a rug and more seating areas, coffee. Brown bag lunches on a regular basis and/or some holiday lunches. Priority of the lounge for seniors at all times. Kids are now using the lounge and messed up the couch already. Get rid of fluorescent lighting. When you come in, it is dark. Need to be able to direct people towards lounge. Signage to direct people. Colorful banner in main entrance. Need signs for social services. Get the patio up and running, even now, sitting outside would be good. Sandy O’Reilly does great signs for the book fair. When we come in the Heritage Center door, it does look cozy, but the main entrance is very cold. Signage would help. Some type of table might be helpful instead of the one bench. Hooks for coats. (Get rid of coat rack). Close circuit TV communication system. Communications board needs to be modernized. Next month we can review list and delegate to certain people. Brighter colors at entrance. Signs and/or site map. Free of charge movie or bingo night perhaps monthly.

Like to see more plants inside. Should have a volunteer in charge of that. Featured cultural enrichment thing at least every season, preferable every month. Like a travelogue thing. Drumming circle, fashion show, etc.

We should look at the demographics and understand what Redding will look like in ten years, and plan for things like housing, meals on wheels, transportation.

8) New Business: Thanks to Jean for her many years of service.

9) Meeting adjourned: 10:30 a.m.

Submitted by: Kathleen Brandt