

**COUNCIL ON  
AGING  
MEETING  
MINUTES**

**December 14, 2015**

*Upton Senior Center – 2 Farm Street, Upton, MA 01568*

*In Attendance: Chair Myra Bigelow, Secretary Judi Blanchard, Vice Chair Maria Griffin, Members Richard Provost, Grace Wadsworth, Betty Consigli and new member Judie Pitts, Social Service Coordinator Jessica D’Amato, COA Director Janice Nowicki, and Department Specialist Bernadette Denson. Member Annette Castonguay was not able to attend.*

1 The monthly meeting of the Council on Aging was called to order on Monday, December 14 at  
2 10:38 by Chair Myra Bigelow. The November minutes were reviewed and a motion was made  
3 to approve them. Motion was seconded; unanimous vote of the Board followed.  
4

5 **DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

6 Jan reported that November was a busy month of activities, and December will be busy as well.  
7 Sign-ups have been very good for all the Christmas Party activities, including the Yankee Swap,  
8 Holiday Hot Dog Bar and Johnny Diamond entertainment. We did three separate sign-ups so  
9 that people can pick and choose some or all of the activities planned that day. The Men’s Club  
10 supper will be held that night as well. Jan reviewed the process of how the Yankee Swap will  
11 work this year. The guidelines are typed up and available in the front office for anyone  
12 interested. The January newsletter is in process.  
13

14 **SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT**

15 The start of the Medicare Open Enrollment period in October made for a busy November.  
16 Thank you to Marcy Singer of SHINE who held extra appointments at the Center in November to  
17 help with the meetings. November was also the beginning of fuel assistance. SMOC referrals  
18 were Jessica’s main priority. She assisted individuals to help them get their benefits sooner and  
19 she worked with the new SMOC Director, who is handling things a bit differently this year. A  
20 report was distributed showing nine new SMOC applicants (which does not include the repeat  
21 applicants from last year). Some required more than one appointment.  
22

23 SNAP started a new coalition meeting which will take place every two to three months. Jes  
24 missed the first one due to the Wellness Fair. She’ll be attending the next one in January.  
25 SNAP sent some letters that were confusing to some seniors, so Jes has been fielding questions  
26 on that.  
27

28 The Center provided the Bloomer Girls with a list of 23 names of Upton residents in need of  
29 assistance. The list is compiled all year based on SNAP inquiries and other calls for assistance.  
30 The Bloomer Girls were fantastic, providing turkey dinner baskets which Jes and Jan delivered.  
31 We provided St. Gabriel’s with a list of 14 names for their giving tree to receive items such as  
32 socks, coats, gift cards, etc. Gift tags were placed on the Unibank tree to collect additional  
33 items such as toiletries, gift cards and stamps that can be handed out as needed throughout the  
34 year.  
35

36 Jes will put more focus on the Weekly Wellness talks beginning in January. Thus far they've  
37 been happening every other week or so with all the other things going on.

38

39 There were two recent social services issues that required the involvement of other town  
40 departments / Board of Health. We won't get into details now – but it's just a reminder that  
41 the Upton Center deals with more than strictly elder affairs in town.

42

#### 43 **SPECIAL REPORT on LIBRARY/SENIOR CENTER**

44 Janice reported on the Library/Senior Center progress. She distributed a copy of proposed  
45 plans for the combined center and reported that there is a meeting scheduled tonight to vote  
46 on possible locations. The plan shows the absolute minimum space COA would need. Jan has  
47 some issues with the design and will give her input at the meeting. Selectman Bob Flemming  
48 has expressed some concerns about the plan as well. Meetings are currently held every two  
49 weeks. Jan would like feedback from the COA Board on the plans. The architect chosen  
50 resigned, so a new architect at that firm has been assigned to the project.

51

52 There was a motion to accept all three reports. The motion was seconded and unanimously  
53 approved.

54

#### 55 **OLD BUSINESS**

56 The 2017 Budget is due by December 31. Good news is that we should be able to maintain or  
57 possibly even increase our budget by 2-4% in areas, so it won't be as difficult of a process as last  
58 year.

59

60 Jan is working on staff performance reviews. If anyone has input on the staff they'd like Jan to  
61 consider, please let her know. Jan's review is being done by Blythe Robinson as well. If anyone  
62 has input on her performance, please relay it directly to Blythe.

63

64 Jan would like to change the name of the "Upton Council on Aging" to "Upton Elder and Human  
65 Services". She feels this better reflects what we do and would improve community awareness  
66 with regards to the fact that we handle more than just elder affairs. She'd like to keep the  
67 current name of the "COA Board" unchanged, but add a member specifically interested in  
68 working with the issues of the younger residents as well. In conjunction with this change she'd  
69 like to change Jessica's title from "Social Services Coordinator" to "Outreach Coordinator",  
70 increase Jessica's hours from 37.5 to 40 per week.

71

72 There was a discussion about the proposed name change. Richard felt the word "Elder" did not  
73 need to be included. Jan explained that's typical of other Centers. Grace and Betty discussed  
74 possible alternatives to "Elders". Jan said we just needed to vote on the concept of making a  
75 name change today, and could discuss specific name options down the road. A vote was held  
76 and the Board agreed to review the name and try to come up with something more inclusive.  
77 There was also a vote on changing Jessica's title, and the Board agreed.

78

79 There is a Bake Sale on Thursday which we need help with. Judie, Grace and Judi all agreed to  
80 help. Proceeds benefit TriValley in Upton. We changed the date of our holiday lights ride due  
81 to poor weather. We'll be closing at 2pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

82

83 Judie Pitts was welcomed as our newest Board Member.

84

#### 85 **NEW BUSINESS**

86 Jan reminded the group that our van was involved in a minor accident at Coach Road last  
87 winter, and announced that there has been another recent van accident there. If there is snow  
88 or someone is parked illegally there (which is common), it is very hard to navigate through that  
89 area. Jan proposed that we no longer drive the van through Coach Road for safety reasons.  
90 She'd like to set up a pick up spot instead, and perhaps put a bench and possibly seek a donated  
91 shelter too. Jan encouraged discussion on the topic today, and proposed inviting all Coach Rd.  
92 residents to the next COA Board Meeting on January 4 to give their input and participate in a  
93 vote.

94

95 Our van driver, John Saulen, suggested that picking up near the Coach Road mailboxes seems  
96 like the best option and would still allow cars to get by. The only concern would be a longer  
97 walk for seniors with multiple bags. Jan reminded the group that shoppers are intended to  
98 have no more than 2 bags. Betty suggested perhaps we should seek input from the Upton  
99 Police Department on the best option too.

100

101 There was a vote and all agreed that inviting Coach Road residents to the next meeting for  
102 further discussion and a vote is a good idea. Myra suggested we mail the invitation to each  
103 Coach Road resident to be sure they get it; Jan will do that.

104

#### 105 **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

106 Judy Blanchard mentioned that she was asked to be on a commission for people having  
107 problems with their housing at either Millhaus or Coach Road. Her role would be to help  
108 people who may have housing issues or may possibly be evicted. Jan requested more  
109 information on what commission this is part of, and who had extended the invitation to Judy.  
110 Judy said she would get that information to Jan.

111

112 A motion was made to adjourn and seconded. Unanimous vote of the Board followed. The  
113 meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m. The next meeting of the COA will be held on Monday,  
114 January 4 at 10:30 a.m.