

DATE: March 7, 2023
TIME: 2:24 PM

**Belmont Council on Aging
Minutes From February 6, 2023 Board Meeting-Zoom**

Meeting Called to order 7:01 PM

Present: Dana Bickelman (Director ex-officio), Pierce Ellenwood (New Assistant Director ex officio), Ellen Sullivan, Ted Dukas, Chao Qiang Lai, Andrea Paschal, Maryann Scali, Jane Shapiro, Margie Wayne, Judy Morrison, Joel Semuels, Tomi Olson, Chair,

Not Present: Mark Paolillo (Select Board liaison).

AGENDA:

1. Senior Citizen Concerns - M. Scali
 - Kitchen: multiple complaints about cleanliness, including no FT custodian at Center, Oven is not clean, dripping water faucet, kitchen counter not cleaned with proper cleaner
 - Accessible bathroom—persons with disability having problems accessing toilet paper
 - Parking permits are very popular
 - Seniors are seeking tax relief. Discussion of possible tax “work off” or other exemptions. Tomi will reach out to Bob Reardon for further information; Dana will contact other towns. Joel advised on general laws, will provide a copy to the Council.
 - Tomi reported on Sherman Gardens and housing production updates.
 - Comments in follow-up of January concerns: continued concerns about volunteer names, nametags, friendliness; pickleball fees will continue but non-payment not followed up
2. Review of Past Meeting Minutes-
Minutes reviewed and approved by unanimous vote.
3. Updates and Correspondence
 - Tomi, Maryann and Jane will draft letter about Concord Ave. concerns (see January minutes), and will send to Dana prior to sending it along
4. Director - Dana Bickelman
 - a. Fitness Room concerns: See Dana’s report. One treadmill needs replacement, another needs repair or replacement due to unsafe incline. Recumbent bike is also of concern, needs console. Extensive discussion of whether to purchase one or two treadmills, and repair or replace bicycle. Joel moves, subject to there being no requirement of competitive bid from the town, that the board authorizes Dana as director to seek purchase of 2 treadmills and repair of bike, not to exceed \$20,000 for equipment, shipping, installation, annual 2 maintenance contract.
 - b. Dana will follow-up up on custodial concerns
 - c. Duplicate bridge has become problematic—used to be very popular pre-pandemic. It now has become too expensive for the number of participants. Council supports cutting the program as moved by Joel and seconded by Jane.

- d. We have new Social Worker funded through ARPA until 2024. Lynn Goldsmith formerly worked at Belmont Manor. She is eager to get involved and help out. Suggest she make connections in the community, Food Pantry, Springwell, Churches, area social workers at other senior centers.
- e. Request for \$10,000 transportation budget denied in budget process.
- f. Dana noted communication with Fire Department about use of Beech Street as a warming center. Library was recently designated. Fire chief indicates we do not meet criteria due to lack of generator. Center is used for cooling in summer.

B. Assistant Director- Pierce Ellenwood

Pierce worked his first full month January. Popular events included Lunar New Year celebration, Harvey Leonard, Anthony DeMarco. February will welcome the Fire Department, the newly hired social worker at Belmont Police Department, and programming for Black History Month with a Lesley University professor presenting on the roles of Black men and women in the Civil War. Pierce met with colleague at Watertown COA to plan a new *Life Transition* Binder workshop series, collaboration will expand the offering and save money with 2 meetings at each site.

In March there will be a meet and greet with Lynn, new social worker. Belmont Police present on scam and frauds. Will try to resume Tuesday evening programs. Good feedback on newsletter, but made a couple of errors and is also trying to get it out earlier. Judy asked about Community Path event and upcoming HomeFit outreach. Pierce will be the best point of contact for program ideas and scheduling. Some communication issues were discussed to promote events—use of social media like Facebook and Next Door.

C. Friends of the Belmont C.O.A. Joel Semuels

Newsletter coming in Spring. Volunteers are being sought to write articles. Joel is looking for volunteers.

Joel announced that as of the October, 2023 annual meeting, he will be stepping down after 11 years as President and 2.5 years as recording secretary. There is a board vacancy now if people are interested—contact Joel and he will refer to Nominating. The Friends are in good financial position at this time and there is a 15-person board.

Council members expressed appreciation for Joel's years of service and dedication.

D. Springwell- J. Shapiro

Wheelchair ride service is now available for seniors in state home care program.

April 1: MassHealth begins annual renewal. Food Stamps program returning to pre-pandemic level.

Newton did survey of seniors about multiple issues; a recommended strategy for other towns. and one outcome was the creation of a community refrigerator “freedge” program through the Newton Food Pantry where people can access privately at any time of need.
<https://newtonfoodpantry.org/get-involved/newton-freedge/>

E. Transportation Working Group -E. Sullivan

Dana will follow up with Jennifer Hewitt to obtain town funds that were allocated last year and have not yet been received. Dana will clarify the amount and submit the request for funds.

Ellen reports that there continues to be a great need for drivers for the Volunteer Drivers Program; Dana reports that one volunteer has been recently identified and CORI check is in progress.

F. Age Friendly Action Committee -J. Morrison

- Things are going well. Judy shared a very nice brochure that was produced for the launch of AARP Home Fit guide being designed by High School class. Publication and presentation to C.O.A. in March. AARP will come present. Pierce will help to promote in March. Will print 500 for distribution at this event and other key locations (library, town hall, Beech Street)
- ADUs – In January AFAC housing subcommittee working across town organizations to support Policy in allowing ADUs in Belmont with appropriate guidelines; Ellen expressed interest in helping with this
- Walkability – Tomi and Maryann both volunteered to give feedback.
- Outdoor Space – see prior note about meeting re Community Path on Feb 17th. Tomi mentioned Open Space for the Music Festival
- Several suggestions for Judy about communication strategies

4. Old Business –

5. New Business: Board-led Staff Appreciation—send email to check dates tentatively March 10 or March 24 lunch 12-1. Tomi and Maryann will send out signup list.

6. Next Meeting will be – March 6, 2023 at 7 pm via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Donelan