

BELMONT COUNCIL ON AGING
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 2, 2019

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

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

1. **Call to Order:** 7:05 pm

Attendees: Chair, Chao-Qiang Lai, J. Singler, E. Hamann, P. Solomon, E. Sullivan, M. Cahalane, T. Dukas, Ex-officios N. Niv-Vogel, Director, D. Leavitt, Assistant Director, Guest Betsy Lipson (Belmont Housing Trust)

2. **Senior Citizen Concerns:**

- Ted reported that he was talking to a friend and the friend wasn't aware of the recently launched Volunteer Driver Program. The friend expressed a desire for better marketing of this program- since she wasn't aware of it. The Board asked Ted to question his friend about the ways he/she gets his/her news and were we missing a marketing opportunity? The COA has widely publicized the Volunteer Driver Program on all of their "channels": weekly newsletter, monthly newsletter, Social Media Posts, Web-Site, etc.
- Ethel expressed that somebody spoke with her regarding their concern over the Beech Street Center parking lot being plowed sufficiently during snow storms. Person was concerned about safety.

3. **Treasurer's Report:** No update.

4. **Review of Past Meeting Minutes:**

- November minutes were reviewed and approved as amended.

5. **Updates and Correspondence:**

A. Director's Report:

- Nava reviewed her November 2019 Director's Report (attached to these minutes) with the Board.
- Nava also reiterated the Beech Street Center's policy regarding inclement weather. If Belmont Schools are closed, all activities at the Center will be cancelled. However, staff will still come to work and Center will be open unless the Governor asks all Government Employees to stay home.

B. Assistant Director's Report:

- Dana reviewed her November 2019 Assistant Director's Report (attached to these minutes) with the Board.
- Our programs continue to be very successful and word is catching on around the area with other programs- as Dana was contacted twice, in the past month, about connections to programs that have been held at our Center.

C. Friends:

- Nava and Ethel reported that the Holiday Crafts Fair was a huge success. The final tally is not in yet- but the lunch counter, bakery counter and knitting group all reported larger earnings this year compared to last year. Everything ran smoothly thanks to the hard work of all the volunteers.

D. Springwell:

- Judy reported that their Annual Meeting was held a couple of weeks ago and the new director was introduced. Springwell's biggest challenge is hiring- they are unable to sustain full staffing levels, due to the area's robust economy.

E. Police Chief Search Committee

- The search is down to 2 final candidates. Both candidates are internal. Final interviews will be taking place in next week.

F. Volunteer Driver Program:

- Ellen reported that a total of 66 volunteer rides were given during the month of November. A total of 10 drivers have been trained and a couple of other drivers recently submitted their applications to be processed. Everyone is very pleased with the program, thus far. Ellen reported that rides range from 5 minute drives within town to requests for longer drives into Boston for medical appointments. Obviously, the shorter rides are being filled rather easily. We are in need of more volunteers who would be willing to drive Seniors into Boston for medical appointments.

6. Old Business

A. Moving Forward the Age Friendly Belmont Action Plan:

- Nava reported that the Town Administration has not been very proactive advertising openings on this committee. The committee needs to submit an “Action Plan” to AARP by March in order to keep our “Age Friendly” status. There are still a few openings on the committee- including a Disability Representative. It was noted that the Town Web-Site recently began advertising openings on this committee on it’s cover page. This will hopefully help attract applications.

B. Status of Belmont Housing Trust Plan for McLean Property:

- Judy and Betsy Lipson (Housing Trust) reported that Northland (the developer) has revised their initial development plans, which were presented to the town in March, in response to the town’s myriad concerns. The Housing Trust, along with the Planning Board, submitted a proposal to the developer at the end of August. The developer just recently came back to the town with a new proposal, which incorporates a lot of the Housing Trust and Planning Board’s suggestions.
- This new proposal includes 40 Townhouse Style Units (smaller square footage than townhouses at McLean now). These Townhouse units will be 2 bedrooms and price point will be more moderate than existing townhouses (that sell for \$1.2-\$1.4 million). 6 of these townhouse units will be income restricted. Betsy believed that the townhouses would sell for around \$500,000-\$650,000, but she wasn’t sure.
- In addition to the Townhouses that are being proposed, the developer is also proposing to build a four-story building that will contain 104 rental units (1 and 2 bedrooms). 20% of these units will be income restricted to 80% of AMI (Area Median Income). 5% of the units will be income restricted to 50% of AMI(Area Median Income).
- Developer is working closely with the Belmont Energy Committee to include solar initiatives and electrification initiatives in order to help reduce carbon emissions. Developer has also made a commitment to LEED Certification.
- Developer has offered to run a shuttle bus from the development to Alewife and other areas around town to help ease traffic congestion.
- Initial projections are that the town will receive \$1.3 million in annual revenues from this development.
- Planning Board will be meeting soon to discuss if they would approve a special Town Meeting in March to vote on this proposal.
- If proposal is approved by Town Meeting, the expected completion date would be 2024.

C. Follow-up on Letter to Transportation Advisory Committee:

- Chao reported that the Transportation Advisory Committee appreciated our letter that raised the issue of safety, with regard to Seniors, and will

keep these concerns in mind as they continue to address transportation issues around town.

7. New Business: Discussion on Media Publicity and Responses to Negative Letters to the Editors about Seniors

- The Board reviewed the "Letter to the Editor" and the "Thoughts for the Day" that were published recently in the Belmont Citizen Herald (attached to these minutes). The Board had a lengthy discussion about the best way to respond to this individual and if we should respond at all. It was decided that it would be best to have Chao submit a guest column to the Belmont Citizen Herald in celebration of Beech Street Center's Ten-Year Anniversary. Everyone agreed that the individual who wrote the letter and column was misinformed and mis-educated about the Center. The purpose of Chao's guest column would be to help educate the public (and individual) about the Center, how it came to fruition and all the programs and services that it offers the entire community.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Next meeting is Monday, January 6 at 7 pm.