

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: August 23, 2021  
TIME: 9:58 AM

**Council on Aging  
September 8, 2020  
Minutes**

Attending: Chair, Chao-Qiang Lai, J. Singler, E. Hamann, E. Sullivan, M. Cahalane, M. Scali, T. Olson, Ex-officio N. Niv-Vogel, M. Paolillo, J. Semuels Director, D. Leavitt, Assistant Director  
Not in attendance: T. Dukas

Marjorie Wayne was introduced to the Board as our newest member. Mackenzie Kewley will serve as the new Intern. Her hours will be M,W,Th from 9a to 4:30p  
Another Intern, Meghan Burgess will also be working in the Town. Her supervisor will be Janet Amdur.

**Citizens Concerns;**

Chao, our Chair, will serve on the Committee to choose a new Fire Chief. After interviewing 3 teams the Town chose a Consulting Team to aid in the process of choosing a new Fire Chief. The Consultant will cost the Town, \$19,500.

Nursing on Demand offered to provide a flu clinic to Belmont residents at the Beech Street Center. There are already 2 dates planned for a flu clinic so this is not needed. Nursing on Demand has also offered to go to senior's homes to administer the flu shot. Dana will list in COA media once they provide information.

**Taxes:** Maryann noted that Watertown has 4 tax levels and questioned whether the Assessors should look into this for Belmont.

Many are wondering when the Beech Street Center will reopen.

The new properties to be built at McLean's will offer housing for seniors over 55.

Impact of Budget crisis on the Senior Center: Since the Town Administrator is attempting to have each department reduce its budget by 10%, the Board considered the possibility of having donations to the Center. Further discussion ensued regarding the ridiculousness of the plan for each Town department to be reduced by 10% given the major impact on services of a 10% reduction to the \$400K COA budget. Tomi suggested that the Town look at it's biggest budget item, the School Department whose 2021 budget was at least \$61,485, 641., for cost savings. If the School Department's budget stayed the same for 2022, a 10% reduction would account for \$6.1 Million.

## Transportation Reports

Ellen questioned how the Books on Wheels program was faring. Dana confirmed that there are volunteers still driving for the program.

Ellen also asked about having enough drivers for medical rides and the Breakfast delivery program. It was noted that members of Belmont Helps have assisted in programs.

### **Dana's Report:**

Dana reported that approximately 40 people attended the Fitness Open House. The cap of 40 people accounts for staff for a total of 50 people.

Dana also reminded the Board of the Flu Clinics scheduled for September 18 and October 2.

**Friends of COA:** Joel reported that their Board voted unanimously to fund Belmont Helps for \$4000 for their work with Seniors.

Joel also stated that due to Covid there will be no concert or Craft fair this year. He expects to send a fund raising letter out in October-November time frame. Maryann offered to provide Joel with an inexpensive printing option for the mailing.

**Springwell** Judy reported that Springwell has not met due to Covid but continues to provide services.

Judy also reported to the Board on the work of the **Housing Trust** regarding the McLean development and zoning change that will come to Town Meeting later this month. From information available the smallest unit is 600 square feet. Additionally, 45 Town Houses will be available for purchase to seniors 55 and up. These are 2 and 3 bedroom units and have attached garages.

Another 110 units with 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms will be available for rental. 25% of the project units will count toward low income units. There will be a local preference. A Shuttle would be desirable.

Discussion ensued regarding advertising the low income units. Maryann suggested that Seniors be educated on the availability of this housing, especially since many are downsizing.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

There will be no override on the ballot this November. Mark serves on the Financial Task Force and relayed that the unexpected \$3M from the State led the Town to believe they could put off the vote on an Override until the Spring. Tomi asked why the Financial Task Force had not considered the possibility of the State's contribution. Mark responded that he believes the policy making role belongs to the SelectBoard not the Financial Task Force. There was also mention of the expenses of the Schools including the new building and the decision to continue in-home learning. Mark suggested that the SelectBoard and the School Committee need to come together on financial issues. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, Nava was asked to cut 10-15% from the COA budget. The Board's sentiment was that this was concerning for the COA programming. Tomi, Maryann and Mark offered to attend a meeting with Nava at her next meeting with the Town Administrator. Ultimately, the Board agreed that Mark should write a letter from the Board to the SelectBoard that the Board believed this cut would be damaging to COA services

The Board voted to purchase a plaque for Phyl Solomon. Donations should be sent to Maryann, our Treasurer. There was also discussion of the untimely loss of Penny Shafer who had served so diligently on the COA.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The Volunteer Driver program is suspended during Covid.

Dana briefly reported on the Library- initiated Pen Pal program for Seniors and High School students.

There is discussion of a Virtual Craft Fair.

A Nominating Committee will be selected at the October meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tommasina Olson