

HOLLISTON COUNCIL ON AGING  
Minutes of Regular Monthly Meeting  
February 8, 2023 – 2:00 PM

Members Present: Yvette Cain (remote), Kathy Anguish, Carmen Chiango (remote), Janet Alexander, Lynne Bajdek, and Georgia Papavasiliou

Members Absent: Millie Bedard

Staff Present: Lisa Borchetta, Melicia DaCosta and Debbie Dupuis

Associate Member Present: Peter Eagan

Guests: Chris Cain, Holliston Reporter (remote), Caitlin Coyle, PhD & Mary Krebs, MS, MPPM (remote)

Call to Order:

The hybrid meeting was conducted in person in the Senior Center classroom, with masks being optional, as well as online via Zoom. Yvette took an audio roll call, and with a quorum being present, called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Presentation: Senior Survey Data/Comments – UMass Boston Gerontological Institute.

Caitlin presented data results from the recent 55+ Survey and how this information can be used for the benefit of Holliston's adult population.

Below are some highlights and recommendations that came out of the survey:

- 24% of Holliston's Population is 60+. Note that the survey included residents aged 55+ which raised the total adult population to 40%.
- By 2030, it is estimated that 35% will be 60+. This demographic shift spans at least three (3) generations of people that provide a wide range of life and personal experiences, values and preferences. The senior center will need to review/adapt their work and programs to align with the size and composition of this population in terms of meeting their needs and preferences.
- Importance of staying in Holliston grows with age. Forty percent of people aged 55-59 stated that staying in Holliston was slightly or not at all important to them. While 69% of the 80+ population stated that staying in Holliston was very or somewhat important.
- The top three (3) themes that people, who want to age in Holliston, were concerned about are:
  - Affordability and cost of living. 70% of respondents reported concerns of affordability and cost of living as a challenge.
  - Transportation and accessing the community. 26% of respondents are concerned about transportation options and being able to access the community either through lack of public transportation, immobility or inconvenience.
  - Housing – either downsizing or maintaining their current home. About 15% identified concerns about being able to maintain property or being able to downsize their housing to maintain independence.
- 38% of respondents are Caregivers and many in the 50-60 age group find it difficult and/or challenging to balance their caregiving with their other responsibilities.
- 37% of respondents don't know who to contact if they need help accessing services. Population between 55-59 rely mostly on town website; 80+ population rely heavily on Senior Center newsletter.

- Senior Center usage Increases with age
- 45% of respondents will retire in the next 5 years.
- 59% of users only participate once/year or for a special event. Number one reason for not using the senior center, was “not interested”, followed by “too busy” and “not yet having a need.” Programs tailored to their interests would increase the likelihood of future participation for non-users.
- Present users of the center prioritized *Day Trips*, *Indoor Exercise* and *Performances and Presentations* as programs of interest. Non Users prioritized *Outdoor Exercise Programs*, *Technology Skills Classes*, and *Educational Programs*.

#### Recommendations:

- The physical space and location of the Holliston Senior Center cannot currently meet the future needs of the range of ages and interests of the Holliston older adult population.
  - Consider expanding to satellite locations around the community to enhance visibility and expand programming.
  - Solicit volunteers and increase staff to run programs.
- Perception that the COA is needs-based deters participation.
  - Consider changing the name of the Senior Center to be more age and gender inclusive. Engage residents by facilitating a Town-wide contest.
  - Offer incentive for “bringing a friend” and consider hosting programs specifically for newcomers.
- Programming does not currently align with the range of interests of residents.
  - Support the development of outdoor exercise clubs that have been successful in other communities.
  - Pilot-test a lifelong learning program that could be led by residents who have skills and experiences they are willing to share with others. Perhaps offering a stipend or tax relief to volunteers willing to teach.
- Opportunities to adapt current housing, downsize, or obtain housing with services are perceived as challenging.
  - Develop and maintain a list of contractors or handypersons who will provide home modifications to support safety within the home.
  - Contribute to local conversations and advocate for housing options for older adults who wish to find supportive housing.
  - Promote awareness of existing property tax relief programs and explore how more residents can be eligible.
- Obtaining supplementary and accessible transportation for Holliston’s residents as they age.
  - Ensure residents aged 80 and older, non-drivers, and those with significant mobility limitations are aware of available options.
  - Consider developing a local “travel training” program or buddy system where residents are helped with setting up and navigating to appointments on their own.
  - Explore formal volunteer transportation programs (e.g., “Friends in Service Helping” or “Village” models) to expand door-to-door transportation.

- Many Holliston residents need support due to physical or cognitive conditions, and many caregivers need help.
  - Connect caregivers with resources through a “resource fair.”
  - Encourage participation in Dementia Friends training to raise awareness about residents and families living with dementia.
  - Consider a volunteer respite program or local adult day program which would require space and staff oversight, to offer residents a few hours of respite.

#### **Action Items:**

Identify and focus efforts on one longer term project (e.g., age and dementia friendly planning).  
 Select one or two quick solutions that people can get excited about (e.g., branding, new programs).

Minutes for January 11, 2023 Meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved (moved by Kathy, seconded by Carmen).

#### Communications:

##### Staff Comments:

- Melicia stated she is working with financial applications and acting as an emergency contact for SMOC. The check for the Taxi Grant has been received and they are close to scheduling rides.
- Debbie reported that the vans are running well.
- Lisa has concluded the first round of interviews for the open Assistant Directors’ position and hopes to narrow down the prospects.

##### Chair Comments:

- Yvette informed the COA of an informational meeting tonight (2/8/23) at 7 PM at the Senior Center regarding Holliston’s 300th Anniversary Celebration. If you would like to sign up to stay informed with 300th related updates, click on link below.  
<http://www.celebrateholliston.com/300getinvolved.html>
- Yvette thanked Lisa for defending the COA budget before the Select Board and Finance Committee.

#### Senior Center Director’s Report Lisa Borchetta:

- Budget Approval:
  - The Select Board and the Finance Committee approved budget with no significant issues.
- Building Issues:
  - James Keast will be working on repairing wall and carpet damage and painting. He is looking into a new alarm and security system for staff.
- Grants:
  - **Formula Grant** - Lisa is currently working on the state applications which is due on February 17.

- **UMass Boston 55+ Survey** – Lisa is excited to integrate the data results into our future initiatives.
- **Senior Safe Program** –Ongoing
- **Habitat for Humanity/ARPA Program** – Ongoing. Two projects completed. Maximum expenditure is \$25K.
- **MA Development Finance Agency – Taxi Grant**. Check has been received and staff is getting closer to scheduling rides.
- Code of Conduct/Review Committee: In progress, on temporary hold awaiting hire of new Assistant Director.
- Inter-Departmental Collaboration. Lisa shared the ways we are involved and integrated with other town departments, such as Youth and Family Services, Fire & Police, Veteran's, and Select Board, Middle and High Schools, Park and Highway Departments, etc.
- SSF Requests: Motion to approve \$350 for Lunch and a Movie for the months of March and April was approved (moved by Kathy, seconded by Janet).

New Business:

Lisa will gather information for an outside service provider for printing the newsletters and present the information to the group in March.

Adjournment:

Motion to Adjourn was approved (Kathy moved; Georgia seconded). Next Meeting is scheduled for March 8 at 2:00 PM. Meeting adjourned at 3:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Alexander