

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
February 9, 2022**

PRESENT: Charlene Bonenfant Jennifer DeLuca Kelley Sylvia
Edward O'Brien Joanne LaFerrara Lori Gonsalves
Ann Kardamis Herbert Day

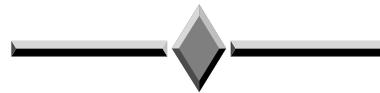
ABSENT: Laura Miola Edward Duffy

Meeting called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Edward O'Brien

Ann Kardamis made a motion to accept the September 8, 2021 meeting minutes.

Joanne LaFerrara seconded.

All in favor.



[Board Meeting Reports 02.09.2022](#)

Director and Assistant Director's Report:

- **Elder Outreach:**

3068 elder telephone contacts, 520 elder home visits, 1033 office visits, 37 new outreach clients, 555 Nursing interactions, 405 agency contacts have been completed on behalf of elder clients, 471 family/friend phone contacts have been completed

Working to redevelop the peer friendly visiting program to focus in on Portuguese mail translation and other translation services for the non-English speaking seniors in the Elder Outreach Program. This will afford the case worker the opportunity to focus on case management tasks outside of translation services.

We are reviewing the major needs of each outreach case to determine staffing in the department. One Bilingual outreach worker and the peer friendly visitor both ended employment in December. Gabby the BSU MSW Social Work intern will be with us until May. It has been determined that we will accept another MSW student in the fall of 2022 for the Elder Outreach Department – we interview the prospect on the 24th of February.

The onboarding of Deb Surprenant has been beneficial to the Elder Outreach Department as she is taking on all new referrals, assisting with information and referral calls, making wellness check in calls and answering basic questions on the Elder Outreach program and services available to Taunton residents age 60+. Additionally, she has been the point of contact for all COVID home test kits for residents age 60+ in the Taunton community. She and Jane Doucet have worked in tandem to create a method of answering phones, making follow up contact, scheduling pickups/deliveries and documenting all necessary interactions in My Senior Center.

- **SHINE:**

There were 503 SHINE interactions documented – 386 of those were Open Enrollment related appointments including applications, enrollments and new to Medicare (full SHINE) appointments 44 of those open enrollment appointments required translation by out Elder

Outreach Bilingual Portuguese staff. Additionally, there were 199 interactions related to health insurance information and health insurance issues.

- **Senior Center Activities:**

Senior Center activities have continued to be conducted however scaled down and we continue to watch the numbers to see if there is a surge. The Director and Assistant Director worked with the Board of Health and made the decision to stay open even as most centers surrounding us chose to close. EOEA required us to impose a mask mandate at the Senior Center. Ed O'Brien asked if vaccination was also required by EOEA or the City. Charlene answered no they cannot and the City does not have a vaccine or mask mandate. Activities at Lee Terrace and Thomas Apartments have begun (sittercise/a movie/two craft projects). East Taunton needs a bit of renovating before we can move forward; however scaled down programming will happen at Caswell in March. We will host outdoor musical performances by Mike Higgins in East Taunton. We have collaborated with the library on senior computer hours and a book club and we are planning events with Park & Rec such as pool activities. We have also spoke with Rehoboth COA who have purchased Francis Farm and we are thinking of collaborating on league play – such as pickleball, horseshoes and Bocce. Charlene asked Joanne if we would be able to collaborate on providing transportation to such league events, and Joanne confirmed she is on board with working that out. Ed O'Brien asked if we had inquired with the PACC about using there Bocce and Horse Shoe courts. Charlene will look into that option. In March we will be hosting a meet and greet with the new City Council and the Mayor – the councilors are asked to provide the coffee and prepackaged breakfast items. Our first grab and go will be on March 31, 2021 at the Taunton Nursing Home – the theme is based on the opening day of baseball. Charlene invited the Board to attend the Meet & Greet and the Grab & Go events. The AARP tax prep program is being held this year and appointments have started – and we have twice as many appointments this year. Last year we ran out of appointments on the first day. The newsletter has been redeveloped and has a more modern look – if anyone knows of a business that would like to advertise please send them to us. We are running out of room in the newsletter and to get more pages we need more advertisers. Herbert Daye asked Charlene to forward information on sponsorship for the newsletter. Charlene mentioned we will have donation bins available in June, July and August for the Teen Closet and Taunton Animal Shelter.

- **Community Relations Program/Emergency Fund/Teen Christmas Program:**

Continues to assist with utility, fuel and rental assistance. Mary Beth distributed approximately \$8,500.00 in gift cards for the Adopt a Teen Christmas Program. A special thanks to The Riverhouse, Star Drive In, Berkley Beer Company and the seniors at the center for stepping up and assisting. The public also stepped in to assist in a big way. Mary Beth Forshaw should be commended - she took on this project and really ran with it. We assisted Our Daily Bread with setting up an emergency cold weather shelter; a hotline has been set up and the number is 508-233-2447. ARPA funds will assist with the meals for the emergency shelter which will be facilitated through the Taunton Emergency Task Force.

- **Taunton Opioid Task Force:** Charlene reported that the team met with Jake Auchincloss' office; the Congressman reached out to ask the needs of the committee. It was stated that a dedicated full time grant coordinator/manager was desperately needed because the members of the committee have full time positions and the ability to engage fully with the funding available is not feasible at this time. An asset map was generated by STARR and there is a definite uptick in overdoses of those of color. There is an average of 20 overdoses a month, mostly men in their 30's. Charlene met with the Mayor and OECD to hopefully

investigate avenues of support for a grant funded position and to discuss the impact of not having this opportunity. Ed O'Brien asked if this was a position that could be run through a local non-profit and also asked if we received funds from the Purdue Settlement Earmark. Charlene stated that \$500,000.00 went to New Bedford, and that the Grant should be run through Board of Health, but unfortunately they weren't available to manage it either. Edward O'Brien asked Charlene to forward the Grant information to him to take a look at, but Charlene has already forwarded it to OECD.

-Lori Gonsalves update on TOTF: Lori stated they are still holding meetings via zoom and the Taunton Police Department is still doing home visits. Judge Mathers is trying to get the Taunton Drug Court up and running again. There have been a couple of graduates of the program. A lot of events were not able to happen due to the pandemic. The D.A.'s Office is holding a Team Summit in May.

Other Department Updates

a. City and Grant Funding updates:

We are still awaiting the final figure on our Executive Office of Elder Affair Formula Funding; I have tabled the budget presentation that we discussed at our last full meeting until a final amount has been received. Jen and Charlene met with the Mayor to discuss the needs of the department which was inclusive of hiring full time positions in the outreach department, the need for a new senior center as well as for a grant manager for the Taunton Opioid Task Force. We further met with the new CFO and voiced the same. We have a follow up meeting on February 10, 2022 at 3:00 PM. Charlene estimated that we need Ten Million dollars for a new COA and is looking into Bristol County ARPA Funds for that. C.J. mentioned that he was under the impression that Taunton was awarded funds from the Bristol County ARPA Grant. Charlene confirmed Taunton did receive funds but didn't have a confirmed answer from Council as to where the funds were allocated. Charlene stated that Human Services receives less than one percent of the City Budget and does not cost the City any rent or utilities as we are housed by the Taunton Housing Authority, and would like a new COA to be part of the City's Master Plan since we have as many Senior's paying taxes as we have school age children in the city. Edward O'Brien expressed that at that rate he feels Taunton should have 2 or 3 COA's. Charlene would like the needs assessment from Edward O'Brien to present to the City Council by March 31, 2022. He said he will have it ready.

b. Staff Transitions and New Positions (Non ARPA funded):

In October, Tracy Heger transferred to the position of Department of Human Services Program Coordinator – this transfer was based on the need for a full time SHINE counselor as well as for the need of someone to manage the larger programs. Jennifer Martins was promoted to Head Clerk and is taking on greater responsibility in the center. We have hired through EOEAF funds and the city has agreed to pay for the benefits, another clerk for the front desk – Linda started on January 3, 2022.

c. ARPA Updates: We have hired two of the three initial positions we requested. Deb Surprenant started in November as the Elder Outreach Information Worker and Jane Doucet started December 1, 2021 as the Recreational Therapist. The Taunton Emergency Task Force has received the initial \$50,000.00 for basic needs assistance; we will be using some of this funding to assist with food at the cold weather emergency shelter. We are foregoing the third position at this time. We have begun expending the senior activities and supplies funds as well.

- d. **Vaccination Clinics:** Pop Up Clinic November 18, 2021 – The Taunton Housing Authority in conjunction with the Mayor’s COVID Coordinator held a pop up walk in vaccination clinic at the Senior Center in which 150 shots were given; each person who got a vaccination received a grocery store gift card.
- e. **Free COVID at home tests:** 540 COVID Home Tests have been distributed with 704 documented people being tested. Maximum amount of persons able to be tested so far is 866 (2kits in a box).
- f. **Renovations:** New windows have been installed and the upstairs office is ready to go. Jane and Deb will be transferring up there. We will use the elder outreach department for the tax program this year since we have more appointments available than last year. The third floor office space is complete and we have moved staff upstairs.
- g. **Collaboration on Housing with Programming:** Jane has developed some programming at Lee Terrace and Thomas apartments. We were going to begin a card room at Fitzsimmons Arms however COVID struck again and we have had to table this activity until the numbers start going down. We will continue to watch the numbers because folks are anxious to play cards and socialize. There were 5 cases of COVID within the over 65 population as of today - however we wonder how much the at home tests skew the numbers.

Ann Kardamis made a motion to adjourn @ 10:42 a.m.

Seconded by Joanne LaFerrara.

All in favor.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 9, 2022