

**City of Westfield
Minutes of the Council On Aging
Monthly Meeting ~ ZOOM Conference Call
April 14, 2021**

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WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

- I. The Meeting was called to order by the Chair, James V. Liptak at 1:07 p.m.

Board Members Present: Elizabeth Boucher, KerryAnn Kielbasa, James V. Liptak, Eileen Rockwal, Alan Sudentas and Barbara Taylor. Also present were Tina Gorman, Director of the Westfield Council On Aging and City Council Liaison, Ralph Figy. There was one guest: Peter Currier, The Westfield News. This COA Meeting was recorded as it is a legal meeting available to the public and was broadcast on Cable Channel 15. Mr. Peter Cowles recorded the meeting.

II. **Approval of Minutes of March 8, 2021 Meeting:**

Upon Motion duly made by Liz Boucher, and seconded by Eileen Rockwal, it was unanimously VOTED: To approve the Minutes of the March 8, 2021 meeting.

III. **Public Participation: NONE**

IV. **Items for Discussion/Information:**

A. Highland Valley Elder Services:

Mr. Liptak attended the March HVES Meeting and gave the following report:

- All services are continued at HVES and employees are slowly returning to their positions on-site.
- There are four open positions: Nursing Assistant, Human Resources Director, Protective Services Worker, Nutrition Director
- The new van purchased is now being used to transport meals.
- The Home Delivered Meals program has increased by 30% during the COVID period.
- Average of 200 meals per day are being distributed curbside at congregate sites.

B. COVID-19 Vaccination Update:

Mrs. Gorman advised that the Senior Center partnered with the Westfield Housing Authority (WHA) to get approximately 100 older adults on the Senior Center waiting list vaccinated. Vaccines were administered in cooperation with the Westfield Stop & Shop Pharmacy. Three clinics were held in March, one in the Community Room at Dolan Ely Apartments and one at McGinn Apartments. Senior Center staff shuttled participants to the sites from the Senior Center parking lot in order to control the flow and tempo of the clinics and because of a lack of parking at the WHA sites. The first shots were administered on March 18, 19, 22. Second shots are scheduled for April 15, 16, 19. In addition to COA staff, volunteers Kathy Millas from the Friends Board, John Niedzielski, and Mike McCabe assisted with the effort. The State has begun the home-bound vaccination effort. However, that is currently paused because of the unavailability of the

Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The COA has approximately 50 seniors on the homebound list. Some received the J & J vaccine prior to the pause. The Big E will open as a vaccination site on 4/19/21. Mrs. Gorman's concern is the confusion regarding registration for seniors in the individual towns in the collaborative. There is supposed to be a set number of vaccines reserved on certain days for specific towns, but the COA staff has not yet been briefed on the protocol for that. Pharmacies in Westfield are also beginning to offer vaccinations. A Veterans Vaccination Clinic is scheduled for April 17, 2021. Mrs. Gorman is awaiting details from Julie Barnes, Director of Veterans Services.

C. AARP Tax Assistance Update:

The AARP Tax Assistance Program is completed for this year. Taxaide Volunteers assisted 205 older adults at the Westfield site with a contactless system. The Volunteers occupied the Games Room and Multipurpose Room twice a week, and completed 16 returns each day. The carefully planned system was nearly flawless. Mrs. Gorman is indebted to Bruce Tomaso, AARP Regional Taxaide Coordinator and his team.

D. Tax Work-Off Proposed Ordinance Change:

Mrs. Gorman reminded the COA Board that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council On Aging Board of Directors had spent several meetings discussing possible changes to the Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program. The Board considered two separate proposals for increasing the maximum tax abatement, which is currently set at \$500. At the March 9, 2020 meeting, the COA Board unanimously recommended that the following ordinance change be submitted to the City Council for approval.

City of Westfield Code of Ordinance Sec. 11-94: Requirements for Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program: Change maximum tax abatement from \$500 per individual to \$800 per individual per fiscal year and change the number of participants from 40 to 25 per fiscal year. Should there be additional monies budgeted, the program may increase the participants accordingly at the \$800 rate.

The required number of hours of service by the participants is based on the State minimum wage rate. As the minimum wage has increased, the number of hours of service has decreased. When the program began, participants volunteered 62 hours in order to get the full \$500 abatement. In 2019, they worked just 41 hours to receive the same \$500 abatement. The number of applicants to the program has been steadily decreasing. The feedback is that the participants would prefer to work more hours for a larger abatement. Assuming that the \$20,000 allocated to the program remains constant, the COA Board opted to increase the abatement and reduce the number of participants. A draft that Attorney Shanna Reed from the City's Law Department wrote last year to amend the current ordinance was sent to Mayor Humason for submission to the City Council. Although the Tax Work-Off program is currently suspended because of COVID restrictions, having the amended ordinance in place will be most helpful in the coming months. Councilor Figy informed the Board that the proposed ordinance change

will be sent to the Legislative and Ordinance Committee. Councilor Onyski is Chair of that Committee.

E. Senior Center Front Doors:

Mrs. Gorman informed the Board that, in consultation with Facilities Director Bryan Forrette, agreement was reached that new sliding glass doors would be more functional for the Senior Center than the ones currently in use. The funding for this project will come from the Friends of the Westfield Senior Center, Inc. A letter requesting acceptance of the 'gift' of new sliding glass doors for the Senior Center was sent to Mayor Humason for submission to the City Council. Mrs. Gorman asked Councilor Figy if the request would have to be sent to a Committee. Councilor Figy said that he plans to ask that the full Council review the request for immediate consideration and vote at the April 15 meeting. Mrs. Gorman advised that once ordered, it will take approximately twelve weeks for delivery of the doors.

- V. Items for Action - Establishment of a Nomination Committee to select Board officers for FY 22. The following Directors volunteered to be on that Committee: Liz Boucher and Alan Sudentas. Mr. Jim Liptak will be the Chair of the Nomination Committee.

VI. Director's Report

Review of Programs

- *'Westfield Council On Aging Presents' Series*
 - o 'Is It Time To Sell The House?'
 - o Aired Tuesdays at 2:45 throughout the month of April
 - o Presenter: Lesley Lambert, Certified Senior Real Estate Specialist
 - o Geared toward older adults, but helpful for anyone thinking about selling a house
 - o Front page story in The Westfield News (Lori Szepelek)

- *Channel 15: 'Mable and Jerry' ~ A Comedy Performance*
 - o Aired Wednesday afternoons at 2:40 and Saturday evenings at 6:00 throughout the month of April
 - o Performers: Steve Henderson and Lori Slozak
 - o Funding through the Westfield Cultural Council
 - Originally, funding was intended for FY21 Senior Center 'Senior Theater' program
 - That program was cancelled and the funds repurposed

- *'Spring Fling' Curbside Luncheon*
 - o Menu: Baked ham, glazed carrots, scalloped potatoes, carrot cake
 - o 125 participants, many of whom dressed in spring attire

- *'Totally FUN Fitness'*
 - o New fitness program on Channel 15
 - o Airing Monday and Wednesday mornings
 - o Instructor: Retired YMCA 'Active Older Adults' Director, Carol Palmer
 - o Extremely positive feedback the first day the class was aired
 - o Front page story in The Westfield News (Lori Szepelak)

- *Diabetes Dialogue ~ What's for Dinner? Part 2*
 - o Carryover from last month because the topic was so broad
 - o Diabetes support group offered the third Wednesday of the month during the *Wake Up Wednesday* cable Channel 15/WSKB radio show
 - o Facilitator: Jennifer Giffune, Registered Dietician and Licensed Nutritionist
 - o April 21 from 7:05 to 8 a.m.

Upcoming Programs

- *Channel 15: 'The Way It Used To Be' Musical Performance*
 - o Will be aired Wednesday afternoons at 2:40 and Saturday evenings at 6:00 throughout the month of May
 - o Richie Mitnick and Joe Saimeri
 - o Prior to the closure of the Senior Center, they were originally scheduled to entertain for last year's Mother's Day luncheon in the Great Room.

- *Volunteer Tribute Curbside Turkey Luncheon*
 - o Will be honoring 19 pandemic volunteers with a 'reverse parade'
 - o Thursday, May 6 during the regularly scheduled meal
 - o Capping at 175 and expect a sell-out event

- *Mother's Day 'Come Fly With Us' Curbside Luncheon*
 - o Thursday, May 27
 - o Airport theme with COA staff and volunteers as the 'crew'
 - o Menu: pot roast with gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, dessert
 - o Will cap at 175


- *'Westfield Council On Aging Presents' Series*
 - o 'Valued and Creative Aging ~ What Is The Recipe?'
 - o Will air Tuesdays at 2:45 throughout the month of May
 - o Presenter: Tina Gorman

- *Diabetes Dialogue ~ Heart Healthy Fats*
 - o Diabetes support group offered the third Wednesday of the month during the *Wake Up Wednesday* cable Channel 15/WSKB radio show; May 19: 7:05 to 8 a.m.
 - o Facilitator: Jennifer Giffune, Registered Dietician and Licensed Nutritionist

- VII:** The Chair reminded the Board that our next meeting is scheduled to be held on Monday, May 10, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. via ZOOM.
- VIII.** There being no further business to come before the Board, upon Motion duly made by Eileen Rockwal and seconded by KerryAnn Kielbasa, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 1:40 p.m.

List of Exhibits:

- Director's Report



Elizabeth Boucher, Secretary