Preston Senior Affairs Committee

“Call in” teleconference meeting

The June 23, 2020 Preston Senior Affairs Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Elizabeth Bassette at 1:05 p.m. Members in attendance included Elizabeth Bassette, Mary Lou Jensen, Marie Perrin, Morris Fishbone and Frances Minor.

The following information was read by F. Minor:

We need everyone to understand the importance of being muted so that background noise is not disruptive. If you dialed in by phone, use your phone’s “Mute” button if you have one. If you do not have a mute button, use your phone keypad; *6 to mute or unmute yourself. If you are interested in learning more – a full list of commands is available to you by using your phone keypad and pressing *4 to hear those commands.

Minutes: M. Perrin made a motion to accept the March 3, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. Motion seconded by M. Fishbone. Motion approved.

Correspondence: None at this time.

Financial report: F. Minor provided the Committee with a lengthy review of our current financial picture. A line item transfer request will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen regarding over expenditures in several line items including; senior center staff, electricity, telephone, newsletter and senior center repairs/supplies. The request will direct all line item transfers to be made from the Senior Affairs/Bus Driver Wages line item account.

F. Minor indicated that to meet the criteria for becoming a licensed food service site, the septic tank needed to be pumped as ours was no longer within the approved timespan. In addition, water testing was completed, staff training of 8-hour ServSafe Food certification was necessary as well as assorted documentation and authorizations prior to granting the license. The license must be renewed annually. Due to the multitude of problems associated with the painting of the interior of the senior center, additional monies were required as the scope of the project changed from painting to repair/restoration projects. M. L. Jensen made a motion to accept the Financial report. M. Fishbone seconded the motion. Motion approved

Old Business:

a. Senior Center repairs: F. Minor elaborated on the multitude of problems which have been encountered while undertaking the painting of the center. All hinges, handles, brackets were replaced as they had years of buildup paint, repairs to rotting wood on cabinet doors, enormous amount of manhours were utilized to remove, sand, prime and paint kitchen
cabinets and trim. Air duct cover replacement was necessary as it was rusted and malfunctioned. Cracks in plaster walls repaired, ceiling heating ducts were removed, scraped, sanded and painted. Repairs and painting will be made to the handrails at the entrance to the senior center. Progress is slow as what initially appears to be a noncomplicated job turns into a major undertaking. M. Fishbone inquired whether the painter had been utilizing the Tax-Exempt authorization to purchase supplies. F. Minor indicated that the individual has done so.

b. Structural integrity inspection – incomplete. M. L. Jensen questioned whether we should hire someone to complete an inspection of the building as we appear to be faced with numerous repair projects to the building. F. Minor indicated that we did have a conversation with a structural engineer and the dialogue failed. We can contact the Building Inspector for additional suggestions of persons interested in doing the work. M. Fishbone indicated that he felt that the building is structurally sound but it is a very old building and needs constant attention. It appears that no other department in the town is stepping up to oversee the building maintenance. We have accepted the responsibility to keep it safe.

c. Flu Clinic: No activity as Norwich Tech High School has closed temporarily due to the COVID 19 pandemic which leaves the possibility of our new brochure in limbo. F. Minor indicated that she usually contacts Walgreens in the month of August to set up our annual flu clinic.

d. Fiscal Budget: The Committee reviewed at length the cuts to our Fiscal Budget request for 2020-2021. F. Minor indicated that several line items were reduced including cuts to Bus Driver Wages by $5,239.00, Senior Center Staff by $1,00.00, .40 for Municipal Agent, $1,000.00 in heating oil bringing the overall reduction to $6,240.40. Our new operating budget will be $73,099.00. As discussed, numerous times before, the transportation service continues to operate uninterrupted but it is not charged off to the Bus Driver Wages line item. The reduction of our transportation line item created double jeopardy for this service. The Town of Preston participates in a grant with 11 other towns to provide medical transportation to its elderly and handicapped population. ECTC provides services and manages the grant along with several other senior center directors who undertake the huge responsibility to write the grant. The Town of Groton is the fiduciary for this grant. (The town’s portion of the state matching grant program would normally be $19,500.00. But, because of the large reduction to our transportation program, our allocation of $19,500.00 is reduced by 39%). The services to our citizens will continue uninterrupted as the other participating towns pool funding to provide service to all participating towns.

Questions arose regarding the senior bus service. There has been no utilization of the vehicle since the Covid 19 pandemic started. The vehicle is moved periodically to ensure that it doesn’t end up with flat spots on the tires, and that it continues to have fluids passing through
engine parts. Prior to the pandemic, transportation was provided by our per-diem driver during this fiscal year.

M. Fishbone indicated that the budget has passed, a new mill rate has been set and this is the budget given to us and that we have to live with. Should circumstances warrant, we will make a request of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance for additional finances to operate with.

**New Business/Other:**

a. Senior Center repairs- septic system. As reported earlier by F. Minor, the septic system was pumped by Abrahamson's. The system was ¾ full.

b. M. Fishbone made a motion to request that line item transfers be made to the Board of Selectmen. Transfers to the Senior Center Staff line item, Electricity, Telephone, Senior Center Repairs/Supplies and Newsletter, etc. shall be taken in whole from the Senior Affairs Bus Driver Wages line item. Motion seconded by M.L. Jensen. Motion approved. If circumstance warrant, prior to June 30th, and the senior center repairs continue to mount with work incomplete, we can opt to encumber funds for that purpose.

**Public Comment:** None

With no other business at hand, M. Fishbone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:46 p.m. Motion seconded by M.L. Jensen. Approved.

Respectfully submitted by,

Frances Minor