

DATE: October 4, 2023
TIME: 2:37 PM

**Draft- Belmont Council on Aging
Minutes From September 11, 2023**

Meeting Called to order 7:05 PM

Present: Dana Bickelman (ex-officio), Pierce Ellenwood (ex officio), Ted Dukas, Ellen Sullivan, Chao Qiang Lai, Maryann Scali, Jane Shapiro, Judy Morrison, Joel Semuels, Peg Callanan, Tomi Olson, Chair,

Not Present: Andrea Pascal, Karen Donelan, Mark Paolillo (Select Board liaison).

AGENDA:

1. Senior Citizen Concerns - M. Scali
 - Bulletins of Watertown and Winchester's Newsletter come out before Belmont's. Pierce reviewed publishers scheduling inconsistencies, not standard publication time.
 - How does a senior contact the volunteer drivers that Ellen's group does? Ellen-contact Marty in Transportation Department.
 - Woman in Women's Club looking for a medical ride-did not want to contact senior center. Contact Marty. Medical taxi and Volunteer programs differ.
 - How often do seniors who are shut in's get library books? Dana-once a month, Center drivers do it.
 - Contact bridge people still there, issues resolved.
 - Working on bathroom accessibility. Dana says bathrooms are A.D.A. accessible. Person having access problem realized there was a second bathroom which met her needs.
 - Kitchen equipment fixed -stove,
 - Sidewalk repairs-see last minutes.
 - Cleaning- Jose has started as the new Janitor, 7 to 4, Monday to Friday.
2. Review of Past Meeting Minutes- Andrea Paschal drafted them; Reviewed and approved unanimously with no edits.
3. Updates and Correspondence
 - A. Director - Dana Bickelman

Bathroom accessibility issue-person had problem accessing bathroom in Center; The person used the other bathroom after the sticking door was fixed by Facilities. Both bathrooms are A.D.A. compliant. New custodian Jose started at the end of August. We had a reception for hm. Thank you letter to Select Board, tabled. Belmont Historical Society moved into Classroom B at the Center. They are having a reception on the 15th. Summer is over, people are coming back. Budget process is starting earlier, first date is September 21st. I must do two budgets, one if override does not pass, one if it does. Town Day is next Sunday. People have signed up for times at our table.
 - B. Assistant Director- Pierce Ellenwood

August had some really good events. We had number of entertainment events seniors enjoyed we had the Frank Sinatra singer, Charlie Chaplin's movie, "The Kid", "Good Will Hunting", and also very successful talent show featuring our community. We do

mahjong at the Center on Tuesdays at 1:00. Cribbage is going to be the first and third of the month on Tuesdays. We also had a lot of educational programming on the MBTA, a housing presentation of the Citizen Housing Planning Association, meetings with Mount Auburn Hospital whose nurse team has been to the Center a few times last few months to present about various things, a hurricane preparedness presentation with the Fire and the Belmont Light Department, the MBTA Ambassador program which was with the Mobility Center brought an out of service MBTA bus and discussed how to use the bus and fare system at a senior discounted rate. In September, we have a local author Christina Wolf who's coming to talk about her forthcoming book "Speak For Me" and talk about publishing her books and kind of the process that went into doing that, a presentation by Val Walker which has been really popular in the two times we've run it, a presentation on artificial intelligence specifically geared towards seniors, a new mosaics course and the Belmont Big Band Concert at the end of the month. As far as educational programming the Red Cross will be in, Cambridge Neighbors will talk about the Village Movement. Also there will be the bereavement workshop and the beginning of our regular bereavement drop-in meetings. We will be welcoming the Historical Society program "Back to School" with some old yearbooks from Belmont High School. In October we'll have someone to speak about history of the New England Patriots, a local attorney discussing the basics of estate planning, another local author discussing her book and then a presentation on the Salem Witch trials on Halloween. It's a good mixture of entertainment and educational events.

C. Friends of the Belmont C.O.A. Joel

We have a meeting at September 20th at which point Andy Levin will become Treasurer and our Treasurer will become the new President replacing me at our October 11th Annual meeting. We have the September 28th big band concert with Jim Bramante. We have about 15 sponsors now and if anybody, would like to contribute at the \$100 \$250 \$500 or \$1000 level they can get their checks to the Friends in our mailbox or they can take them to Treasurer John Stearns at 15 Winthrop Street Belmont.

D. Springwell-Jane

Farmers Market Coupons worth \$50 will be distributed soon; homebound elder vegetable boxes going out soon. People can call I&R of Springwell to process MassHealth redeterminations and get an email one week later to confirm.

E. Transportation-Ellen

Medical taxi rides-have served 98 seniors; since August have had 35 rides; \$29,000 left in the account from money from Town of Belmont; Problem, Belmont taxi is having a hard time servicing our rides, cannot accommodate any rides between 7 and 9 a.m. Monday through Friday. a very popular time with our seniors. Scrambling to try to figure out what are other alternatives. Margie and Margie and Dana are really brainstorming some alternative sources like Watertown taxi or taxi service outside of Belmont. There is political red tape when a town department contracts with an out-of-town company. There is an alternative transportation company based out of Arlington. Their costs were double to triple what Belmont taxi was charging. A round trip ride to that Mass General is \$85/ Belmont Taxi. The Arlington company would be double that = \$160. They charge are \$90.00 just to dispatch, \$4.75 a mile. Bringing it to the

attention of the Select Board, urge seniors to schedule appointments after 9 a.m. Hoping to be able to use Watertown taxi or another taxi service outside of Belmont. Suggestion to use Uber. Answer- users of medical rides may not have a smart phone, are not tech savvy and are not comfortable not knowing who the driver is.

F. Age Friendly Action-Judy

- a. Outdoor subgroup met with the recreation committee and got agreement to consider including a person from our committee when they have guidelines on updating a field, etc. Next step is to get input on these guidelines and to get guidelines codified as part of the way the town does business. Mark Paolillo can help. We will bring guidelines to COA Board and the League and other groups. Judy Singler is a resource.
- b. The housing group had two goals. The first one we met last year/ helping educate seniors on how to modify their homes to stay in place with auxiliary dwelling units. Had a presentation to the Housing Trust. It is appropriate for the age friendly group to align with a Housing Trust in terms of what the priorities are.
- c. Communications group is waiting for new Belmont Voice, a local place to centralize our communications.
- d. Safe Sidewalk group is working with town and schools to improve paths. Goden Street new schools are a traffic issue but when a senior resident can't get out of driveway, it is an Advocacy issue. Wanda of Winters Hardware is closing in June, wants to connect with Age Friendly Committee to do home repairs for seniors.

4. Old Business

Town Day- Covered above;

Historical Society arrival in Center-Covered above.

5. New Business

-E.O.E.A. Grant. Dana applying for a Virtual and Hybrid Programming Grant for \$100K; cooperate with Media Center to pay for staffing to teach people to use Zoom in 2024- 2025. We may purchase iPads and chrome books. Will come to Board for letter of support.

-Proclamation to honor National Senior Citizen Center Month. Developed by Margie. Read to Board. Added "Beech Street Center" to top of page. Discussion. Motion to approve. Seconded. Voted unanimously to approve.

-Welcome to Board, Peg Callanan

6. Next Meeting

Monday October 2, 2023 on Zoom

7. Adjournment at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Joel Semuels