

Town of Natick

Council on Aging Board – Meeting Minutes

POSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF M.G.L. CHAPTER 30A, §§ 18-25, AS AMENDED

February 09, 2026 2:00 PM

HYBRID MEETING

- 1) Welcome & Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order by Saul Beaumont at 2:05 PM and roll call attendance was confirmed. There was a quorum.

Board Member Attendance: Saul Beaumont, Jim Fitzgerald, Mark Frankel, Linda Jaffe, Fonda Mangino (Zoom), Paula Panchuck, Sal Pandolfo, Debra Shaw, Mal Sockol, Jan Sewell (Zoom), Laura Forker

Associate Member Attendance: Connie Pitt (Zoom), Christine Weithman

Natick COA Staff Attendance: Donna Tarutz, Director of Council on Aging & Human Services (Zoom)

Liaison Attendance: Richard Sidney, Town Select Board Liaison

Guest Attendance: none.

- 2) Public Comments:** No comments.

- 3) January Minutes Approval:**

Sal made a motion to approve and Paula seconded the motion. All approved. (Saul-Yes, Jim-Yes, Mark-Yes, Linda-Yes, Fonda-Yes, Paula-Yes, Sal-Yes, Debra-Yes, Mal-Yes, Jan-Yes, Laura-Yes: 11-Yes, 0-No)

- 4) Announcements**

None.

- 5) Associate Member Nomination**

Postponed until the next meeting.

- 6) Town Staff Report** - Donna Tarutz, Director of Council on Aging and Human Services

- a) Upcoming key programs (see newsletter for all): Fraud prevention. Online shopping Tips and Safe buying, creative writing/poetry, celebrate sing dance America birthday with singing/dancing and presentation on women of 1776, Immigration Experience talk, and the Book club (facilitated by Morse Institute). Note that AARP tax appointments and SHINE appointments all filled through February but more being added for March.
- b) Budget: \$690K annual budget for COA is 4% higher than last year. Wellness programs and transportation programs are the highest line items. There were two questions: (1) why is the budget approximately \$250K less than the one from 2019? (2) Does the budget include the value of any grants or donations? The answers were: (1) potential answer is there may have been town reorganizations after that therefore may not be comparing apples to apples with 2026 budget. Chris took action to work with proper town officials to determine the cause of the discrepancy. (2) No, grants and donations are not included in the line item budget. A final request was the COA board would like more insight into the line items comprising the budget.

- c) There are five (5) bus trips planned for 2026: Maine (Ogunquit), Newport Mansions, Plymouth Waterfront, and the Norman Rockwell museum in Stockbridge, New Hampshire Turkey Train. The bid is out to vendors for these trips. Participants do pay a fee for the trip and a portion is covered by the budget.

7) Subcommittee and Workgroup Reports

a. Housing Subcommittee –Jim Fitzgerald (Linda, Paula, Laura):

Provided draft strategic objectives (2) to the Strategic Planning Committee. Laura has joined our team. New Assisted Living Facility being built at the 9/27 area where the former Fannons and some medical/office buildings is moving ahead through the project approval process with the Town. Our team has developed a short list of questions for the COA Staff to gain understanding of their role in housing and we will provide these to Donna to facilitate dialog with her team on this topic.

b. Governance Subcommittee - (Sal, Connie)

Presented changes to the board at this meeting. There were no comments on the draft. Final approval on this update will be voted on at next month's meeting.

c. Strategic Planning Subcommittee - Paula/Jan (Jim):

Met on January 30th. Progress continues on the defining the strategic objectives for the five strategic goals. Desire is to have draft objectives from all subcommittees by the end of February. This will allow a full draft of the strategic plan to be presented at the April meeting. A request is being made for up to one hour to discuss the draft at the April meeting. The goal is to approve the plan by June.

d. Health Workgroup - (Fonda, Mark, Jan, Debbie)

Reviewed NCSC COA existing health related programs. Very impressed with the programs on physical exercise. Considering how we could advertise these more including the usage of the NCSC gym which is very affordable for all people in town. Reviewed other towns health related programming and identified a number of ideas in areas such as chronic diseases that may be good future programs for our COA.

Presented information regarding Active Aging week (October 5th through 11th) which is sponsored by ICAA. If we want free use of ICAA campaign tools for Active Aging Week, then the COA has to register. Mark made a motion that the COA Board ask Donna and the COA Staff to investigate registering for this event. Chris seconded the motion. The results of the vote were: (Saul-Yes, Jim-Yes, Mark-Yes, Linda-Yes, Fonda-Yes, Paula-Yes, Sal-Yes, Debra-Yes, Mal-Yes, Jan-Yes, Laura-Yes: 11-Yes, 0-No)

Donna stated she would commence looking into this upon her return from medical leave. There is time pressure on this decision if we want to have this event this year since if not registered by the middle of spring it will not happen.

e. Safety Workgroup: (Laura, Jim, Mal):

Did not meet this month. Excited about getting our recommended speaker for the March meeting (see Speakers Workgroup).

f. Speakers Workgroup: Sal Pandolfo (Chris Weithman)

March speakers will be from the Natick Police and they are Lt Chad Howard and Detective Greg Lanoue. They will speak about fraud and overall safety issues impacting seniors in Natick and ways to help prevent them. Goal will be that at the end of the presentation we can discuss how to help deploy this information to as many seniors as possible in town.

The next speaker will be for the June meeting. Note that the workgroup is always open to recommendations for speakers.

g. Programs Workgroup: (TBD)

The activities for this workgroup are still being scoped out.

9) Liaison Reports

a. Dementia Friendly Community Update – Paula Panchuck

- Compiling list of current services for dementia and suggestions from participating work groups. Goal is to compile all suggestions for the March meeting and create the final action plan for a launch date in June. Official launch for the program will be held in the Great Room at NCSC.

b. Town Select Board Liaison Report: Richard Sidney

- Nothing to report.

c. Springwell - Debra Shaw

- Report is in the Google Drive. Budgeting changes in senior care options (SCO) required members to now also enroll in Medicare parts A and B. Some members disenrolled during this process. Also now making MassHealth folks apply for Medicare now and Medicaid will now employ a five year look back. Note that PACE program is all over Massachusetts.
- The potential loss of immigrant health care workers has been put on hold by a Federal Judge although some are already self-deporting. It was mentioned that both public and private agencies are starved for employees. It is almost impossible to hire enough workers in this area even when raising wages.

d. Friends of Natick Community Senior Center - Donna Tarutz

- Friends continue their generous donations to programs like the upcoming Love Note celebration for Valentines Day, concerts, program on Online shopping scams, Pot of Gold party for St. Patricks Day, and the Mothers Day Harvest event. It was noted that the Friends provide free daily Coffee, hot chocolate, Tea, and newspapers. There is sign informing people to inquire at front desk to get these items.

10) Board items

- Update on Future of Johnson School property: Feedback from 4 out of 6 town committees (including COA Board) emphasized the need to retain/preserve the area for open space and to oppose any efforts to sell any of the land. The latest materials on this project can be found on the Town of Natick web site.
- Rich Sidney stated that the next meeting will be his last as Select Board liaison as his term will be ending. He recommended we make a request to the Select Board to identify his replacement.

11) Next Meeting Date: Monday March 9, 2026. 2 PM.

12) Adjournment: The agenda was completed at 3:15 pm. Sal moved to adjourn, Mal seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

(Saul-Yes, Jim-Yes, Mark-Yes, Linda-Yes, Fonda-Yes, Paula-Yes, Sal-Yes, Debra-Yes, Mal-Yes, Jan-Yes, Laura-Yes: 11-Yes, 0-No)

Respectfully submitted by Jim Fitzgerald, COA Secretary