

MINUTES OF THE GRAFTON COUNCIL ON AGING MEETING
September 11, 2008

Members present: William Drago, Chairman, William Cutler, Vice-Chairman, Marcella Benoit, Secretary, Phyllis Brown, Doris Fowler, Barbara Gardner, Chet Jakubiak, Winifred Paul

Members absent: Rev. Philip Goff

Also present: Shirley Antaya, Former Member
Martha Chartier, Bus Driver
Barbara Connelly, Senior Center Secretary
Michelle Drumm, Senior Center Director
Connie Mellis, Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission
Ruby Pollack, Director of Crescent Manor Rest Home
Roland Richard, FOGE President
Wendy Steinhilber, Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission
Robert Taft, Bus Driver
Seniors also present were: Jill Achilles, Elaine Blaisdell, Lena Cornachioli, Edith Engwall
Helen Kazlauskas, Barbara LaPoint, Dot Legassey, Barbara McLellan

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 P.M. by William Drago, Chairman.

There was a moment of silence in honor of 9/11.

Introductions were done.

Overview of centralized dispatch pilot program was presented by Wendy Steinhilber. There has been an upheaval in the para transit program. Auburn and Leicester are in the pilot program. There are some issues that are being worked on mainly scheduling and dispatching. There is no coordination between the towns. It was talked about 20 years ago and tabled. There is a central call area which reportedly can use the vehicles more efficiently, according to Wendy Steinhilber, although Michelle stated a COA Director of another town reports otherwise. The towns refer residents needing escort service to the WRTA and they supply the necessary escort. Communication can be an issue as seniors, especially those with hearing problems have trouble understanding directions on the phone when that person has a strong accent. Wendy stated we are a diverse society and must be aware of it. Michelle stated that the seniors need to be treated with patience and respect and need to be able to communicate with the dispatcher which are complaints from the other communities she has heard. Wendy stated that PBSI (the dispatching agency) has had several pieces of feedback along these lines and it is being worked on.

Input from the COA and Grafton residents. Grafton residents often request to go to a place listing a different name other than the actual name of the facility, perhaps a name from many years ago. Wendy stated there will be a database listing each person's personal information, i.e. doctors, hairdressers, barbers. Drivers must be involved in implementing this program. The personal caring, from our staff to our residents will be diminished as seniors will no longer be in contact with our staff directly for transportation. One senior felt the personal caring from escorts would be missing. Wendy assured her the escorts would still be caring and friendly. The town of Upton has no bus service, and has approached WRTA. Wendy said that possibly Grafton could reach out to their sister community and help. One resident asked if we will retain two drivers. We were assured that that would happen. They plan to schedule the trips so no one has a long wait, although other towns say this is a concern. Transportation will be available for the return trip after Grafton drivers are done for the day. After questioning by Mr. Cutler, a one hour wait is considered acceptable according to Ms. Steinhilber. The state picks 75% of the cost and the town 25% at the end of the year. Upton would be expected to pay 100%. Grafton

drivers may have to travel to other towns and be available to Upton on our less busy days. It was a concern that Grafton seniors would have less service. New buses are expected in January, 2009. The pilot program buses would be equipped with GPS and cell phones. A concern was voiced over losing the daily interactions with the population, and the Senior Center Staff. It was a way to keep in touch re: well-being. Michelle hoped that seniors could continue to call the Center for rides to alleviate this and lessen the impact to the seniors. Wendy said this could be considered, but could not promise. No vote was taken.

Chet Jakubiak distributed a new guide to depression and dementia in old age which he and his team put together from MAOA (Mass. Older Americans Association). It contains a description of illnesses and treatments. Michelle requested to receive as many of these booklets as possible.

Emergency No Heat Response – Michelle Drumm and Tony Merenda attended a workshop presented by SMOC. Reserve funds from last year are gone. The federal funding is less for more people needing assistance. MEMA is now involved. SMOC recommends every town start a task force, warming centers and other ways to help with the heating crisis. Barbara Gardner made a motion that COA recommends implementation of a task force for emergency no heat response. Seconded by Phyllis Brown. So moved. Michelle Drumm will be making a presentation to the Board of Selectmen requesting a no heat task force be initiated.

WRTA fare increase has been set at \$.25 for next year, it is believed.

Secretary's minutes were read. A motion to accept as written was made by Doris Fowler, seconded by Winifred Paul. So moved.

Chet Jakubiak accepted the appointment as representative to Elder Services of Worcester.

FOGE update was given to Roland Richard, President.

- There was no quorum the past two months. Agenda sent to all members and only one member responded.
- Tony Merenda is invited to tonight's meeting to discuss the FOGE Heating Fund.
- Another fund drive for the heating fund has started.
- Monthly supper tonight at 5:15 P.M. Meeting at 6:30 P.M.
- Correspondence: The late Marion Elvidge willed \$5,000 for exercise and exercise equipment only, and on September 23, 2008 will be acknowledged.

William Cutler made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Barbara Gardner. So moved.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 P.M.

The next meeting will be Thursday, October 9, 2008 at 1:00 P.M. in the craft room of the Grafton Senior Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Benoit
Secretary