

DATE: August 23, 2021
TIME: 9:53 AM

Council on Aging
Minutes
July 6, 2020

Present: Chao-Qiang Lai, Chair; Ted Dukas; Joel Semuels, Maryann Scali; Tomi Olson; Mark Paolillo; Judy Singler; Michael Cahalane; Nava Niv-Vogel; Dana Leavitt; Jessica Porter, Human Resources Director -Belmont

1. Call to order: 7:08 pm

2. Minutes were accepted with amendments

3. Senior Citizens' concerns- Maryann Scali reported that seniors raise the question of what to do when they see something that needs to be reported such as a possible drug deal occurring. We discussed that the police should be called and that the liaison for seniors in the Police Department is Officer Kristen Daley. Another concern was whether there were senior perks/discounts available for seniors and when is the senior center opening for the seniors. Also for help with using ZOOM, Dana Leavitt for that one can look up online how to guide particularly with Belmont Helps. It is also a Facebook Group.

4. Treasurers report – There is still 60 dollars. Perhaps 10 dollars can be collected from each member of the Board.

5. Updates and Correspondence

Director – Brian Jennings, former Transportation Coordinator died last week. He worked for the Council on Aging for over 10 years.

There is an opportunity where a former Belmont Media Center Employee contacted Nava about possibly being able to be an Operation A.B.L.E. Employee. Hopefully it will happen. This would be a budget neutral event for the center.

Marie Poore wanted to know whether everyone received an email from her about volunteer gift recognition. Friends are gifting gift certificates. Just pick a restaurant.

With respect to the financial task force meetings, none are yet scheduled online.

Assistant Director- Dana reports that June was a good month. The virtual exhibit was well attended. The virtual pet program was fun. Father's Day with a local food truck produced a not very large group. There are informal groups on ZOOM. There was a brain yoga class. We need new fitness classes. Also there is storytelling about baseball and cooking demos. Attendance numbers are indeed tracked. Dana is also working with the media center. Nava is reaching out to isolated seniors.

Friends- if people want to donate a brick for Henry Kazarian or Al Natale they can send a check for \$15 to John Stearns, 15 Winthrop Rd., Belmont, MA 02478. The Friends are going to take up a vote on whether to donate to the Senior Center.

Springwell – Services continue, more and more of it is in person. They have been some changes in the meals. They are hot now but a change might be made in the future. Private senior care services have expanded. Judy has information sheets that will be forwarded.

Belmont Housing Trust plan for the McLean property- this group meets this Thursday. More senior units will be available. Town meeting will vote on this in the fall.

Age Friendly Belmont Action Plan- Glen Clancy, the Director of Community Development has been invited to speak at the Age Friendly Advisory Council about sidewalks and plans to have them repaired, also where things are with regard to accessory dwelling units. Glen Clancy is currently on vacation.

Guidelines for COA functioning with restrictions easing: This was mentioned in neighbors report. There has been no discussion from MCOA or the Executive Office of Elder Affairs meaning that there is no external pressure to open. Much as we would like, we don't really know how we can open right now. See you should not have high expectations. The AARP tax preparers came in and completed all of their appointments. Important to note that even though seniors cannot come in right now, we are using the building, and it is open for staff. We need to discuss HOW we are going to open for all.

Regarding rentals, one group with a workshop maybe using it in the fall. One group wishes to use the parking lot but most groups have canceled.

Masks for seniors- Nava reported that we have a good inventory.

Meals for seniors- Hot meals are better received than frozen meals. There is some concern about getting them inside the house in a timely fashion. Some seniors prefer cold meals in the summer.

Formula grant money of \$6000 was used for breakfast vouchers. Russo's provides breakfast once a week.

Budget FY'21: The state formula grant leftover money that was not used for the social worker.

New business-

COA funding 2022: no meetings are scheduled yet. The town has a \$12 million deficit for fiscal year 22. COVID added \$5 million.

There have been no ads for employment in the Town of Belmont. We discussed the fact that an override will be site that will increase taxes per household \$1600 per year. If this doesn't pass this fall, an April override will be proposed. In the extreme, if it's not passed, it may eliminate

the Council on Aging, reduce personnel by 100 to 120 people and close the library. There's a dire crisis. Even the suggestion of closing the COA has put a chill into the staff. This is not shared by other communities and some staff may leave. Also this would mean that a whole department would be eliminated.

It's important to note that when we were "shut down", *we never shut down*. Our services continue even while the building is close to the seniors. We help people stay in their homes. During this pandemic, seniors who stay home live. In Belmont 26% of the population are seniors.

A discussion of fiscal year 21 schedule monthly meetings and assignment of Minute takers and a discussion of how to recognize long time board member Phyl Solomon will be tabled until next meeting. We plan to have a meeting in August to discuss these issues.

We discuss whether the Chair should write a letter to express our deep concerns about reducing our budget drastically and instead we agreed that a fact sheet would be put together by Nava stating the statistics of what services were provided during the pandemic. This would be available on-line and in print.

August 3 will be our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Cahalane