

COA/LCC Meeting – MINUTES

July 18, 2022 at 10:30AM

Lancaster Community Center - in person and via ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87647643485>

Meeting ID: 876 4764 3485

Attendees:

Members:

	Present	Absent
Judie Maclean	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nicole Kanis – Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deborah Ducharme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Linda Cutler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frank Macgrory	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ann Mazzola	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others present:

David James
Roberta Winsor
Maribeth Eugene
Peter Christoph
Mary Ann Cleary
Sheila Casey
David Bartlett
Audra Guimond

Meeting called to order by Nicole Kanis at 10:33am

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes of the June meeting were unanimously approved without any changes

Friends Updates:

FOLS TREASURER'S REPORT

June 2022

CATEGORY	INCOME	EXPENSES
Pancakes	\$41.00	\$49.11
Quicken subscription renewal	/ / / / /	\$38.24
Gardening	/ / / / /	\$132.25
LCC Building Improvements	/ / / / /	\$486.30
Fitness	/ / / / /	\$95.44
Entertainment	/ / / / /	\$250.00
Gifts	/ / / / /	\$39.98
Friday Lunch Group	/ / / / /	\$82.65
Credit Interest	\$0.66	/ / / / /
TOTALS	\$41.66	\$1,173.97
ACCOUNT BALANCE AS OF 6/30/22		\$39,361.00

Updates (Director position vacant):

- Covid-19 update
 - No change in numbers or guidance per BOH (Jeff Paster)
- LCC/SC vacation coverage/hours
 - David James will be on a well-deserved vacation the week of July 25
 - He will generate a list of daily activities and provide this to Kate Hodges
 - Phone messages will be forwarded to Kate Hodges
 - Scott Muth will be asked to unlock both lower doors (not just the SC door)
 - David James will prepare the van schedule and meals on wheels lists for each day of the week.
- PR/Marketing
 - "Crier" had still not arrived after one week David James called LPI and found out they had seen all the white space in the document and thought there was a problem. They called Alix Turner's number and left message, but her phone had been disconnected by IT. David resubmitted the newsletter and LPI will print asap.
 - August newsletter needs to be prepped as soon as possible,
- Senior Tax Work-off Program
 - David James will receive, sign, and forward timesheets to Bobbie Jo Williams
- Building Updates. Cleaning etc.
 - Following the BOH inspections, major cleaning has occurred. Estimating 80-90% of items in the LCC have been removed, including ALL medical equipment, 120 place settings of china, 120 place setting of stainless tableware, all "seasonal" decorations, all "craft" materials, the red padded Senior Center chairs, etc.
 - The Friends of the Lancaster Seniors, spearheaded by Denise Hurley, and with guidance and approval from Kate Hodges have repainted the Senior Center and are now repainting the meeting room. New furniture will be purchased (or donated) for the meeting room.
 - ServPro has been commissioned to do a thorough cleaning of the LCC. Date TBD, but soon.

- Food service updates- MOC etc.
 - MOW continuing as before
 - Upstairs kitchen MAY become available to us “in a few months”
 - No Tuesday breakfast yet, although the Friends had a continental breakfast last Thursday.
 - David James will speak to Denise about doing something on Tuesdays, so we can continue the blood pressure clinics and Senator Cronin’s visits.
- Programming
 - All exercise classes, BINGO, Bridge, Mah Jong continuing
 - All social trips were cancelled due to lack of a leader.
 - Dining Club still going on
- Grants – no update
- Administrative and Personnel
 - David James announced that he has requested that Kate Hodges post his current position, and that he would stay on the job until a replacement is hired and trained.
 - David Bartlett still on medical leave
 - Ann Mazzola announced that she is resigning from the COA Board, upset by the actions taken by the town toward Alix and the Senior Center
 - Deb Ducharme announced that she will not be requesting an extension of her term on the COA board, which expired 6/30.
 - Kate Hodges, TA, announced the creation of the Department of Health and Human Services (see attached document)
- Summer planning/Garden
 - Sheila Casey noted that this has been the best year ever for the garden
 - Sheila also announced that she would NOT be coordinating the garden next year.
- CSL update
 - With David Bartlett on leave, and Alix gone, there is NO ONE here to deal with Outreach issues.
- New Business that could not be anticipated
 - Mary Ann Cleary from Nashoba Neighbors gave a brief update. They are trying to reboot their efforts in Lancaster, and they need volunteers.
- Next meeting date – Aug 8, 2022; time 10:30

Respectfully submitted,



David R. James, Admin. Asst.



Town of Lancaster

Office of the Town Administrator

701 Main Street, Suite 1 • Lancaster, MA 01523

MEMO

TO: Select Board Members
FROM: Kate Hodges, Town Administrator
DATE: July 13, 2022
RE: Reorganization: Department of Health & Human Services

Background:

I was asked by Select Board Chairperson Stephen Kerrigan to study the operation and management of the Council on Aging (COA) and the Lancaster Community Center (LCC) in order to create a plan for the Town relative to these operations which was both financially feasible and appropriately sized to meet the needs of the Lancaster Community. My approach in beginning this study was to create a short-term and long term plan for the operation which covers all aspects of social and human services with the exception of the Public Library which is overseen by a separately elected Board of Directors.

While contemplating a long-term plan relative to social services in Lancaster, the need to develop a clear set of departmental goals and objectives which are to be carried out by professionally licensed staff became a very apparent and clear first step to the process. In order to hire and retain qualified individuals, the roles must be clearly defined and the operational funding sources must be identified.

Table A: FY23 Budgeted Personnel:

DIVISION	ROLE/TITLE	STATUS HOURS PER WEEK	TOTAL COMPENSATION
<i>COA</i>	Director	20 hrs/week	\$ 31,550
	Liaison	40 hrs/week	\$ 46,010
	Dispatch	10 hrs/week	\$ 11,502
	Meals Coordinator	9 hrs/week	\$ 12,000
<i>LCC</i>	Director	20 hrs/week	\$ 31,550
<i>Veterans</i>	Agent	Shared w/Leominster	\$ 20,000
<i>Recreation</i>	Director	20 hrs/week	\$ 22,000
<i>Board of Health</i>	Health Agent	Not Budgeted & Vacant	--
	Administrative Asst.	5 hrs./week	\$ 7,556
<i>Human Resources</i>	Director	Vacant	\$ 65,000
		TOTAL BUDGETED SALARIES	\$ 247,168

In studying the structure of the existing operations, the physical layout of the building, and the resources allocated to the operation, (outlined in *Table A* above) I believe if we carefully reevaluate the total social services needs for the Town with a keen eye towards the reallocation of dollars, we will be able to develop

a plan of action which creates a well-defined, and proportionately staffed, Department of Health and Human Services. The creation of a Health and Human Services Department ensures that Lancaster residents are provided access to essential needs and creative life-enhancements that cultivate all residents' social and emotional needs.

The idea of a Town Department tasked with ensuring attention and resources are funneled towards social, emotional, medical, and behavioral health programs and services is both timely and necessary. As Lancaster's population increases, so does the need for community and recreational programming. Service areas currently lacking in Town include access to affordable childcare, school-aged activities, summer camp programming, community social events, parent groups and organized playgroups. In terms of public health and social services, a strong push for programming related to substance abuse treatment, long and short-term care or support groups, nutritional and food insecurity assistance, and greater ease of access to public benefit systems for those who qualify, has grown exponentially.

Department staff will work to connect youth, families, elders, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other community members to programming, employment, volunteer opportunities, affordable housing, and support services. Through greater outreach efforts, the Town will be able to work with other local and state agencies and the Regional School District to identify at-risk persons in our community and their families *before* a crisis ensues. Partnering with programs such as regional juvenile justice and the Department of Elder Affairs will better assist families in helping their loved ones navigate difficult times. Greater community programming and events will work to bring the community together and foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose for residents.

1. REORGANIZATION FACTORS

- Complex health and safety issues over the past several years have led many communities to re-think and reevaluating their social service needs.
 - The 2021 US Census data shows Lancaster's population as 8,441, an increase of nearly 5% since 2010.
 - Residents aged 65+ account for 18.7% of Lancaster's population.
 - 6.6% of Lancaster's population are Veterans.
 - Lancaster residents under the age of 65 who are living with some type of disability account for 9.5% of the population. 5% of those individuals are without healthcare.
 - 3.9% of Lancaster's population are children under the age of 5 and 16.6% are under the age of 18 and live at home.
- The Recreation Committee has done an amazing job over the years of running a quality and robust program with very little budget and only one part-time staff member. Given the number of active community members and families, coupled with the fact that Lancaster has a public bathing beach and an active Community Center, expanding public recreational opportunities Town-wide is of great benefit to all.
 - The personal benefits relative to Recreational offerings are backed by more than three decades of scientific research and include:
 - Increased Life Expectancy
 - Improved Heart Health

- Prevention of Bone Disease
 - Reduction of Chronic Illnesses such as Diabetes
- The psychological benefits of Recreation include:
 - Reduction of Stress and Depression
 - Holistic Development Aids for Youth and Families
 - Enhancement of Emotional Health
 - Creation of Community and Belonging
- The Social Benefits of Recreation include:
 - Reduction of Crime
 - Reduction of Feelings of Isolation and/or Loneliness
 - Enhancement of Social Skills
 - Greater Understanding of Social, Cultural and Socioeconomic Differences
- The field of Social Work has changed a great deal over the years. Where communities once had no staff, or limited part time staff, '*available*' for folks in need, the structure of these services were often reactive rather than proactive.
 - Persons in crisis or in need would seek help, but communities were not set up in a manner that actively helped seniors, families, or persons in crisis *before* their situations became dire.
 - The COA Board members and staff have worked hard to adapt, expand and, in many cases, change their programs and offerings to best meet the needs of the community. They have accomplished a great deal with very little budget and even less staff support.
 - The Center is active and boasts a robust programming schedule, thanks for the efforts of the staff and board members – both past and present. Center staff coordinate rides for those in need and arrange for the delivery of food to Seniors who may not have consistent access to nutritious meals.
 - As the need for services have increased, the Town expanded its offerings. With this, the Town's fiduciary responsibility to the people served -- both professionally and ethically, also needs to evolve. To legally and ethically comply with the standards of care and operational procedures which surround client-based social services, staff must possess, and retain, certain qualifications.
 - In considering revisions to the job descriptions for the Director and the associated support staff, the Town must seek personnel with:
 - Educational backgrounds in Social Services, Geriatric Care, Human Factors or Organizational Management.
 - A minimum of three years' experience working in a social service setting or under a Licensed Clinical Social worker.
 - Particular focus and experience working with persons over the age of 65.
 - Clarity in both the Job Description and through ongoing trainings that social service staff are mandated reporters and are required to uphold and exercise certain boundaries relative to the populations they serve—children and adults.
 - When looking at the total operation in the Community Center, the Town must have at least one member of the paid staff who possess:

- A valid license in Social Work or a provisional social work license (meaning, they are working under the MSW or LCSW to obtain a clinical license) valid in the State of MA.
 - The ability to sustain their license through a commitment to continuing education which, in many cases, is provided by the State or offered through various Professional Associations.
 - A valid Serve-Safe certification and is familiar with the requirements necessary to operate a commercial kitchen and handle food service in accordance with the rules and regulations outlined by the Nashoba and Lancaster Boards of Health.
 - A background or expertise relative to community-based childcare and camp programming *plus* the ability to obtain proper licensing through the appropriate childcare authorities such as: Department of Early Education and Childcare, Nashoba Board of Health Camp Licensing Division and/or the American Camping Association.
- It is no secret that high-quality and visible leadership positions such as those outlined here are hard to fill. As the global workforce reevaluates the meaning of ‘work-life-balance’ in the wake of the pandemic, this notion has become particularly evident. As an employer, we need to be creative in structuring of our positions, offering competitive wages and allowing additional forms of compensation such as the ability to work from home or flexible scheduling, to attract persons to these roles.

2. REORGANIZATION GOALS

- Enhance the attraction of Lancaster for existing and potential residents, staff members, volunteers, businesses and local non-profit organizations and clubs.
- Meet the needs of community members by keeping them satisfied, engaged, safe and whole.
- Preserve and strengthen the Town’s capabilities to serve its citizens by expanding services, program offerings, grant opportunities and social interactions.
- Reduce burdens on the Town’s General Fund by generating steady and healthy revenue streams which sustain operations and, ultimately, *may* provide additional financial means for capital investments and infrastructure improvements.
- Bolster the capabilities of local businesses, entrepreneurs, and seasoned professionals by allowing them to market or teach classes within the community in the form of continuing education classes, public programing, and other wide-spread community building efforts.
- Create meaningful job opportunities for community members that teach responsibility, teamwork, and cooperation.
- Directly provide education to, or advocacy for, our community’s most vulnerable members in areas like cash and food assistance, subsidized health and housing programs, state and federal aid programs, tax abatements, and various trainings or self-help courses.
- Increase opportunities for seniors to participate in cross or multi-generational events and social activities.
- Improve communication to residents relative to social service, recreation, and public health matters available in, or through, the community.
- Actively promote programs and efforts which identify and surround public health; develop a

volunteer medical core consistent with hazard mitigation best practices relative to pandemic and public-health related outbreaks or natural disaster relief preparedness.

3. RECOMMENDED OPERATIONS

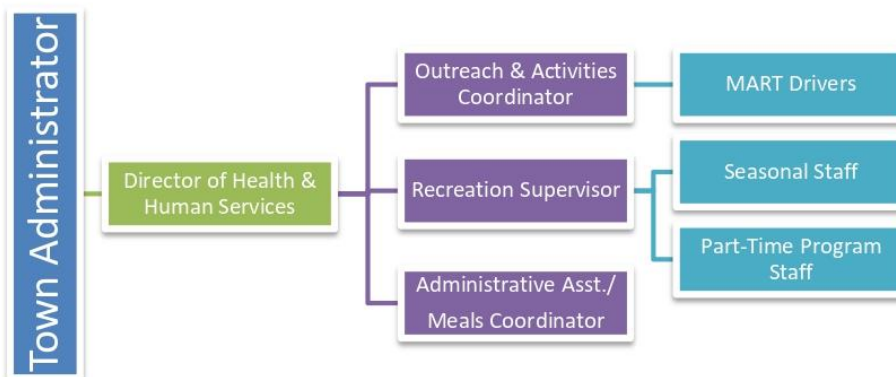
While the public sector differs from private business in a variety of ways, the operational management of the two entities is strikingly similar. Many Fortune 500 Companies undergo organizational audits regularly to ensure their departments, committees and staff are focused, streamlined, and designed in a manner which aligns with the goals and desires of its constituents. The same principles apply here. To meet the needs and demands of our growing community, we need to be more proactive in communicating with area social service agencies, recreation departments, state and federal transitional assistance agencies and local boards of health. Members of the community need to be informed of specific assistance programs that are available and, when requested, become more engaged in community-wide events, programs, and social gatherings.

To that end, the following restructuring proposal takes the existing dollars which were allocated to various health and human services functions for FY23 and re-organizes them into the following positions and categories:

Table B: FY23 Reorganized Personnel

ROLE/TITLE	STATUS HOURS PER WEEK	Projected COMPENSATION ¹
Health & Human Services Director	Full Time, Exempt	\$ 81,285
Outreach & Activities Coordinator	Full Time, Exempt	\$ 58,464
Recreation Coordinator	Full Time, Exempt	\$ 63,913
Admin/Meals Coordinator	15 hrs/week	\$ 19,420
Veteran's Agent	Shared w/Leominster	\$ 20,000
Health Agent	TBD ²	TBD ³
	TOTAL SALARIES	\$ 243,082
	Diff. from Budget	(\$ 4,086)⁴

4. REPORTING STRUCTURE*



**The diagram shows the paid staff positions only. It is worth noting; however, that the Director will also be overseen by the Council on Aging and Board of Health. The Director is also expected to maintain a good working relationship with the Recreation Committee who also participates in the oversight of the Recreation Supervisor's goals and effectiveness.*

Conclusion & Next Steps:

I believe that the plan above, as outlined, meets the criteria identified by the Select Board relative to Town Departments' purpose and structure. The proposed Department of Health and Human Services is fiscally responsible, budget neutral (and more likely, budget positive) and, most importantly, a professional, responsible, and holistic way to fulfil the important needs and basic human rights for those in our community. The mission of the Department is based on the idea of protecting the physical, social, and emotional wellbeing of Lancaster residents by supporting an individual's access to available transitional assistance, childcare and wellness programs, and other social and health-related services. Additionally, the Department will oversee various types of youth and family programming and events, each varying in style and format, to ensure members of the community have a convenient way to participate in community and educational endeavors which increase the quality of life in Lancaster.

In partnership with several well-established Town Boards and Committees, the Department will connect with existing resources to further their goals and mission. The Department of Health and Human Services shall build upon the idea of '*community*' and '*togetherness*' by spearheading initiatives which bring people and resources together. Regular communication and coordination with local groups such as the Nashoba and Lancaster Boards of Health, Council on Aging, Recreation Committee, Regional Veterans Services, Cultural Council, Disability Commission and the Agricultural Commission will benefit the Town by a collective approach to identifying needs and developing results-based solutions and opportunities to expanded resources and advocacy.

As a first step, the position of *Director of Health and Human Services* has been advertised. The ad was written to reflect a 'rolling deadline' but outlined a priority review date of July 15th. As of today's date, we have received more than thirty applications for the position, more than half of those who applied exceed the minimum qualifications relative to years of experience and education. The Director's job description was provided to the Chairperson of the COA Board and discussed with the Select Board Chair prior to posting. The advertisement and application timeline were also reviewed with both Board Chairs. I have asked that at least one of the COA Board participate in each 'round' of the interview process and expect the Select Board Chair will also be involved. I believe it is important to have additional perspectives from other boards and committees that may interact regularly with the Department and its staff. I would be interested in hearing thoughts regarding which committees or members of the community may be best to involve in the screening processes.

As a next step, attached you will find draft copies two other positions which were discussed above – the proposed Outreach and Activities Coordinator and the Recreation Supervisor. Filling these positions is critical to the operation and likely will be one of the first assignments imparted to the new Director at the time of their hire. As a final measure, this plan, and the accompanying documents, once reviewed by the Select Board, will also be forwarded to the Chairpersons of the Committees mentioned above and to the Town Department Heads. I want to ensure everyone is clear regarding this initiative and is afforded the opportunity to provide feedback as we move forward. I look forward to also receiving the Select Board's thoughts relative to this matter.

I look forward to working together to create a robust and exciting new Department of Health and Human Services. I am confident the members of this new team and the respective Boards and Committees will be able to work together to provide these essential services for Lancaster.