

MINUTES OF THE BELMONT COA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
May 4, 2009

Present: E. Hamann, D. Dick, N., Hegarty, J. Kantor, H. Kazarian, A. Lougee, J. Morrison, A. Santoro Mullin, J. Semuels, P. Solomon, N. Niv-Vogel, Director

Absent: J. Bruschi

E. Hamann (chair) called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes: The minutes of the April 13th meeting were reviewed and approved upon a motion and seconded with an amendment that the word “personnel” shall replace “previous” in the section “Executive Session,” second line.

Senior Citizen Concerns: None were mentioned at this time.

General Announcements: Because of a conflict with the Town Meeting scheduled for Monday, June 1st, the next COA Board Meeting will be rescheduled to Monday, June 15th at 7:30 p.m. Nava will talk with the Beech Street Center contractor to schedule more walk-throughs of the new building.

Springwell Report: Ms. Solomon reported that the House Budget of the Commonwealth might restore some of the funding originally lowered for FY’10 through the state legislature. Springwell held a fine recognition dinner in-house this year. Mr. Hegarty pointed out the large range of volunteer activities at Springwell. For example, approximately 50 volunteers perform money management tasks for seniors, and there is oversight of those volunteers by yet another volunteer group. A special aspect of the program is that whole families come to visit their senior clients, which is wonderful. There continues to be a need for a board member to replace Dr. David Alper whose 9 year term expired recently.

Director’s Report: The Board Members received the director’s report in advance of the meeting, but there were several updates and discussion of the report. The budget was written before a personnel vacancy came about, thereby restoring funding for more social work hours. Tom Younger approved this change. Since there is an additional five thousand dollars in the budget that can be used the director has asked for a new radio dispatch system for the new Center. This request was made per the recommendation of the Fire Chief since the communication system could be switched to FIOS (fiber optic) at that location. The sub-committee assigned to the COA from the warrant committee will probably be calling to meet with the COA prior to Town Meeting in June. The position of “Home Care Coordinator” is vacant at this time, with the Director managing its functions. Probably because of the economy, right now there are more outside home care providers looking for work than the number of seniors requesting this type of assistance through the COA. The Director emphasized that there is a tremendous need for social work for the COA and she is applying for a Title III grant, incorporating the needs of the Chinese population. Title III federal grants are made available under the Older Americans Act, and are seed grants of a two year cycle that in the past targeted elder services such as health education and transportation. However, as a result of the economy, these grants are being limited to specialized social service projects. The director notified the board that “Operation Able,” which is the local conduit for federally funded senior job trainees has been eliminated, and it is unclear how the program will function in the future. The coming volunteer luncheon is planned for the Museum of Our National Heritage some time during the first two weeks of June. The Director worked with the Board of Health to supply the COA with swine flu announcements in many languages. Parking at the temporary COA offices was discussed and has not recently been a

problem. Visitors to the COA should merely put their own sign on the dashboard of their vehicle and there should be coordination with the High School principal, Dr. Harvey. The COA Director will revise the budget and distribute it to the Board Members.

Senior Center Building Committee: Ms. Anne Rittenburg, liaison to the COA from the School Committee and Chair of the School Committee joined the discussion during the report of this committee. Mr. Hegarty reported that the date for the opening of the Beech Street Center is still undecided. He informed the Board regarding the concerns of the Center's neighbors with the emergency generator, which have been submitted to the committee. Mitigating measures will be taken such as planting bushes and providing other screening materials. The generator will actually be running an average of 15 to 20 minutes a month for testing. The town's highway department will be supplying the center with 10 spaces on Beech Street. The building committee's budget has funds reserved for the furnishing of the Senior Center and the exercise equipment.

Discussion of Reported Interest in Wellington School Relocation at Beech Street Center Ms. Hamann and Ms. Rittenburg led the discussion regarding the School Committee's reported interest in housing students during the Wellington School renovation. The relocation to modules at the Butler, Burbank and High School would cost the town \$3M that the state will not reimburse. There is some concern that the Senior Center is seen as empty at the moment and a viable alternative by some citizens concerned about the student relocation, possibly heightened by the coming election to approve a debt exclusion for construction of a renovated Wellington School. Ms. Rittenburg indicated that the School Committee is not interested in using the Senior Center, which is already dedicated to uses by senior citizens. Furthermore, the Beech Street Center does not meet state standards of bathrooms, parking, etc. for a school population. It was also noted that state regulations require that whoever occupies a school building needs to have a CORI check, and this is not feasible to do with all seniors entering the building. It was also raised that that private citizens of Belmont have already pledged over \$1M for the express purpose of building a senior center, and that the senior population in town has always been very supportive of initiatives benefitting all of the Belmont schools. The Board Members of the COA can succinctly communicate these facts to any group concerned about this issue. Ms. Niv-Vogel noted that seniors have valuable links to school aged students, for example, the Winbrook and high school community service program. Gardening around the senior center might serve as another shared activity for the two generations.

Friends of the COA: Ms. Lougee reported that the recent newsletter of the COA was sent to approximately 650 individuals and families including all of the Town Meeting members, Selectmen, et. al. The memorial bricks (newsletter insert) have been selling. A total of \$2,800 has been received \$1,600 of which will go to supporting construction of the building. The Friends' June meeting has been scheduled for June 4. Jim Staton, the President of the Friends, is submitting a grant proposal to the Pappas Foundation for funds towards the Center's fitness equipment.

Fitness Room Policy Working Group: Ms. Morrison, Ms. Solomon and Mr. Semuels reported that a lot of preliminary work has been done on this budget and a business proposal will be sent to the COA Board in July. The amount of \$35,000 in the Senior Center budget is reserved for fitness equipment, but a proposal to the Pappas Family Foundation might be possible .

Budget Working Group: Mr. Hegarty and Ms. Santoro Mullin reported the findings of the transportation report. Ms. Haesang Jeon's survey of Belmont senior citizens revealed that they are in several groupings according to need: 1) those who say that they do not use COA transportation now and they never will, 2) those who are extremely dependent on COA

transportation, and 3) those who do not know about the services. The results of the survey of 6 nearby communities (Somerville, Arlington, Lexington, Woburn, Watertown and Waltham) were that all of these communities consider transportation for elders to be a core, essential service. It enables seniors to socialize (very important), go to medical appointments, and do personal shopping that they couldn't do otherwise or it would be extremely difficult to do. These towns vary how they supply transportation: from having large budgets dedicated to this use, to incorporating taxi services for any distance the seniors might need, to receiving grants. Belmont should neither outsource elder transportation to another company nor depend on vouchers which do not work. The last pick-up time could be lengthened past 3:15 p.m., and there will be an increased demand for transportation as a result of the opening of the senior center. The Warrant Committee needs to consider this transportation need in its recommendations.

After Hours Use of Beech Street Center Policy Recommendations Working Group: The issues around the use of the Center are the same as noted on page 3 of the April 13th minutes and will be on the agenda of the June Town Meeting. Security is an especially important concern. Mr. Kazarian reported that the American Legion may be interested in using the Beech Street Center after hours, but this is an inappropriate use of the Center. In addition, the Legion has a large amount of materials they own and need to store.

New Business:

- The COA response to outside groups seeking use of the Beech Street Center should be similar to the list of requirements and charges that Marshfield uses. Belmont's elder population over the age of 60 is 21% and is expected to grow 16% in the next ten years.
- 2 Discussion of Board Membership in FY'9-10. Upon review of the Members' terms, there will be one opening to be filled for the coming year.
 - 3 May 16th is Town Day and the Board Members all volunteered time to staff the COA table during the day.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m. The next COA Board Meeting will be held on Monday, June 15th at 7:30 p.m., at the temporary COA site located in a module behind the Belmont High School.

Respectfully Submitted:

Diana Dick, Revolving Recording Secretary