

Harvard Council on Aging  
Planning Meeting  
August 17, 2009

Present: Sharon Briggs, Carlene Phillips, Mike Peters, Barbara Kemp, Fran Nickerson, Janice Goodell, Connie Larrabee, Ginger Quarles, Lucy Wallace (Board of Selectmen liaison to the COA)  
Absent: Bill Mohn, Colleen Nigzus

Opening remarks:

COA Director Ginger Quarles reviewed the board's progress over the past five years, from a time when the COA had only a 19-hour-a-week director and the Hildreth House was in great disrepair, to the present, with a fulltime director, part-time outreach coordinator, part-time program director, and greatly improved senior center and expanded program and services. Ginger credited the board's supportive teamwork approach and urged board members to "keep the pressure on" to both improve and expand services for elderly residents and their families. In response, several board members praised Ginger's efforts to expand the program and facilitate the Hildreth House renovations.

Co-Chairwoman Sharon Briggs reviewed the goals established at last year's COA planning session and recommended limiting further discussion about ways to spark enhanced participation in our programs among younger seniors, or "baby-boomers," a topic that was amply covered last year. Ginger agreed, remarking that the greatest need she sees among "boomers" is help with their aging parents, particularly if they live far away. The board agreed that the COA should continue to promote awareness of the resources available to Harvard families in meeting the needs of elderly relatives, wherever they live. Mike suggested that one strategy might be to match people just encountering such issues with others who have more experience and who might be able to provide helpful insights.

Group sessions:

The group broke into three sub-groups to brainstorm suggested priorities or goals for the coming year. At the end of the sessions, the whole group heard reports from the sub-groups and agreed on the following list of priorities.

Goals and Priorities

- **Housing**

Board members agreed that a top priority is the issue of housing for the elderly, specifically helping seniors stay in their homes if they want to, or stay in Harvard if they want to move into smaller or more manageable homes. The board will take a strong position on developing age-restricted housing and advocate for that position. One or two board members will take on the task of attending meetings on the topic, staying informed, and reporting back to the board.

- **Public Relations**

The board will work on defining the COA's mission and increasing its visibility in the community, not just among residents over the age of 60. Related activities will include: expanded use of press releases and newspaper articles about COA activities and issues of interest to seniors; upgrading the COA brochure; creating a "speakers bureau" of board members who would attend meetings of various community groups and explain the COA's mission and activities; and the establishment of formal COA liaisons to other town boards.

The message should emphasize that in addition to serving the over-60 population, the COA also provides services to residents under the age of 60 who may need help with aging relatives, both in Harvard and living elsewhere.

- **Volunteer Coordination**

The board will define the role of volunteer coordinator and recruit a volunteer to handle those responsibilities, possibly under the town's tax work-off program. Among other things, volunteers are needed to help seniors with paying bills and other financial matters, and with small handyman jobs.

Aside from these three primary goals, the board agreed on the following secondary priorities:

- Healthy aging programs, including speakers, seminars, wellness and fitness programs, newspaper articles, and Medicare planning assistance.
- Transportation: Explore use of the MART van for regularly scheduled congregate shopping trips. Attempt to expand use of the van in general.
- Social activities, possibly including movie nights and Bingo.
- Regional collaboration with neighboring COAs.
- Senior Center: develop a set of requirements and needs for the future, and begin planning for possible expansion of the Hildreth House or building a new center elsewhere.
- Political Action: lay the groundwork for future building and staffing needs by political outreach and education.

- Long Range Planning: develop one-, three-, and five-year plans to meet future needs and requirements. Put together supporting statistics and graphs.
- Emergency Services: continue efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of elderly residents in an weather-related or other emergency.

The next COA Board meeting is scheduled for September 21 at 7 p.m. A planning meeting for the COA barbeque will be held on September 10 from 4 to 5 p.m. Both meetings will be at the Hildreth House.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Larrabee