

11/16/09

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN OVERSIGHT MEETING FOR COUNCIL ON AGING –**

**NOV.16, 2009**

- GREETING.
- INTRODUCTIONS

PLUS THE ACTON SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR, JEAN FLEMING.

JEAN AND HER STAFF PROVIDE AN AMAZING GROUP OF CLASSES, PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SUPPORT TO THE SENIOR POPULATION. THEY PROVIDE INFORMATION AND REFERRALS FOR FOOD, CLOTHING, HEATING, TRANSPORTATION, PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, LEGAL ASSISTANCE. THE COA ALSO OFFERS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SUCH AS VISITING FRIENDS VOLUNTEERS, BEREAVEMENT GROUPS, HANDYMAN SERVICES. IN ADDITION SENIORS CAN HAVE PERSONAL CONSULTATIONS FOR FUEL ASSISTANCE, TAX QUESTIONS, AND HOUSING ISSUES.

AS YOU KNOW WE CONDUCTED A SURVEY IN 2008 ASKING THE SENIORS IN TOWN WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE WAY OF PROGRAMING, AND WHAT THEY THOUGHT WAS GOOD AND WHAT THEY THOUGHT NEEDED IMPOVEMENT AT THE CENTER. WE LOOKED AT THE DEMAND FOR CERTAIN PROGRAMS AND WENT ABOUT TRYING TO PROVIDE THEM. NOT ALL COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN ONE YEAR BUT AS A RESULT OF THE INFORMATION FROM THE SURVEY, THIS YEAR THE CENTER OFFERED THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS IN ADDITION TO OTHER SERVICES AND NEW CLASSES:

- AN INTRO CLASS FOR TAI CHI WAS OFFERED AND IT WAS FILLED TO OVERFLOWING. THIS YEAR WE HAD TO PLAN A SECOND CLASS DUE TO ITS POPULARITY
- NEW EDUCATIONAL CLASSES OFFERED SUCH AS “OPERA CLASSES”, “AMERICAN TRIALS” AND “GREAT AMERICAN COMPOSERS” --- THESE CLASSES HAD APPROXIMATELY 60 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE.
- COOKING CLASS: THIS FOCUSED ON COOKING FOR ONE OR TWO PEOPLE WITH A GREAT TURNOUT
- THE ACTON GARDEN CLUB PROVIDED A HANDS ON FLORAL WORKSHOP, DELIGHTING THE GROUP WITH LOVELY ARRANGEMENTS TO TAKE HOME, ALL AT NO COST.
- THE CLASSES AND PROGRAMS ARE VERY POPULAR – SO POPULAR THAT ALMOST EVERY CLASS ON SIGN UP DAYS ENDS UP HAVING A WAITING LIST. SO THIS SITUATION IS ONLY GOING TO GET MORE CHALLENGING AS THE SENIOR POPULATION GROWS ESPECIALLY AS THE BABY BOOMERS COME ON BOARD.
- THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER IS NOW E-MAILED TO OVER 10% OF THE SENIORS RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER AND OTHERS NOW PICK UP THEIR COPY AT THE CENTER INSTEAD OF IT BEING SENT IN REGULAR MAIL SAVING SIGNIFICANT COPYING AND POSTAGE EXPENSES. BY THE WAY INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKET IS A COPY OF NOVEMBERS NEWSLETTER. I

HOPE YOU WILL TAKE A LOOK AT THE CALENDAR PAGE AT THE BACK TO SEE JUST HOW FULL THAT CALENDAR IS.

- SENIOR CENTER EXPANSION COMMITTEE

SEVERAL OF THE COA BOARD MEMBERS SPENT MANY HOURS WORKING WITH PAULINA ON THE SENIOR CENTER EXPANSION COMMITTEE. THIS COMMITTEE HAD SUB COMMITTEES FOR FUNCTION, FINANCE, LEASING SITES, NEW SITES, AND REFURBISHING THE EXISTING CENTER, WE MADE VISITS TO OTHER CENTERS IN THE AREA TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON THOSE FACILITIES – WHAT WAS POSITIVE AND WHAT WAS NEGATIVE. AT THE END OF THE STUDY IT WAS DETERMINED THAT BUILDING A NEW SENIOR CENTER POSSIBLY AT A TOWN OWNED SITE WOULD BE THE BEST ALTERNATIVE FOR THE TOWN AND ITS SENIORS. IN ADDITION SUCH A FACILITY COULD ALSO PROVIDE COMMUNITY USE. ALTHOUGH THE FULL CONCEPT WAS NOT VIABLE WITH THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS WE HAVE NOT ABANDONED THE IDEA AT ALL AND ASK THAT THE GROWING SENIOR POPULATION WILL BE ABLE TO COUNT ON YOUR HELP TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IN THE FUTURE.

- BASED ON THE WORK OF THE FUNCTION SUB COMMITTEE SOME IMMEDIATE NEEDS WERE IDENTIFIED AND ACCOMPLISHED:
- WE NEEDED SOME RECONFIGURATION OF THE SPACE AND SO FAR WE HAVE:

- MOVED COMPUTERS TO A CORNER OF THE DINING ROOM – PROVIDES EASIER ACCESS FOR USE AND THE PREVIOUS SPACE CAN NOW BE USED FOR PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS
- SCREENED OFF THE OTHER CORNER OF THE DINING ROOM FOR HEALTH CLINIC SPACE – ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT VERY PRIVATE IT IS AN IMPROVEMENT
- REPLACEMENT OF THE FLOOR IN THE LIVING ROOM WAS FUNDED FROM THE CAPITAL APPROPRIATION APPROVED AT TOWN MEETING. THIS WAS DONE BECAUSE THE OLD FLOORING POSED A SERIOUS SAFETY HAZARD. THE FINAL PRODUCT IS VERY ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE AND THE EXERCISE INSTRUCTORS THEMSELVES ARE VERY PLEASED.
- MANY OF THE PROGRAMS AT THE SENIOR CENTER ARE ASSISTED IN FUNDING BY THE FRIENDS OF THE COUNCIL ON AGING WHO HAVE SEVERAL FUND RAISING PROJECTS DURING THE YEAR - AND BY THE WAY YOU ARE INVITED TO THEIR CRAFT AND BAKE FAIR TOMORROW AT THE CENTER
- THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS PARAMOUNT TO THE COA. THE FRIENDS ALSO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID FOR TRIPS SPONSORED BY THE CENTER SUCH AS THE TRIP THIS WEDNESDAY TO SMITH COLLEGE FOR THE FALL CHRYSANTHEMUM SHOW AND MUSEUM OF ART TOUR.

- THE VAST MAJORITY OF FUNDS ARE FROM SENIORS DONATIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY.
- **FOR THE COMING YEAR:**
- WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP LIAISONS FROM THE COA TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES IN TOWN IN ORDER TO OPEN UP COMMUNICATION ON AN ONGOING BASIS TO BRING THE COA AND SENIORS TO THE ATTENTION OF OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY WITH THE HOPE THAT MORE ASSISTANCE - IN MAYBE YET UNKNOWN WAYS – MIGHT BE OBTAINED. WE ALREADY HAVE ESTABLISHED THIS CONNECTION WITH THE HEALTHY COMMUNITY GROUP WHO ARE EXPLORING THE SENIOR CENTERS ROLE IN MAINTAINING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY. WE ARE CONNECTED WITH THE UNITED WAY AND WE NOW ALSO HAVE A LIAISON FOR THE MINUTEMAN SERVICES BOARD
- PLANS ARE TO CONTINUE PROVIDING ONGOING PROGRAMS WITH OUR STATE LEGISLATORS, AND LOCAL LEADERS. WE INVITE OUR LEGISLATORS AND TOWN LEADERS TO THE CENTER TO SHARE INFORMATION AND ANSWER QUESTIONS ESPECIALLY RELEVANT TO SENIORS.
- THE STAFF IS TRYING TO ESTABLISH SOME EVENING PROGRAMS AT THE CENTER. THE SURVEY OF TWO YEARS AGO FOUND THIS WAS SOMETHING SENIORS THOUGHT WOULD BE A GOOD THING.

- IN JANUARY THERE WILL BE A SENIORS DRIVING PROGRAM PRESENTED BY AAA. THIS IS TWO 3 HOUR SESSIONS.
- THERE ARE ALWAYS NEW AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAM IDEAS COMING FORWARD AND JEAN AND HER STAFF ARE DEDICATED TO OFFERING THE BEST EVEN THOUGH IT'S A CHALLENGE GIVEN THE SPACE AND PARKING RESTRICTIONS.
- I WANT TO MENTION HERE THE IMPORTANT WORK THAT THE COA OUTREACH COORDINATOR, CAROL STEINER AND THE TOWNS OUTREACH PERSON LAURA DUSHARM QUIETLY GO ABOUT DOING IMPORTANT AND WONDERFUL WORK FOR ACTON SENIORS IN DISTRESS SITUATIONS FOR VARIOUS REASONS.
- WE CONTINUE TO HAVE A "WISH LIST" FOR NEEDED CHANGES TO THE PRESENT CENTER. WE HAVE SHOWN SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ONES SEPARATED BY "SAFETY" ISSUES AND "PROGRAM" NEEDS. YOU SHOULD HAVE A COPY OF THIS LIST IN YOUR PACKET, BUT LET ME JUST TELL YOU ABOUT THESE ITEMS:
- **USE WISH LIST PAGE**

- ON BEHALF OF THE COA I WANT TO THANK THE BOS AND OUR TOWN OFFICIALS FOR THEIR PRIOR SUPPORT AND ASK FOR YOUR CONTINUED HELP AND SUPPORT GOING FORWARD. KEEP THE “WISH LIST” FOR THE CENTER ON YOUR AGENDA ALTHOUGH WE KNOW YOU FACE MANY DEPARTMENTS COMPETING FOR LIMITED RESOURCES. THE TRUTH IS THAT AS THE SENIOR POPULATION DOES GROW – THE CENTER AS IT PRESENTLY STANDS INCLUDING THE PARKING WILL NOT BE ABLE TO INCREASE IT’S PROGRAMS AND CLASSES TO MEET THE NEW NEEDS
- FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE REACHED THIS WONDERFUL STATUS OF “SENIOR CITIZEN” THE SENIOR CENTER PROVIDES CONNECTIONS WITH FRIENDS, FUN, HEALTHY AND STIMULATING ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE NOW. WE ARE VERY FORTUNATE TO HAVE AN EXPERIENCED AND HIGHLY QUALIFIED DIRECTOR AND STAFF WHO HAVE THEIR HEARTS IN THEIR JOBS ALONG WITH A DEDICATED GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION