

**Belmont Council on Aging  
Board Meeting Minutes, March 6, 2023**

DATE: April 6, 2023

TIME: 2:35 PM

Meeting Called to order at 7:04 PM

Present: Jane Shapiro, Chao Qiang Lai, Dana Bickelman (Director ex-officio), Margie Wayne, Judy Morrison, Pierce Ellinwood (Assistant Director ex officio), Ellen Sullivan, Ted Dukas, Andrea Paschal, Karen Donelan, Maryann Scali, Tomi Olson, Chair, & Joel Semuels (late). Guest- Lynn Goldsmith (new CoA social worker)

Not Present: Mark Paolillo (Select Board liaison)

**1. Senior Citizen Concerns – MaryAnn**

- Positive comments about Pierce's work.
- No FT custodian yet. Dripping faucet in kitchen needs to be fixed and oven needs to be clean. Dana will put work in order.
- Senior parking permits over 200 done – thanks Margie for her work.
- Notes on the bathroom wall are too small, needs to be in bigger font. Dana will put in request to get this fixed.
- A lot of classes become very popular.

**2. The past meeting minutes was reviewed approved with no change.**

**3. Updates and Correspondence:**

**a. Director D. Bickelman**

- Dana introduced Lynn Goldsmith as a new hired social worker since Jan 2023.  
Lynn made senior community aware of services the center can offer:
  - Connected with Police Department and Housing Authority.
  - Started three social groups: Good News Group, Caregiver Support Group (for dementia care), Down Memory Lane;
  - Other groups in planning: Not-So Golden Years and Memory LaneTomi suggested music programs for social activity.  
Several suggestions to spread the news on the center programs.
- Kim Sliney left on Feb 10. She is still doing book club for the center.
- Update on fitness equipment: the purchase order was approved by the Accounting Department - two treadmills and repair of bike console. The order will be placed to Precision Fitness and anticipate this will take 5-6 weeks.
- Viktoria Haase approached Pierce and Dana from the historical society about using the center temporarily for space while the library is being rebuilt. The conference room upstairs could be used to store 5 file cabinets. MaryAnn is a member of the society.
- Tuesday evening program will officially start 5 pm - 7 pm, tomorrow again at the center.

- Meeting with Warrant Committee via Zoom will occur at 8 am, March 15. Dana will send out the Zoom link to the Board.

Ellen asked if the center received \$4000 (Uber/Lyft) promised by the town. Dana will follow up by a phone call to Jennifer Hewitt, Finance Director.

- The date of staff appreciation lunch needs to be re-set. Dana will do doodle and send the invitation to the staff. Pierce will confirm the best date. About 20 attendees (11 staff and Board members). MaryAnn will bring desert and Joel will provide dinner tool (cups, fork and napkin). Other members will sign up for bringing food later.

**b. Assistant Director- Pierce Ellinwood**

- February was a productive and busy month. The duplicate bridge group is too costly. To continue the program, we need to have more people attend or charge participants more. It was decided to cut this activity at Beech Street as of a certain date.
- March: Tuesday evening programs will start tomorrow. A few high school students are interested in playing music at the center. This could be added to Tuesday evening or other programs. Note - no program on Tuesday, April 4, Election Day. This Friday, we have Lieutenant Kristin Daley from Police Department talking about fraud and scam issues. Next Tuesday we have a presentation by Tania Vitvitsky about Ukraine War. St Patrick's Day will be a movies day at the center. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, Michael Goodwin will talk about the history of St Patrick's day, songs & stories.
- April: The big event on April 7 is to launch the initiative for the Belmont Home Fitness Guide and AARP "Home Fit" Guide by the Belmont Age-Friendly Action Committee, the Office of Community Development & AARP. We will have several entertainment events including a presentation on the Wright Brothers, a Frank Sinatra tribute singer, and a talk centering on game theory in WWII by a former Harvard professor. The Beech Street Center is coordinating a trip for seniors on April 29, to visit "The Embrace" statute of Martin Luther King Jr & Coretta Scott King on Boston Common and then having lunch in Boston.
- Life-learning program: Recruit teachers and professors who can give lectures and lessons on a variety of subjects in the center. Anyone wants to nominate someone as instructors can send information to Pierce. Each academia course can include 4-8 classes with 10-12 attendees. A small stipend may be provided to instructors. Hopefully, this program will start in September.

**c. Friends of the Belmont C.O.A. - Joel Semuels**

Thanks to those who contributed to the Friends of COA's Newsletter.

Joel will step down as the president and member of the Friends Board at the October meeting. There are three seats available on the Board. The Friends are looking for new young Board members to join. Joel will stay as a Board member of COA.

**d. Springwell- J. Shapiro**

- Wheel-chair transportation is available for medical appointment.
- MASSHealth will begin to annual re-determination process which was on-hold since the beginning of the pandemic. MASSHealth members will receive information in mail to renew their coverage starting in April.
- SNAP benefit will return to pre-pandemic level in April.
- Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) supporting older adults and individuals with disabilities to 'age in community' will reexamine their programs and expect more information in spring.
  
- Dana indicated no federal funding is available for breakfast program. Belmont food pantry program is open weekly. Karen mentioned Watertown Community Fridge is open 24/7 to Watertown and Belmont residents in need.

**e. Transportation Working Group E. Sullivan**

The grant of \$10,000 arrived from Mass Development for the medical taxi ride program. No additional news to report.

**f. Age Friendly Action Committee (AFAC) - J. Morrison**

- Thanks to sponsors AARP and Realtor Ellen Sullivan, preparations are underway including printing brochures and funding for the April 7th program.
  
- AARP will come and speak on how to prepare/update your house for aging in place. Kristin Daley will talk about contracts, permit application, like guardrails for your bathroom.
  
- Official AARP brochures are printed both English and Chinese with 30 copies in Chinese being requested.
  
- Housing trust group is leading the discussion on how to get approval of 80 units at Sherman Gardens in Belmont. The Age Friendly group is looking into how to get Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in Belmont.

- AFAC will provide a document on outdoor space enhancement to the Board at its next Board meeting to review what this means for seniors in terms of Age Friendly and outdoor space enhancement in Belmont. The head of the Recreation Committee, a member of the AFAC subcommittee is gatekeeper of Outdoor Space enhancement proposal. AFAC made a big strive on the project.
- Thanks to the Communication Committee (Dana, Pierce, and Amy) for help with connection to all the resources.
- Next on the agenda of AFAC is determining the walkability of Belmont, which entails identifying where seniors live and go which outdoor spaces are frequently used by seniors. This may require a survey.
- Tomi indicated Anne Paulsen did walkability study and published a map on walkability in Belmont a few years ago. Tomi will reach out to Jesse Bennett on Walkability project.

#### **4. Old Business**

##### **A. Fitness room** (see above Dana's update)

##### **B. Diversity Statement**

- Dana sent out the statement to everyone.
- The board voted and approved the Diversity Statement:  
 “The Belmont Council on Aging is committed to valuing and supporting people— all people—as they age. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are central to the core values of the COA. We are dedicated to fostering inclusive and equitable practices in our community space and throughout our programs. We celebrate and support the unique qualities of our employees and all individuals who we serve; as such, the Beech Street Center welcomes all seniors inclusive of differences in sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, or socioeconomic status.”
- The statement will be posted in the eNewsletter.

#### **5. New Business**

##### **A. Town Day Application (May. 20th).**

- Application was submitted. The Friends of COA will pay for the table registration cost. Dana will set up a doddle for Board members to sign up for manning the table in the Town Day.

##### **B. Belmont Historical Society needing space during building of the new library** - See Director's report.

### **C. Board sub-committees including communications and fitness room**

- To establish sub-committee for communications for long-term communication, as needed, webpage, newsletters, a new committee was established for communication: Dana, MaryAnn, Karen, Chao, Judy, Pierce.

### **D. Millionaires Tax**

- The back and forth discussions are about million dollar taxes. A suggestion for writing a letter to the State Representative on addressing issue for seniors was proposed.
- The law on the \$1 millionaires' income tax was mentioned. This tax has been voted and passed - if your net income exceeds \$1 million, you will be required to pay all of your net income at a higher rate (5%+4%=9%). It is not clear for seniors what Millionaires Tax means and what one can do to avoid Millionaires Tax when one dies. Dana and Pierce will invite a lawyer to explain the law on Millionaires Tax to seniors.
- The Estate tax was also mentioned. Federal exemption for 2023 is \$12.92 million and MA is currently 1 million. The question is whether the MA estate tax cap should be expanded beyond \$1 million. Governor Healy has a proposal to increase it to \$3 million.
- Ellen will gather all the information on the topic and do a recap at the next meeting, which will help to discuss the topic further at the next meeting.

### **E. Seamstress**

A seamstress may come and provide service to seniors very two week. Tomi will go and see her. No commitment yet.

### **F. Intergenerational award**

- The first choice, as Dana nominated, is Joel Iglesias who worked with Judy and Aimee on finding students to shovel snow for seniors.
- The Second choice, as Judy suggested, is the Digital Media Group who did the Brochure for April 7<sup>th</sup> event.
- A plaque will be presented to the selected awardee to honor their contribution to Intergeneration program.

**6. Next meeting date:** April 3, 2023.

Meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

Meeting minutes submitted by Chao Qiang Lai