

Metuchen Senior Commission Minutes

Date: April 10, 2024

Location Metuchen Senior Center at 15 Center St. Metuchen, NJ 08840

Agenda

Sunshine Law Acknowledgement

Call to order: 4:12 pm by Beverley Wilson and seconded by Lynn Bergner

Lorraine Perkins, Wendi Richards, Trena Whitaker, and Beverley Wilson. New members

Members Absent: Tom Hansen, Jay Shroff and Tina Cumiskey

Guests Present: Sharon Muenster (MSI Rep)

Minutes from November 8, 2023 were read. Lynn moved to accept minutes and Lorraine seconded it. The Minutes were approved by voting members present on that date.

Liaison's Report: Dorothy reports that the DPW is unable to fix the outside lights due to its lack of parts. She will keep working on this.

A discussion took place regarding publicizing the MSC Commission to the Senior Center Membership. The purpose would be to increase awareness of its accessibility and support in addressing the needs of members. Since Dorothy is the MSC Liaison to the Metuchen Borough Council, Alice asked Dorothy for approval to promote the Commission in the monthly newsletter. Dorothy gave her approval. Kristin suggests promoting the Commission at monthly luncheons.

Director's Report: Rick mentioned that despite posting extensive event information in four locations in the Senior Center, some members will say after-the-fact, "I didn't know." At other times some members use discourteous language to complain about this to him. Wendi agreed with this situation. Since some members may have memory issues and/or depression, Kristin, who is a therapist, volunteered to conduct workshop(s) to address these life situations with the membership. Wendi added that in the past, members have not been interested in proposed or scheduled educational programming.

One of the Senior Center buses is out-of-service due to an inoperable handicap access door that cannot be fixed. Rick is working on applying for a New Jersey Transit grant to purchase a new bus. In the meantime, it was suggested that NJ Transit and Middlesex County be contacted to see if a bus might be borrowed for senior services. This would be especially helpful for saving transportation costs when planning special trips out of town. A discounted rate would be even better.

There is a catch-22 when renting a bus for out-of-town trips. Group rates are not available for a small bus. A standard size bus costs \$1600.00 which in the past has been subsidized beyond

member tickets by the Senior Center budget. The bus holds 52 people which comes to about \$30.00/person. Tickets for last year's riverboat ride were also subsidized. Under the current budget this is not sustainable. It is important that there is transparency in the cost of trips. There was agreement that members need to be informed of the actual cost of transportation, events and trips so they are charged enough to cover expenses. If members do not sign up because the cost is too high, Commission members are willing to forgo the event/trip. Dorothy provided suitable language for this change, "subsidizing is no longer available". Dorothy will talk to a theater friend about discounts.

Rick provided an update on the budget. In 2023 the Senior Center budget was \$21,000. \$18,000.00 was used for instructors. \$500-600 was for Shop Rite supplies. The remaining funds were used to subsidize programming supplies and trips. Sharon reports that Metuchen Senior Inc. (MSI) a separate not-for-profit entity will be contributing supplies for the coffee station in the front lobby. The MSI current fundraising endeavors have raised \$3,000. Therefore, that is all they can contribute. MSI will be involved in fundraising plans that are recommended by this Commission. In order to hire a ceramics instructor, additional funds will need to be raised. Currently, instructors are paid \$50.00/hour. A discussion took place about informing the membership of their option to donate to MSI. The Metuchen Senior Commission looks at the day-to-day operations of the Senior Center. Finances beyond the budget are delegated to MSI.

May is 'Older American Month'. There is a Middlesex County 90+ Birthday Luncheon on May 17 open to anyone 90+ years. Another adult may accompany him/her. This is a free luncheon to be held in Woodbridge. Wendi and Rick will 'host' the May 21 Metuchen Senior Center Luncheon. They will buy the prepared food so participants will not pay for it. They will need the number of participants ahead of time. July 2 will be the regular outdoor BBQ luncheon set up in the parking lot.

Old Business: Lynn spoke with Sondra Flite from 'Friends of the Metuchen Library' (FOTML) for information about how the library raises money. See the list on a separate paper. The idea of participating in the '**Town Wide Garage Sale**' was enthusiastically received. MSI would be in charge. The membership would be asked to contribute stuff and participate on the day of the sale.

Wendi reached out to Bonnie at the high school about town students preparing meals for our monthly luncheon. She wasn't available so Wendi will continue to pursue contact. Wendi will also continue to reach out to other resources to illicit interest in our monthly luncheon program.

Tom is willing to drive the Senior Center bus in the Memorial Day Parade so members will be solicited to join in. Trina and Beverley will announce the event at upcoming luncheons. Wendi will register the Senior Center for the parade. There is no banner for the bus

Rick has pricing for tee-shirts. Dorothy suggested printing on the shirts, "I Support the Metuchen Senior Center". All present liked the idea. Rick and Wendi will follow up on this. The tee-shirts will be one way of raising money for the Senior Center.

Rich Miller from the Metuchen Garden Club has not yet trimmed the bushes around the Senior Center.

New Business: Lorraine reports that 13 ½ % of Metuchen's population is over 65. She would like to see a greater effort made to increase the Senior Center membership. Rick reports there are currently 254 members; 191 are Metuchen residents and 63 are non-residents. Dorothy will promote 'Bridge' at the Senior Center at the Monday Borough Council Meeting. This may bring in a few new members. An **Open-House** to advertise the offerings of the Senior Center was discussed. It will be planned for an evening and Commission members are encouraged to attend. Senior Center Tee-shirts will be on hand to sell. Dorothy suggests that the Borough supply refreshments or perhaps a sponsor can be found to do so. Members participating in activities that evening would demonstrate the variety of offerings at the Senior Center. Rick will make an 'Open House' flyer which can be put up around town.

New Commission meeting dates were discussed. Trina made a **motion** to revise the 2025 calendar to be five meetings a year; January, March, June, September and November. Beverley seconded it. The motion carried. The dates need to be run by the Borough Clerk to confirm no conflicts on the dates. The Borough publishes all its Commission dates in the *Home News* each December for the following year. The January meeting will also help to inform new Commission members appointed in January instead of waiting until April to do so.

Beverley reports there have been no complaints about the newly raised luncheon price from \$10 to \$15.

Beverley read Jay's report about increasing dues for non-residents. See separate paper. A discussion about Jay's proposal to raise non-resident dues included what other towns charge; Highland Park \$90.00. All other neighboring towns do not allow non-residents to join or participate. Some towns charge by class. Several ideas were discussed. It was decided to table this topic until June when it was agreed that a decision would be made with more members present.

Monday's exercise class will no longer be an afternoon 'Chair Exercise' class with Elizabeth. Instead it will be a 'Strength and Balance' morning exercise class with Alberto. Elizabeth will continue to lead two exercise classes on Fridays, weekly alternating 'Chair Exercise' and 'Chair Yoga'. The new 'Stitch and Gab' class still needs a consistent crochet instructor. Alice will reach out to Regina who had indicated interest in volunteering to do this.

The Commission meetings for the rest of 2024 are June 12, September 11, and November 13. Meetings are held at the Senior Center from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

Sharon reports that the next MSI meeting is April 23rd at 4:00 pm.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:00 pm: motion by Beverley and seconded by Alice