

Holliston Council on Aging
July 26, 2021 - 2:00PM

Members Present:

Yvette Cain, Frank Caron, Carmen Chiango, Bob Malone,

Staff Present:

Lisa Borchetta, Marty Schneier, Amanda Boralessa

Associate Members Present:

Janet Alexander

The meeting was convened in person, in accordance with revised state guidelines, in the Senior Center classroom. A quorum being present, Yvette Cain called the meeting to order at 2:00PM. Yvette completed roll call through visual quorum.

Yvette introduced that the topic of the meeting was to discuss the request for ARPA funding. Yvette explained that on May 24, it was determined that Holliston would be awarded \$4 million, meaning \$299 per capita. The request would need to be submitted by August 2nd.

Lisa introduced the ARPA request. She explained how the initial 4 items for request had been narrowed to 2 items. Lisa read the request she had drafted aloud for the Council as they read along with their copies. Lisa explained the grant would cover 5 years. She also said she spoke to Leslie, the library's director and found that the cost of the initial request (a survey to all residents 55+) could be done for less if the survey was included with a future Census mailing. Lisa is awaiting a discussion about this with Liz Greendale. Lisa also introduced the economic and housing data she used in the request, which she found through the MA Healthy Aging Initiative.

Bob Malone added that during his previous discussions with Mary Greendale, she was also interested in the idea of a survey of the entire town. He explained the merits, since many older adults are reluctant to share information about their needs. Bob Malone then reemphasized the numbers discussed about the economic needs of seniors included in the request. He added that 41% of respondents residing in Holliston had voiced that upkeep of their homes is a problem for them.

Marty and Bob voiced concern on the limits to the program, should we provide services of a Handyman and more expensive home repair services using the proposed \$100,000 fund. The Council discussed concerns involving individuals requesting repairs that would rapidly deplete the fund, requesting multiple repairs at a time, and requesting repairs that could cause the town to be liable. Frank also asked how we would determine which older adults were in need without an understanding of their financial background.

Lisa explained how the categories of low income are determined and suggested creating strict criteria and limits to the services the Handyman would perform. Lisa reemphasized Marty's concern that if the Handyman went in to repair an item, there may be a host of items that need replacing that pose more serious safety concerns.

Bob Malone suggested that the request be separated into 5 items. The group discussed the idea of removing the trade professionals and potential need for insurance altogether. Marty explained that when her parents lived in Newton, they could call the town for available, lost cost professionals who could help with small repairs and installations such as installing a grab bar. Marty also explained that she already calls on the Lion's Club for small home repairs and they have done a good job. Lisa added that the Community Action Fund (CAF) has also offered volunteers to complete a range of home maintenance and repair needs.

Marty questioned what the needs of the Handyman would be if we already have the assistance of the Lion's Club and the CAF. Lisa suggested a vetted provider list in place of the Handyman which would include professionals who could complete services above the expertise of the Lion's Club and CAF. Janet also said it would be great to have vendors who cap their services or charge on a sliding scale for low income seniors.

Bob Malone then suggested we instead hire a Coordinator of services. The Coordinator could assemble a list of approved vendors, complete the vetting process, and be the point of contact. Carmen also suggested the Coordinator visit Home Depot and other stores to see if they can get materials donated or at reduced cost.

Lisa voiced concern that the \$100,000 repair fund would be depleted quickly since it would be \$20,000 per year. Bob Malone suggested it be changed to \$25,000 per year, increasing the request to \$125,000. The pool of funds would be used to pay for small repairs and safety items. Yvette brought up that the Coordinator would be able to work in one of the spare offices at the Senior Center and Bob Malone added that they would be a temporary, part-time town employee, covered by the town's insurance. Lisa said this would be a great opportunity for a retired person who had worked in the trades.

The Board voted unanimously (moved by Frank, seconded by Carmen) that the application be requested in 2 parts while accepting the first part regarding the survey as it was written.

The conversation continued to flesh out the changes to the second part of the application, regarding the Coordinator. Bob Malone suggested creating certain limits such as a \$100 limit per person on each repair and Lisa recommending a limit to the number of times a person could make a request within a year.

Yvette called a vote to amend the original first 5 points in the application to the new 3 point funding request. This would include hiring a dedicated part-time coordinator, fund miscellaneous safety items, and create a list of approved vendors.

The Board unanimously approved the amended application (moved by Bob Malone, seconded by Frank). Bob Malone finally said he would share more detailed statistics with Lisa after the meeting.

Yvette called for a motion to adjourn the meeting (moved by Carmen, seconded by Bob) which was voted for unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Boralessa

Approved by COA September 8, 2021

Yvette Cain, Chair