



Truro COA Board

REPORT ON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COA Board would like to thank Truro COA staff members Damion Clements and Elton Cutler, and James Brown, President of the Friends of Truro COA, for their support, input and attendance at the COA Board's focus group discussions this fall. Most importantly, we appreciated the time and participation of our community members during these discussion groups. The attendance and community engagement at these sessions exceeded our expectations.

Now the hard work begins. We have a vision of what the COA Senior Center should be through the eyes of the community. How do we become the COA to which others want to benchmark? It will take staff, collaborators, volunteers and advocates, not to mention the support of the Select Board and the Town Manager. It is our hope that these discussions and this report will spark a revitalization of the Truro COA to begin to truly address community needs and wishes.

II. INTRODUCTION

The COA Board strives to be a strong advocate for the senior community it serves through partnerships and collaborations with the Truro COA, the Friends of Truro COA and other COA Boards on the Outer Cape.

The membership of the Board is relatively new with most members joining just prior to or during the COVID pandemic and through two COA Director vacancies. The Senior Center was closed and many of the activities and programs were put on hold. In 2022, the Board defined our charge from the Select Board with a mission statement, established our core values as members of the community and created our 2022/2023 goals and objectives (Appendices A and B). The COA Board along with the COA staff (Appendix C) and the Friends of Truro COA (Appendix D) are focused on revitalizing the COA and the community it supports.

Over the past few months, the COA Board held focus group discussions (Appendix E) with the community at the Truro Community Center. The discussions were forward-thinking and very optimistic about the future of the COA and support it should provide to our senior population. In addition to the onsite meetings with ZOOM connection for three of those sessions, we received input from members of the community via email, telephone calls and feedback submitted directly to the Friends of Truro COA, COA staff and COA Board members (Table 1).

Table 1 – Focus Group Attendance

Focus Group	Community (#) *	Staff (#)	COA Board (#)	Friends of COA (#)
October 20	20	2	2	3
October 27	19	2	1	4
November 3	24	2	2	3
November 10	30	3	2	3

*includes COA Board and Friends of COA

This report summarizes the outcome of these discussions with areas needing attention as well as the COA Board’s recommendations to the COA. This report will be shared with the new Deputy Director once he/she is onboarded as well as publishing key excerpts in our COA newsletter and on our website.

III. RESULTS

The summaries from the four focus group discussions are located in Appendices F, G, H and I. Major themes from those discussions are centered on communication, collaboration, volunteerism, outreach and programs, facilities and transportation, and socials/gatherings as well as the overall health and well-being of the COA Senior Center and the community it supports (Table 2).

Table 2 – Major points from focus group discussions

Overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COA needs to focus on two areas in life for senior community (healthy aging and economic security). • Overall concerns regarding dedicated COA staff (in the past there were 4 full time staff and 2-4 part-time drivers – now there will be 2 COA staff and 1 driver—2 if another applicant can be found for the vacant driver position, and a shared administrative assistant) • COA staff needs to be considered as essential workers. • Grassroots approach is needed, since staff is limited • Communication and Isolation are critical focal points • Social contract with community • Must assure the vital needs of the community are met (healthcare, wellness, outreach, Medicare/Medicaid) • Need to benchmark to Wellfleet, P-town and other COAs • Regionalization, where appropriate • 360 approach - Body, mind and soul • Quality of Life • Missed opportunities with grants

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs of the full-time senior community are different than the part-time senior community. Both are important and should be addressed 	
Communication	Volunteer Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to reach entire senior community Newsletter revamp Keep the dialogue open Continue periodic focus group discussions Open door policy for deputy director of Community Services – COA Suggestion box 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs responsible over-sight of volunteers (coordinator) For COA activities, programs, outreach For assistance at home For assistance of others Volunteer referrals
Collaboration	Socials/Gatherings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Truro departments Other town COAs Youth of Truro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multigenerational Luncheons, coffees and socials Lunch and Learns Picnics Social programs for home-bound Need for youth connections
Outreach and Programs	Facilities and Transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health insurance, financial assistance, caregiver support, housing and referrals Need a full-time program coordinator Services must be fully supported Health and wellness Technology support Bring back programs that worked Bring life back to the center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More efficient use of bus Share resources with other Truro departments, other town COA's Involve volunteers COA should be open at least 5 days/week Mini gym Front desk is critical

IV. COA BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The COA Board understands that the operations and budget of the COA Senior Center are under the auspices of the Town of Truro and that the COA Board's role is one of advocacy, guidance and volunteering. To that end, we are providing the following recommendations for the Town of Truro's consideration based on the input from these focus groups discussions (Table 3). It is a call to action for all. For our part, we are committed to partner with and volunteer, as appropriate. We will continue to seek feedback from our community, work with our partners at the COA and Friends of the Truro COA as well as neighboring towns' COA Boards.

Table 3 – COA Board Recommendations for the Truro COA (One-year Plan)**

First month
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open up facility on Mondays (the COA Board has already submitted a request to the Town Manager). Board Champion: D. Schreiner • No Seniors Left Behind: work with Elton to generate a complete list of full-time and part-time seniors (59.5 yrs and up); advocate for a system to keep this up-to-date (seniors joining the community and those leaving). Board Champion: S. Girard-Irwin • Focus on Communication – Reach everyone by using different delivery systems (e.g. newsletter, robocalls, email, social media, flyers). Board Champion: K. Black • Establish COA board liaisons to Provincetown and Wellfleet COA boards and vice versa (purpose: benchmarking and regionalization of activities, as appropriate, as well as sharing programming ideas). Board Champion: D. Schreiner • Set up a white board at Senior Center for ideas and thoughts, designate a board member to check it once a week to capture input. Board Champion: C. Bishop • Volunteer at the COA front desk, recruit and coordinate volunteers to provide full front desk coverage, answer phones and greet participants, until a new admin assistant can be hired. Board Champion: K. Black
Within six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor staff resources to meet COA needs. Board champion: D. Schreiner • COA should be an active member of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA), trade organization, to fully utilize its resources (1,2). The goals of the MCOA are aligned to the needs of our community. Board Champion: S. Girard-Irwin • Revive the Truro COA volunteer program. Board Champion: K. Black <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify a volunteer coordinator to work with the new deputy director ▪ Recruit volunteers from the COA community ▪ Recruit volunteers from the non-senior community • Establish three Truro Senior Center subcommittees to create diverse groups of Truro citizens focused on specific areas of interest to the senior community with support and guidance from the Council on Aging. Board Champions: S. Girard-Irwin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Three Subcommittees - Socials, Programs, Newsletters</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Membership – Six individuals/committee:</i> 2 members of the Senior Community, 1 member of COA Board, 1 member of Friends of COA, 1 member of COA staff, and 1 Truro high school student • Partner with the Truro Recreation Department to set up a mini-gym at the center for seniors. Board Champion: A. Shenk • Create a connection to Nauset High School guidance office. Board Champion: S. Girard-Irwin • Continued dialogue with COA staff and Friends of COA. Board Champion: D. Schreiner • Continue dialogue with the community through focus groups and informal discussions. Board Champion: S. Girard-Irwin
Within twelve months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a process to identify and apply for appropriate grants. Board Champion: D. Schreiner • Set up monthly bus trips/outings (partner with P-town and/ or Wellfleet). Board Champion: A. Shenk • Establish Senior Center gatherings. Board Champion: C. Bishop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weekly luncheons ▪ Monthly lunch and learns - pot luck or brown bag (BYOB) ▪ Morning chats with friends – Coffee, tea and pastries on two days a week (opportunity to meet with staff, Board and Friends)
Beyond 12 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to work on an Age-Friendly action plan according to the guidelines of the MA Healthy Aging Collaborative and Dementia-friendly Massachusetts (DFM) initiative (3,4). Board Champion: S. Girard-Irwin

** Assumptions: over 60% of the full-time Truro residences are over 65 years of age; COA staff is lean; funds are limited; Board Champions will provide advocacy, monitoring and volunteer, as needed.

V. REFERENCES

1. O'leary, Maureen, MCOA's Strategic Planning Documents (2022)
(<https://mcoaonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MCOAs-Strategic-Plan-August-16-2022.pdf>)
2. Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) (www.mcoaonline.com)
3. Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative (<https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/age-friendly/>)
4. Dementia Friendly Massachusetts (<https://dfmassachusetts.org/>)

VI. APPENDICES

Appendix A	Truro COA Board Mission Statement, Values
Appendix B	Truro COA Board 2022/23 Goals and Objectives
Appendix C	Truro COA
Appendix D	Friends of Truro COA
Appendix E	Focus Group Agenda
Appendix F	Notes from October 20 Focus Group
Appendix G	Notes from October 27 Focus Group
Appendix H	Notes from November 3 Focus Group
Appendix I	Notes from November 10 Focus Group

APPENDIX A

Truro Council on Aging (COA) Board

Mission Statement

This board strives to be a strong advocate for the senior community it serves through partnerships and collaborations with the Truro COA, the Friends of Truro COA and other COA Boards on the Outer Cape.

Values

Communication

- To **listen and learn** from the community
- To **identify** the needs and interests of our community's seniors
- To build **awareness** in the community regarding the COA programs and the role of the COA board
- To **enlist** the support and participation of **all** residents (part-time and full-time)

Collaboration

- To **collaborate and assist** the COA director in the **promotion** of services within the community that address the needs and interests of our seniors
- To build **effective partnerships** with the COA director, Friends of COA and other COA Boards on the Outer Cape
- To **review** COA budget annually and **advocate** for funding

Leadership

- To be **community leaders** through our words and actions
- To act in an **advisory** role to the COA
- To **engage** through volunteerism

Compliance

- To comply with all of the **legal and ethical obligations** of elected officials (Open Meeting, Public Records, Conflict of Interest, Solicitation, Fundraising, Fair Information Practices Act and CORI)

APPENDIX B
COA Board 2022/23 Goals and Objectives

1. Information Gathering and Recommendations to COA

- a. Determine needs and interests of seniors (e.g. focus groups, survey)
- b. Benchmark to other COA Boards and COAs
- c. Establish monthly one-on-one with Board chair and COA director prior to monthly Board meetings
- d. Champion new programs in this fiscal year

2. Board Branding/Visibility

- a. Create our Vision, Mission and Values
- b. Establish meetings with Friends of COA (e.g. bi-annual)
- c. Arrange meet and greets with Board members at COA programs and/or events
- d. Develop media presence (e.g. newsletters, flyers, social media, town meetings)

3. Volunteering

- a. Establish a sign up for programs/events for Board members to attend/participate
- b. Strive to keep the Board full – always look for new membership

APPENDIX C

Truro Council on Aging (COA)

General Information

The Truro Council on Aging administers the various programs provided to enhance the health and well-being of our older persons.

Mission: The mission of the Truro Council on Aging is to identify the needs and interests of the community's older adults; to educate the community and enlist support and participation of all citizens concerning these needs and interests; to design, promote, and carry out programs; and to coordinate existing services within our community.

APPENDIX D
Friends of Truro COA

Mission: to raise funds and support the Truro Council on Aging.

Primary focus is 1) to provide financial assistance to the group for those programs and expenses that are not included in the town budget, and 2) to provide direct assistance to town residents when they encounter unforeseen emergencies under the auspices of the COA Outreach.

APPENDIX E
2022 Truro Council on Aging (COA) Board
Focus Group Discussions

- Welcome and Introductions
- Brief Overview of COA Board, COA and Friends of COA
- Group Discussion
 - What does the community need?
 - What is working well?
 - Where do you see an opportunity for improvement?
 - Additional comments.
- Wrap-up

APPENDIX F

Notes from COA Board Focus Group – October 20

Communication regarding meeting

- Set up Zoom for the remaining sessions
- Post fliers at Post Offices
- Continue with Robocall
- Post on Face Book pages and Town website
- Interview with Damion for the Independent

Staff, Facilities and Communications

- Open up COA on Monday or explain why it should be closed
- There should be email addresses for all COA staff and Damion
- COA should have responsibility for those who can still do and not just those who cannot
- Hopefully, more staff will soon be on board to help with all the above, and any activities that are generated by these focus meetings.
- Talking about a major shift and to keep it going.
- Focus groups should continue quarterly with new head of COA

Outreach and Programs

- Need more social activities for home-bound (identification as a patient and more as a whole person).
- Need outreach beyond healthcare
- Activities for the homebound
- COA is based on requests not established outreach
- Need to know Family and Friends – how is everyone connected
- Cards at Home
- IT support for ZOOM
- Utilize church services in town

Transportation

- Ride to events and appointments
- Social vs isolation
- People who don't drive – need rides to classes/programs. Capable but not able
- Transportation services should be expanded to include transit to meetings and health clinics, among other things, and certainly for any evening activities at the library, the Truro historical society or elsewhere in town.

General

- Become a true senior center
- A model shift – Truro Library
- Eastham and P-town COA good benchmarks
- Ramp-up newsletter – Senior Profile, interest groups, recipes, stories and poems – should be monthly, birthdays in the back

- COA needs revitalization
- Look back at programs from the past to see which ones would make sense to bring back
- Send out Katy Ward's email address so that people could contact her directly
- When the new "Assistant" Director is on board, have a reception to introduce him/her and give people an opportunity to get to know him/her and to provide him/her with an orientation

Luncheons and Coffees

- Should be weekly
- Lunch and Learns
- Transportation for those who need it
- change day of lunch from Friday
- Coffees with the....(e.g. Police chief, TCK)
- BINGO

Programs

- Set up Program suggestion box
- Activities at the COA should always have a Zoom option, if possible, which has proved so useful for the strength class.
- Information programs at the COA should be given by people without commercial ties to the issue.
- Pickleball classes
- Support groups – e.g. Grief
- Class on cell phones

COA Volunteers

- COA needs to resource volunteers. Needs a coordinator

APPENDIX G

Notes from COA Board Focus Group – October 27

Communication regarding meeting

- Continue with Robocalls
- Can we schedule another focus group in early evening for folks who work?

Staff, Facilities and Communications

- Mini gym (with weights and bans and few exercise bikes). Suggestions were to use the vacant lounge.
- Many folks do not know about all that PUMA, Recreation and COA has to offer. How can we reach everyone? This hard. Some folks rely on COA physical location, others internet, email etc. Some folks have no way of communicating.
- Sometimes the information arrives to late, how can we stream in real-time and to reach everyone?
- Hold a Fair (similar to a health fair but expanded) showcasing all of the services and programs that exist for seniors
- What about video clips of different folks (e.g. Elton, Damion, COA Board members)? These could run on TV at COA, library, internet, etc.

Outreach and Programs

- Bring back Zumba and meditation
- Cooking for One classes
- Living with arthritis classes
- Hire a tech person at the COA (few times a week) to help folks. The Library has someone from the HS every Saturday to help folks with tech issues – who would pay for this (Town budget Independent Contractor like instructors)
- More exercise tapes (CD) that can run similar to the Strength Classes
- Bring back the Cookie Swap – Everyone makes cookies, they meet and create cookie gift boxes for the holidays (Christmas, Valentine's Day) – Distribute to those home-bound
- Find a swimming pool for winter time (Beach Point was used in the past)

Youth Connections

- There needs to be a way to bring the youth and seniors together
- Storytelling and games
- Teenagers to help and earn some cash (e.g. Rent a Raider, Sue to reach out to NJ town) – need to check on liability issues
- Helps kids look at elders as people

Outings

- Utilize 12 person bus
- Trips, excursions, luncheons (e.g. Sandwich glass museum, restaurants outside of Truro, shows
- Who should initiate outings (2-way street) from COA as well as residents

General

- Newsletter should be more often than every two months
- Group of volunteers to write articles and recruit contributions from others
- Truro Part-time Resident Taxpayers' Association (TPRTA) has program to connect residents who need assistance (e.g. painting) with adult volunteers for free. Nauset Neighbors has a similar program.
- Need to make sure no one feels isolated and alone...it takes everyone. A small community like Truro can do this
- Need a suggestion box for COA
- Need volunteers and teams to work on this opportunities

APPENDIX H

Notes from COA Board Focus Group – November 3

Communication regarding meeting

- Can we schedule another focus group in early evening for folks who work? (Post meeting: November 16 @ 5PM)
- Can the town manager join one of the focus groups?

Staff, Facilities and Communications

- Set-up a volunteer referral service
- Open COA on Mondays
- What about Saturday and weeknights? Open COA
- Events can take place after 4PM as long as someone is authorized to use the building
- Continue with exercise programs and assistance with healthcare coverage, home telephone calls, free Thursday bread, and grief counseling.
- Need a calendar available that posts all events in our area.
- RIDES are an important issue- a ride to Orleans for PT cost someone \$80
- Can the COA help get on board with Nauset Neighbors?
- Is there a place (storage) at COA where we can receive crutches, walkers, etc.? Currently turned in at Transfer station. Wellfleet has a storage shed.
- The Truro COA kitchen is under-utilized. Could this be opened to residents as a Test Kitchen?
- Can the outside terrace be used more for meeting? Can the meeting room be opened more? It's so beige and shuttered.

Outreach and Programs

- We need to focus on the Quality of Life
 - Vans to museums
 - Why are services going down as we get older they should be going up?
 - Look at old programs, they worked
 - We need more music
 - There should be laughter
 - Bring back the seniors dance
 - Outer Cape Chorale
 - Shows in the Big Room
 - Young and Old
 - Singing lessons, choir, musicals
 - People need a good time
 - Less lectures more socials
 - 68% of year-rounders are 65+ yrs
- Luncheons and Coffees
 - These should be free since there is some food insecurity in the community
 - Use the Music for a Dollar model
 - SKIP sponsors meals for a day

- Educational Seminars
 - Similar to health fairs or
 - Focused – e.g. fall prevention, preventive health care, dental care, cardio, etc.
 - Hybrid (ZOOM and in person) and RECORDED
- House-sharing Programs
 - Home sharing programs—Kat will contact Homeless Prevention to see if they are going to pick up the Home Share Program that used to be in Provincetown
 - Home share for young ones who need housing to help elders with chores or caregiving
 - Look at past Home Sharing with HOW model
 - MV has something similar
 - Target short-term housing (e.g. AmeriCorps, Payomet, seasonal help, new teachers or town residents)
 - Establishes a mutual relationship (Senior needs help and/or income and person needs housing and savings)
 - Need to work through an agency for liability reasons.
 - Grants are available
 - Interest has to be there
- Support Groups
 - Caregiver's support (e.g. Alzheimer's)
 - IT/Tech
- Programs to shop for folks (e.g. a lot of programs for lower income through Elder Services)
- Classes/Programs
 - Email blast to let us know when a seminar/class is cancelled
 - Requested three stationary bikes to be available at the community center. Damion said there could be space in a room on the recreation side of the building.
 - Who is going to act as volunteer coordinator?
 - Pickleball
 - Run shows, theatre, musicals in the multipurpose room
 - More music, glee club
 - Technology class – Damion said there is one in the works

Newsletter

- More often (monthly)
- The COA newsletter is too commercial right now. It needs to be more personal
- More timely
- Need to reach everyone including summer and year-round list
- Should provide links in Truro Talks
- How to get added to the newsletter email list?

Youth Connections

- Age-disparity exists in this town. Need to bring it together

- Need to better connect Seniors to Students
- How do we get interactions in a positive way
- Intergenerational programs where teens could read to those with low vision, teens could help elders with their phones and/or computers
- Students – Community Service credit
- Seniors – Good child care provider
- Inter-generational movie night

General

- Regionalize some activities with other COA (P-Town, Wellfleet) for trips – shared services
- We need figure out how to reach everyone in the community (current lists are based on town voter registry, individuals reaching out, PO Boxes) for Newsletters, information, alerts
- Also need to better understand the needs and wants of the summer and part-time senior residents needs versus full-time senior residents
- In general, more activities and integration with the community and checking in with home-bound residents.
- Discussion of health lectures that are of interest. Elton responded about the VNA nurse who can come do talks.
- We should keep Zoom as part of hybrid programming
- Can we use Capital COA money that wasn't used for things (e.g. gym equipment)?

APPENDIX I

Notes from COA Board Focus Group – November 10

General

- BODY, MIND and SPIRIT is critical to the Community
- There needs to be a Social Compact with the COA
- Communication and Isolation are the key issues
- COA as a Social Hub
- We need to reach everyone
- We need to seek out partnerships (synergies) Join groups for Joint events (bus trip to Glass Museum) (e.g. Truro-P-town-Wellfleet COAs, Truro COA-Library-Rec)
- Food and Nutrition is critical
- COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION
- Revamping is a big task- where to begin, what are our priorities?
- Community outreach – Good Neighbor
- Get everyone on the radar
- We are a Grassroots Community
- We can't sit and wait for head of COA onboarding or a budget – we need to get things moving now
- Grants are important and are missed opportunities. We need a person to seek out and write grants for Fed, State and local funding --- These have to be done by staff. Volunteers might be able to help.
- We need to benchmark to Wellfleet, P-town, Brewster, Nauset Neighbors (Barbara volunteered to help)
- Need to look at programs that were fun and well attended in the past.
- Regionalize some activities with other COA (P-Town, Wellfleet) for trips – shared services
- We need to determine why Truro residents are going to Wellfleet and P-town COAs for their programs (social) and support (SHINE). The COA building is nicer and bigger than Wellfleet but doesn't have the draw that Wellfleet does.
- We need figure out how to reach everyone in the community (current lists are based on town voter registry, individuals reaching out, PO Boxes) for Newsletters, information, alerts
- Need to reconsider staffing of COA (in the past there were 4 COA staff and 2 van drivers)

Staff, Facilities and Communications

- Front desk is CRITICAL – first point of introduction
- Set-up a volunteer referral service
- COA needs a larger staff, not a smaller one. Ratio of COA dedicated staff to residents needs to be monitored and benchmarked to other COAs
- COA needs a dedicated program coordinator and office assistant
- Hire Deputy Director with geriatric experience
- COA needs more support for senior programs such as SHINE. Can we train volunteers as well?

- Need a calendar available that posts all events in our area.
- Can the COA help get on board with Nauset Neighbors?
- Some people do not feel respected.
- Need to get rid of the day-old bread cart as soon as you walk into the building. Understanding the need for some but shouldn't be front and center.

Outreach and Programs

- Cape-wide field trips to various places (e.g. Kennedy Museum, Glass Factory, Edward Gorey Museum, Cape Cod Potato Chip factory, CC Beer Brewery, Basilica, Pirate Museum, art museum, whale watching, natural history museum)) – day trip, pre-registering
- More music
- Steven Stahl volunteered to work on bringing music back to COA (e.g. live mic night, jam sessions)
- Technology class – Damion said there is one in the works
- More frequent luncheons
- Pickleball
- Cribbage
- Board Games
- Wellfleet has soup and scones available daily for a small price. Great place for friends to gather on a regular basis
- Coffee Time with Hot topics
- Movie Matinees (with popcorn)
- Hour classes (specific topics)
- Healthcare concerns (Medicare and SCAMS)

Volunteers

- Need a FOCAL Volunteer Coordinator
- There is so much knowledge in the room. How do we tap into it?
- Reset Volunteer program (paid and unpaid) Handy-person
- Look at Truro Part-Time residents Resource List
- Volunteer driving system is needed
- We need a Grapevine (tree system) to contact everyone

Newsletter

- Needs to reach everyone
- How to get added to the newsletter email list?
- Reach out to Seaman Bank for support

Youth Connections

- Tap into local High School for volunteers (community services)