

MINUTES
Emergency Assistance Fund Committee
February 18, 2022
VIRTUAL MEETING

Present: Abigail Butt (AB), Lorraine Fiore (LF), Wendy Kusik (WK), Mary Stechschulte (MS).
Absent: Jennifer Coon, Timothy Higgins (ex officio), and Garrett Yates
Also present: Natalia Dedkov, Town Social Worker.

The meeting was called to order by Abigail Butt at 9:30 am.

The minutes of January 21, 2022 were approved unanimously.

One request to purchase 5 more iPads and 5 more cases for residents in need was unanimously approved.

One request for assistance was unanimously approved.

Discussion of Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provision to cover SNAP authorized representatives began. AB explained that recently DTA had change their "Request for Agency Employee(s) to be my SNAP Authorized Representative" form to include a provision that would make the Town liable if a member of the COA&HS provided DTA with erroneous information that led to a resident receiving more SNAP benefits than the resident was entitled to. On average, the COA&HS only has one client at a time needing the COA&HS to function as an Authorized Representative. The role gives the COA&HS the ability to speak to DTA SNAP without the resident being present. This means that a homebound, illiterate, or linguistically isolated resident can have the COA&HS call DTA on the resident's behalf without the resident being present and receive information about the resident's case. AB spoke with the Town's Finance Department and the Town Administrator's Office. There is no fund available to cover the cost should DTA mandate a payback of benefits from the Town. Both Finance and Administrator's Office were comfortable with the EAF covering the cost if the need arose. Both believe that the risk is very low, and that should it happen, the financial payout would be very small. This is because the maximum SNAP monthly benefits are small and SNAP program eligibility is reevaluated annually. AB noted that a policy change at the COA&HS would be changed if a vote to use EAF funds passed and that any client using the COA&HS as an Authorized Representative would have any paperwork submitted to DTA SNAP double checked by an additional staff member for quality and accuracy to reduce risk.

A request to cover DTA SNAP authorizing representatives to DTA should COA&HS representative over submit for benefits, provided said representative doubled check with another an additional COA&HS staff member was unanimously approved.

Discussion of original charge began. AB noted that the original charge seemed centered on making sure that the charitable and social service agencies in town had representation. St. Anne's Church, First Parish Church, and St. Joseph's church all still function in this role. There is a partnership they have with the town/COA&HS through acts of service, community collaboration,

and grants. The Grange has not had a participating member on the EAF Committee for some years and there seems to be no partnership with the COA&HS. Furthermore, the majority of donations to the EAF come from residents within the Town following the annual appeal. AB suggested that the EAF committee's 8 member be changed to reflect the charitable agencies within the town, including St. Vincent de Paul, that the Grange position be removed, and a representative at large role be included. AB also requested that the word "Selectmen" be change to the new title "Select Board."

The original charge states that the Town does not have a Social Worker and thus, the COA Director acts as facilitator. The Town now does have a Social Worker. AB suggested that the COA&HS Director, who is a voting member of the EAF Committee, continue to act as facilitator, but that the role of presenting cases to the EAF Committee be filled by the Town Social Worker to avoid a conflict of interest. MS agreed that this was a good idea.

AB will edit the document to reflect the proposed changes and discussion will continue at the next EAF meeting. No vote was taken.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 am.