

## **Finance Committee Presentation January 12,2020**

*The Lancaster Council on Aging will work to enhance the quality of life of Lancaster's seniors, and their caregivers. The Council on Aging will strive to assist them, to the greatest extent possible in maintaining dignity, and independence in their role as full participants in the community through programming, advocacy, and education*

### **Covid Impacts**

The Lancaster Community Center began 2020 with a strong presence in the Community including an array of fitness classes, intergenerational events, and counseling. We continued to offer a robust schedule, greater than many other Centers. We continued to offer regular support services as well, transportation, counseling, and meal services. We also made sure our popular events and programs brought in revenue to help fund the Center's mission.

Mid-March Covid was declared a pandemic, older and compromised clientele were recognized as those at highest risk. We quickly pivoted, closing the Center to visitors and thus eliminating many supports and revenue streams. We developed innovative and effective programming and supports to meet our mission including the Senior Angels program, Senior Connections, Dining Al Fresco, Food Pantry delivery, and USDA food distribution site, Cheers for the Holidays, Grab and Go Dinners, Outdoor Santa, Crazy Crafternoons and an array of virtual fitness classes and programs.

Initially in FY 2021 we have begun a 'hybrid' model returning transportation and some food service. We began socially distanced events and meals- with safeguards. However, with the surge we are currently greatly restricting most in-house activities though Outreach continues to be the biggest demand. We look forward to continuing to work with the Board of Health to offer safe programming and supports for those at most risk. We look forward to a 'new normal' FY 2022. We are submitting a budget to reflect anticipated changes.

### **Challenges and Unmet Needs:**

#### **Community Service/Outreach Overload=Turnover/Increased Service Demands**

**Mental Health and Economic Challenges;** Lancaster is not immune to the greatly increased mental health challenges exacerbated by COVID-19. Though many residents struggled before the pandemic and will continue to. We have seniors in our town who are greatly depressed and at great risk. Even in bucolic Lancaster we assist residents who are homeless and living outdoors or in their vehicles, residents in living in violent homes, and residents we have had to help 'section' or send for mental health inpatient care. In addition we serve those who have lost jobs, income and a sense of security. We assist with fuel assistance, SNAP, housing and transportation, connectivity, and food security, caregiving and dementia. The side effects of Covid go well beyond the hospital. This season has been especially challenging with Federal benefits reduced. Intensive assistance requires greater time spent per person than under normal conditions, but the impacts are greater.

***The job of the Community Services Liaison is very stressful and has experienced high turnover. Currently we pay the Liaison less than we paid an Administrative Assistant two years ago, and the discrepancy has grown. In fact, the rate for this critical has decreased. 2020 the CSL started at \$19.19 and 2021 started at \$18.79 (less than the Admin rate of FY 20). Other salaries did not increase equitably when compared to other departments wages. Our staff deserves better than that. Our Seniors deserve better than that.***

**Transportation:** We provide top notch, personal door to door service to the most vulnerable residents. Currently we cannot transport more than two people at once on the van due to distancing regulations. There are many residents who have been putting off routine care as they do not have access or appointments have not been available. This means we are not as efficient judged per mile, or hour. We have and are committed to getting seniors to critical appointments, even if they are farther or they need to ride individually. We expect to transport Phase One Homebound seniors to vaccines soon, individually. We have some obstacles returning to a normal schedule as our existing drivers have been 'borrowed' by neighboring towns that pay more, or quit to drive for other towns. hard time scheduling drivers as they are taking routes at towns that pay better than we do.

**Food Service/Security:** We are currently providing hot meals to those who need to remain at home five days a week, at little cost to the town. In addition, we supply families with door-to-door food pantry services and supplement when we can with USDA food. Going forward we plan on expanding our excellent business relationship with Sandee's restaurant to provide meals to more people through the take out and eventually eat in model when it is deemed safe. Seniors with social distanced seating and serve safe protocols followed, per approval of the BOH.

### Budget Overview

#### 7161 Total Lancaster Residents

##### By Age

01-17: 1070 or 14.94%

50-59: 1150 or 16.06%

60-69: 1075 or 15.01%

70 +: 1057 or 14.76%

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Total 50 plus **45.83%** (*considered a senior in the Aging industry-AARP etc. to prepare for Aging in home*)  
**60 plus 29.77%** (*close to a third of Lancaster residents are traditional seniors*)

##### Budget

**Total Town Budget** \$ 25,439,778 (includes education and debt) FY22 est

**Town Services Budget** \$9,503,473 budget *without education includes all non-school costs*

**Total COA/LCC budget** \$73,780\* = (includes Community Center) Due to pay rates we can't use all

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**COA/LCC Budget as a % .29%** of total budget \*We could not even graph this as the graphic was so small it did not appear.

**COA/LCC Budget as a % .78%** of town only

### Supports and Solutions: By Request:

The COA/LCC improves the quality of life and property value for all residents. A well rounded and balanced community includes support for caregivers, and all generations. We are well respected and offer innovative programming and more importantly- critical lifesaving social services. However, with the cuts we have sustained this year, and in FY 2020 and decreased salaries we are not able to attract and retain staff. Our services have been negatively impacted. Families and Seniors who are most at risk are negatively impacted by changing staff and repeated training is a waste of town resources and money. Currently social workers are being actively

recruited at a rate of \$30 per hour. Need outstrips supply. We know the town is best served by a full time Community Services Liaison and feel it would be easier to attract and retain FT staff in the best interest of residents. We also request that historically underpaid staff is brought to market rate. **Our current pay rate for Admin AND CSL is lower than admin asst. staff was paid in FY19.**

### **Financial Supports Needed**

- **FT CSL** Please consider amending line 01541100 511020 to \$45,760
- **MOC Meals** per MOC \$12,500- we are interested in moving our contract which we expect might increase the cost several thousand.  
\*meals coordinator – meals to be served by staff and new vendor agreements.
- **Salary Adjustments:** We are requesting an increase in other salaries to bring in line with area salaries to make sure we can attract and retain

### **Summary**

***Historically Lancaster lags well behind neighboring towns, and state averages in supporting seniors while senior's property taxes support town revenue.***

Lancaster residents pay has one of the highest tax rates in MA. In 2020 Lancaster tax rates were 312<sup>th</sup> of 343 towns reporting or in the top 10% of towns.\* Those over 50 pay the large majority of the taxes. Yet the reverse is true for Senior support, where Lancaster rates as one of the lowest. Lancaster Seniors receiving less than 1% of the town budget, a *tiny number that is trending down.*

This is not equitable, not humane, nor in the best financial interest of the overall financial health of the town. It is widely known that seniors volunteer more than any other age group and require less services. It is in our best financial interest to keep seniors in their homes. The COA/LCC provides services to do that, though we cannot meet demand. Lancaster seniors we have spoken to strongly support good education funding and services and ask that they receive equitable funding in turn.

\* <https://patch.com/massachusetts/boston/ma-residential-property-tax-rates-each-community>

### **Expense Cuts**

*We understand expenses need to be managed strictly. While our expenses were already cut by 26.12% in FY 21 we honor your request for another budget reduction of 5% from expenses with the suggestion it come from Office supplies. Our expense budget is \$13,350- FY 21 **\$667.50 reduction** = \$12,682.50*

### **In house Statistics- FY2020**

- **630 individual seniors served** in house/or in person FY 2020 despite being 'closed' to the public for a third of the year. Many of these we served multiple times. ***This number excludes many large events, (Santa parties, Summer Lawn parties etc). Count is by MSC attendance software- and is voluntary. We expect our numbers are higher. Studies claim at least 20% of people are not accurately recorded in Centers without a reception (ist) area.***
- We serve families. We work with school nurses to supply food, and social work for families in need. We also work with referrals, churches, and other agency referrals.
- We serve all ages in larger events designed to appeal to all and improve Lancaster's standard of living.
- In addition we manage rental space for the town, and other boards and commissions.