

Minutes of the Belmont Council on Aging Board Meeting, Monday, February 4, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Beech Street Center

Present: Chao Qiang-Lai, Chair, Maryann Scali, Ethel Hamann, Ellen Sullivan, Joel Semuels, Ted Dukas, Phyl Solomon, Judy Singler, Tomi Olson, Michael Cahalane, Terese Hammerle, Nava Niv-Vogel, ex officio, Dana Leavitt, ex officio

Absent: None

1. Call to Order: Chair Qiang-Lai called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A moment of silence was held for Joseph Scali, husband of Maryann Scali and Town of Belmont stalwart who passed away on February 1st. His funeral will be on Friday, February 8th at 11:00 at Saint Camillus Parish in Arlington, MA. Ms. Scali announced that donations in his memory will be to the Friends of the Belmont C.O.A..

2. Introduction of New Board Member: New Board member Terese Hammerle was introduced to the Board and discussed her professional and community activities such as Sustainable Belmont and the Vision Committee. The new C.O.A. Board was introduced.

3. Senior Citizen Concerns: Nava raised the issue of Chinese groups meeting in the Center when there is no staff or others in the center who can speak Chinese (what to do if there is an accident). Staff will work with groups to have each group have a point person who speaks English for staff to talk to. The indoor Town swimming pool now has removable steps. There are no designated senior swim times. Seniors can swim at designated adult swim times. The Town real estate bill tax check off for the Senior Center held by the Town Treasurer has yielded \$16,000 (\$2000) a year. \$6000 is to be drawn down for new chairs for the Center.

4. Treasurer's Report: Ms. Scali requested and received small donations from each Board member for the Board Incidentals Fund .

5. Review Past Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the January 14th C.O.A. Board meeting were reviewed and approved by a unanimous vote with the following amendment: New Board member's name is "Ellen" Sullivan. After motion and second, the minutes were adopted unanimously.

6. Updates and Correspondence:

A. Director's Report:

A1. Nava discussed an issue raised at the last Board meeting, "as the center's popularity grows, and participation increases, how to make sharing of the space as equitable as possible to all interested users of the building." A draft "Policy for Program and Space Usage at the Beech Street Center" was given to Board members for review at the next Board meeting. Mr. Semuels suggested that it be printed in the next Board meeting minutes in its entirety if adopted by the board.

A2. Because of Facilities Department actions, cleaning consistency of the Center has improved. There is a new cleaning person working for the contractor. Our Town custodians' responsibilities

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have shifted to benefit the Center. The C.O.A. will grant an "Intergenerational Excellence Award" to the School Department for its After School Program at the Chenery Middle School. A plaque will be awarded in March. Nava is working on the FY '20 budget and will meet with the Chair and Selectmen in February. Nava is coordinating planning of the LWV forum on senior needs in March. The Age Friendly Network Belmont C.O.A. certification will be announced soon in coordination with the Selectmen. Center use and transportation statistics were handed out. Nava announced a new Art Therapy Group at the Center. A second Simmons School of Social Work intern, Sarah Goldberg has come on board through the summer. A new substitute driver, Chuck Jennings has been approved to hire.

A3. Transportation Issue: Under a state program, Belmont has been receiving 5 cents from every ride sharing ride starting in Belmont from companies such as Uber and Lyft. Glen Clancy of Community Development has earmarked 2018 revenue of \$19,500 from this for Town infrastructure. Nava has asked Town Administrator Patrice Garvin if that 2019 pool of money can be dedicated to the C.O.A.. Due the demise of cab companies in Belmont, Nava and Marty are looking into ways to do ride sharing from our C.O.A. dispatcher for seniors needing far away medical rides (e.g. Longwood area). Brookline is doing a pilot program. Can ride sharing be made easier for seniors? Issues include the facts that many seniors don't use smart phones and would need expensive data service plans. The Board decided to have a working group to work with Nava on this issue: Ms. Sullivan volunteered.

B. Assistant Director: Dana Leavitt reported that our C.O.A. is participating in a "Speed Dating" program with Lincoln and Sudbury. In January there was a "Mocktail Party." There was as a "New Year-New You" program with Springwell. Dana attended the recent Belmont Chinese American Association New Year's Cultural Festival whose proceeds were donated to the C.O.A. Friends. Among many upcoming programs there will be a Sign-Language Program for the visually and hearing impaired with Perkins School, a weekend trip to the service dog graduation ceremony (funded by the Friends), an anti-bullying program for older adults, an affordable housing program, climate change program with Ted Reinstein of Channel 5, indoor volleyball, lunar New Year Chinese Party, essential oils and yoga program and beach party. The Board commended Ms. Leavitt on her work.

C. Friends of the C.O.A.: Joel reported that the Friends Board met on January 23rd. The annual membership drive mailing has resulted in 351 members. We set a record with the November Crafts Fair grossing over \$5800 with 49 vendors participating. Joel congratulated Karen Nichols and her many volunteers. Jim Staton has left the Friends Board as he is moving out of Belmont. He has been a mainstay as former Friends President during the Capital Campaign to raise funds to build the Beech Street Center, insure that it remains a senior center, and for the Crafts Fair in borrowing extra tables and getting transportation of them for that event for years. Board members, Nava and Dana are in the article writing phase of our Spring Newsletter. We are considering a replacement for the annual Al Natale concert as Al has retired. The next Friends Board meeting will be announced for a date June at 7:00 p.m.

D. Springwell: Judy reported that the Springwell, Inc. C.E.O is leaving. The Executive Board has hired a search firm and is seeking to interview 3 candidates. Judy is on the search Committee.

E. Planning Board Meeting on McClean Property: Judy Singler discussed the need for more affordable housing for Belmont seniors who may have to move to other towns that are more affordable. She noted the agreement between the Town of Belmont and McClean Hospital regarding disposition of McLean Land and the rezoning that occurred 1999-2009 which included zone 3, a proposed senior housing complex which was to be built on the land and fell through because of the recession. Currently McLean is working with a developer, Northland Residential Co. (which developed The Woodlands) to build clustered residential housing units (104 units including 34 townhouses with two to three bedrooms and 70 one to two bedroom units in a two to four story building which would purportedly appeal to people who are age 55 plus and empty nesters. The proposal includes 9% affordable using 120% of Area Median Income (A.M.I) standards (\$94,550 for a two person household). The proposed development would, according Judy referring to the Northland President's previous comments "attract retirees who want to live closer to their grown children and grandchildren, do not require a mortgage, are likely to have other homes, would not live in Belmont 365 days a year and would have a light impact on town traffic and services." Judy cited the Age Friendly Belmont Research report which found that "the housing needs for the aged are for smaller and more affordable units," She quoted Rachel Heller, co-chair of the Belmont Housing Trust that "we have a tremendous need for more affordable homes in Belmont for people across ages and incomes and particularly for seniors and families with children." Tomi Olson, member of the Belmont Housing Trust, Chair of the Belmont Housing Authority and C.O.A. Board member has said she would like to see more affordable housing and have residents stay in Belmont and not have to move to other towns. Roger Colton's article in the Belmont Citizen was cited saying that the number of affordable units in the Northland Proposal was too low and "there is a need for places to allow aging people in Belmont to downsize." Ellen Sullivan noted that are many elders are looking for 1100 to 1200 square foot units. Judy sought C.O.A. Board support for a response to the Northland Proposal at the next Planning Board meeting. After discussion, the Board voted in favor, after motion, and second that "the Belmont Council on Aging Board supports development of Zone 3 at the McClean Hospital property with housing for middle income older adults with at least 20 percent affordable units set aside at 80% of Area Median Income (A.M.I.) or below). There was one abstention on the vote.

7. Old Business:

A. Update on Roger Colton's Proposal to Insure That Seniors With Tax Deferrals Automatically Enroll in BLMD Discount Program.

Roger Colton's project- Last January 2019 Board Meeting board action- To insure that seniors with tax deferrals automatically enroll in BLMD discount program. Request to expand list to those aging Belmont residents who qualify. C.O.A. Board Voted "We support action suggested by R. Colton for seniors who qualify regarding Express Lane." No update.

B. Planning of Staff C.O.A. Appreciation Luncheon. The luncheon was scheduled for Friday, February 9th. Because the funeral of Joseph Scali is scheduled on that day at 11 a.m., we are rescheduling the luncheon for February 15th at 12 noon.

8. Next Meeting: The next C.O.A. Board meeting will be Monday, March 4, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

9. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Joel Semuels, February Minutes Taker