## **TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

**SENIOR SERVICES IN JAMESTOWN**

**May 15, 2017**

## **ROLL CALL**

Town Council Members present:

Kristine S. Trocki, President

Michael G. White, Vice President

Blake A. Dickinson

Mary E. Meagher

Eugene B. Mihaly

Also in attendance:

Andrew E. Nota, Town Administrator

Christina D. Collins, Finance Director

Andrew J. Wade, Parks and Recreation Director

Deb Hagie, Recreation Supervisor

Ellen Vietri, Senior Coordinator

Ellie Chase, Friends of the Jamestown Seniors

Michael C. Gray, Public Works Director

Peter D. Ruggiero, Town Solicitor

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, Town Clerk

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Council President Trocki called the work session on Senior Services in Jamestown to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Rosamond A. Tefft Town Council Chambers of the Jamestown Town Hall at 93 Narragansett Avenue.

## **WORK SESSION**

* 1. Senior Services in the Town of Jamestown

Transition of Past/Present Services and Program Enhancements

Trending of Future Program Needs and Services

Parks and Recreation Director Andrew Wade introduced the Recreation Department staff and proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation on Aging in Place. Since January 2016 the Recreation Department took on oversight and management of the part-time program and personnel by agreement with the Friends of the Jamestown Seniors, and the Town is a joint lessee of the Grange facility, with a 50-year lease. The Friends of the Jamestown Seniors remain as an active advisory board for program services and facility needs.

The 3,800 sq. ft. Grange serves as the Senior Facility, with 1,680 sq. ft. (downstairs) used for the Meal Site and 2,100 sq. ft. (multi-purpose room upstairs) for activities and events. The facility has limited parking and needs upgrades. $20,000 was allocated for flooring replacement at the Meal Site (2016) and $15,000 to refinish flooring and HVAC work (2017) through the Capital Improvement Program.

For 2017-18 the Total Senior Operating Budget is $73,353. Other Town resources provided to the Seniors include liability insurance, payroll services, worker’s compensation, cleaning services, and dedicated Town staff that include the Recreation Director, Recreation Supervisor, Senior Coordinator, Senior Program Staff, and Maintenance Crew for a total of $119,000 total funding by the Town.

Recreation Supervisor Deb Hagie reported on the programs offered to match varied interests and abilities and explained that programs run quarterly in eight-week sessions. Meal Site use has increased significantly and is the center for social interactions. Expanded programs are offered, including off-island activities. Discussion continued.

Senior Coordinator Ellen Vietri reported on expanded programs using multiple locations – Grange, Baptist Church, Recreation Center and Jamestown Arts Center, and off-island programs at Absolute Fitness and Wickford Lanes - with transportation provided by the Parks and Recreation Department bus. Discussion ensued of programs that were not successful. Information on program preferences and transportation was obtained through a survey (conducted by a URI student). There were 90 responders, with a 46% interest in off-island transportation. To date, however, the transportation trial program was not successful. Discussion continued.

Parks and Recreation Director Wade commented on the hard work of the team in expanding the programs and activities and meal site participation. President Trocki concurred, thanked the staff for the presentation, noted we have made major strides over the last year, and opened the meeting to questions and comments.

* 1. Public Comment/Review and Discussion

Ron Ratcliff of Ship Street commented on the excellent presentation. The National Council on Aging sets standards for senior centers and recommends that any successful Senior program requires a mission statement, goals and objectives, and an action plan, which Jamestown should pursue. Communications should be improved to keep our citizens aware of programs and special sessions.

Dorothy Strang of Riptide Street commented that seniors are assets and we have many talented seniors that volunteer and serve our organizations. She offered words of encouragement for the new programs and initiatives offered for our Seniors, and urged everyone to keep up the good work.

Brenda Ratcliff of Ship Street acknowledged the accomplishments to date and recommends a Senior Advisory Board to help develop goals and objectives and to expand what works.

Jean Britton of Sampan Avenue expressed concern for the facilities at the Grange, stated it is not adequate for meals, has no parking, narrow stairways, and does not have sprinklers. We need a nice new facility to attract participants, and better publication of meetings that have Seniors on the agenda.

Gary Girard of Seaside Drive stated the Seniors are off to a good start, and he thought the Friends of the Jamestown Seniors was acting as the advisory board. We have a good foundation there, should work with them as the advisory board, and give them a chance.

Nancy Ventrone of Nautilus Street asked if anyone visited the North Kingstown Senior Center; it is beautiful and has many activities. She expressed concern the Tuesday movies were suspended through the summer.

Gayen Thompson of Grinnell Street stated the movies will continue during the summer on Wednesdays, we are dependent on the *Jamestown Press* for publication of this information, and that letters to the editor must be a maximum of 250 words. She does the rusty pens program, which is a sharing of stories, and it is wonderful. It was the meals that brought her to the Senior Center, and she kept coming for the activities.

Edward Holland of Howland Avenue stated he is the President of the Friends of Jamestown Seniors. Since partnering with Town they have assisted with activities and budgeting, and they have done a great job working with us to improve senior programs. We are very happy with the Recreation Department, and Andy Wade is wonderful to work with. Mr. Holland gave a history over the last 25 years of senior activities and groups in town. The Friends group rewrote the Bylaws, has elections annually in June, has a mission statement, looking for interested citizens to participate, and plan to continue and improve what is offered.

President Trocki encouraged everyone to come together to join resources for an improved program and services.

Elizabeth Richter of Beach Avenue noted she was Chair of the Christian Ed Committee at Central Baptist Church. They conducted a survey, members wanted to hear about seniors, and a group was established and forums held. The major topic that came from the group was Aging in Place. Jamestown is a unique community - Police Department, Fire Department, EMS, and Clergy - all came together. As we age we will spend more time at home due to the cost of healthcare, and we are in need of services to assist us in that area. She praised the Town Administrator for his efforts and this meeting this evening. Funding for Seniors needs to be addressed and increased, and there should be more meetings with the Seniors.

Brenda Radcliff of Ship Street stated the Friends of the Jamestown Seniors are very dedicated and have given back to the Town. The partnership between the Friends and Recreation Department is the next step to bring forth people and ideas for an advisory committee.

Councilor Dickinson stated he ran for Council to give back to the community, and he cherishes the contributions of our seniors.

President Trocki commented on the meaning of our seniors, including her 99 year old grandmother and senior parents. She understands first-hand the medical issues faced by our seniors as a caregiver and a community. It is important to have our young members and seniors coexist and work for our community. This has been very informative, she would like this to continue as an ongoing discussion, and the Council is committed to improving services for our seniors.

Councilor Meagher thanked everyone for being here, commented Ron’s points were excellent, and thanked the Friends for invigorating the program and our staff for their assistance. It is time to look at the mission statement, this is a start, and we need to work together to provide these services. .

Vice President White stated as a senior he appreciates this evening’s program by the Recreation/Senior Department. They’ve done a great job and he is thankful we have such enthusiastic members that have such good ideas. Many senior centers were built by private donors partnered with municipal governments, and he looks forward to working on such a project in the future. He thanked everyone for their input and looks forward to improving programs and services.

Councilor Mihaly stated he will not recuse, as we seniors are 25% of the population. This is a good start, and lots more dialogue and testing is needed. Aging in Place is a challenge, the country hasn’t come to grips with it, and he wants Jamestown to do it elegantly.

President Trocki thanked everyone for their attendance and comments.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, the work session was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Attest:

Cheryl A. Fernstrom, CMC, Town Clerk

Copies to: Town Council

Town Administrator

Finance Director

Solicitor