

**TOWN OF AMHERST SENIOR SERVICES
MINUTES OF ADVISORY BOARD ZOOM MEETING
Wednesday, December 8, 2021**

PRESENT: Kate Wagner, Chairperson, Senior Services Advisory Board; Honorable Deborah Bruch Bucki, Councilmember/Liaison to Senior Services Department; Asst. Chief Michael Camilleri; Beverly Fish; Rhonda Frederick; Brian MacDonald; Del Szczesniak; Brian C. Bray, Director, Amherst Senior Services; Melissa Abel, Deputy Director, Amherst Center for Senior Services; Mary-Diana Pouli, Executive Director, Amherst Youth & Recreation Department

EXCUSED: Aaron Carlson; Robert Durante; Dal Giuliani; Karen Grady; Honorable Geoffrey Klein; Jordana Maisel; Jay Smith; Deborah Waldrop

CALL TO ORDER & APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES - Chairman Wagner called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Motion to approve the October 13, 2021 minutes by Del Szczesniak, seconded by Beverly Fish.

Report from Amherst Senior Services Director, Brian Bray:

Brian announced his resignation as Director of the Center for Senior Services. His last day will be next week Friday. The plan for the Senior Center is to join forces with the Department of Youth & Recreation. Mary-Diana Pouli will be taking over as head of the combined departments & Melissa Abel will be taking on an enhanced role at the Senior Center.

Covid policies continue with masks requirements & social distancing. The County is still running the congregate dining program & plan to continue serving meals. We are reluctant to stop programs & activities at the Center and are doing our best to make sure everyone is safe. Tops continues to offer vaccinations at the senior center.

The Town Budget was recently approved without any significant changes. The biggest change we had was the Senior Outreach Services Unit being moved from a grant budget to an operating budget. The impact of that should be a lot less stress & issues going forward and will be a long term benefit for seniors. We have reached our 2021 revenue target despite the Covid pandemic and the closures we had earlier this year. We are waiting for final approval of the Amherst Meals on Wheels contract which expires on December 31st. Frozen meals will continue as long as the County continues its support.

Report from Mary-Diana Pouli: Mary-Diana is the current Executive Director of the Youth & Recreation Department. She has been a Town employee for 30 years. The merge of the Senior Center with the Youth & Recreation Department is a work in progress and we hope to bring all our services under one giant umbrella. Our working name at the moment is the Town of Amherst Department of Community Services and our goal is to provide services in the Town for everyone from toddlers to senior citizens. The merge of departments is not intended to cut costs, but to better serve the community. Staff & program cuts are not anticipated. Employees may be working in different positions if they desire to do so. Vacancies will be filled & we hope to align people's strengths to their positions. Payroll & purchasing will be streamlined. The plan is to grow & expand. The first 3 years will be about aligning staff & becoming comfortable. There will be bumps in the road, but our hopes are to grow, expand partnerships and optimize programs. We know that changes are difficult for some & exciting for others and we will try to be sensitive & respectable to those feelings. This is the right time to try something new & we are excited over the possibilities. You can contact Mary-Diana via email: mpouli@amherst.ny.us or by phone: (716) 631-7132 x 7532.

Report from Melissa Abel:

The merge of the Senior Center & the Youth & Recreation Departments is a good opportunity for us to become new & innovative and enhance what we are doing. There have been many questions & concerns and bumps are expected. This is a good opportunity for us to enhance our programs & offer different types of services. Our goal is to make the transition as smooth as possible for our seniors.

Center Highlights:

- There is a walk-in vaccine clinic today in the Adult Day Center from 9-2:00 pm. First time shots, boosters & flu shots are being given.
- The Holiday Happening drive-thru is this Friday. This in collaboration with the Library, Police, and Youth & Recreation Departments.
- The vaccine clinic will continue on Mondays.
- We have one staff person out with Covid & hope to have her back next week. We are a little short in some areas, but managing. The collaboration with Youth & Rec should be helpful in areas of staffing.
- The Social Workers are working partially remote & alternating days. Home visits are on hold.

Updates from Debbie Bucki:

Debbie thanked Brian for his work over the last year and wished him well in his new position. Congratulations were given to Melissa on her new role at the Senior Center & Debbie is looking forward to working with Mary-Diana. The merge of departments is a good move forward for everyone & good things are expected. It's a great start & Debbie is happy to be a part of this exciting process. Her words of advice: Err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion.

Member Updates:

- Rhonda Frederick said that People Inc. is hoping to hear about their proposed project on Evans Street next week. They received funding for affordable housing in that location.
- Del Szczesniak addressed the fear of change & the misinformation it can cause. It is important to keep members informed as much as possible.
- Brian MacDonald will be moving to a practice in Orchard Park. He stressed the importance of getting a Covid booster & is keeping a watchful eye on Covid & the Omicron variant.
- Michael Camilleri is looking forward to working with the Board in 2022.

Membership reappointments are being looked at and information will be sent out soon. We will continue as we are & maintain the Board as is for now.

Adjourn: 9:35 a.m. - Motion to adjourn by Rhonda Frederick, seconded by Del Szczesniak.

The next Advisory Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 8:30 a.m.

370 John James Audubon Parkway, via Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Melissa Abel