

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: July 14, 2021

TIME: 1:55 PM

Belmont Council on Aging
May 4, 2021

Meeting held via Zoom.

Attending: Nava Niv-Vogel, Chao Qiang-Lai, Ethel Hamann, Mark Paolillo, Ted Dukas, Tomi Olsen, Maryann Scali, Joel Semuels, Ellen Sullivan, Judy Singler, Andrea Paschal & Dana Bickelman.

Mark stated that he resigned as Chair for the COA Board this morning because of his appointment to the Select Board. Mark will continue to attend meetings if he is available as a liaison. Ellen Sullivan, Vice Chair was not able to start the meeting so Tomi, COA Board Secretary stood in as Chair for the meeting.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

2. Senior Citizens' Concerns

Mary Ann Scali stated that many seniors were pleased with the vaccine process. Some of the other questions asked of Mary Ann were where they can get the Newsletter, where can Senior's park with the new parking permits, when is Contract Bridge starting and when is the Beech Street Center opening. Nava stated that the newsletters were available in banks, Star Market and other places around the Town. If a senior wants to get the newsletter in the mail they can call and ask to be added to the list. The Permit parking is at meter parking on streets and in lots. Contract Bridge will be outside and will start on May 17th. Beech Street Center opening was discussed in the Directors Report Section.

3. Updates and Correspondence

A. Director's Report

Nava addressed the question about the opening of the Beech Street Center. She said due to the current rate of people getting vaccinated and the Governor increasing the States re-opening timeframe, it could be the end of the Summer or September. The Board of Health stated the Center is to be closed through May and will revisit the re-opening date at that time. Nava said the Executive Office of Elder Affairs do not have any re-opening specific information but has provided a tool for COA's. It is being left up to the COA's/towns to decide when it can reopen. Nava said when it is safe to re-open and have enough volunteers to cover the Front Desk, Transportation and other areas. Half of the workforce are volunteers.

Nava updated the Board on the results of the Volunteer Survey sent out to around 100 pre-covid volunteers. So far 66 volunteers have returned the survey which shows their dedication to the Center. She said many are still very weary of coming back into the Beech Street Center at this time and some volunteers have taking this opportunity to inform Nava that they are retiring from their volunteer positions. Nava said that a couple of Transportation volunteers have returned. Next month an outdoor volunteer appreciation event is being planned for a small number (about 20 or so) who have continued to volunteer in the building or have helped with Zoom programs and other tasks during COVID.

Nava stated that the Transportation Report shows an increase in rides and donations for this service.

Nava asked if anyone knew who Jillian Bryant is because she received a request through the

Town's website- Public Records Request Form for attendance rates for 2019. The request was discussed, and Mark suggested that Nava asked Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Town Clerk if the Board can ask Jillian why she is requesting this information.

Mark said he had a conversation with Jon Marshall, Assistant Town Administrator about the Senior membership rate for the use of the pool this summer. Bottom line was that the fee structure would go to the Recreation Commission to re-evaluate the fee for seniors since there was no charge to seniors when the pool opened years. Mark suggested that the senior fee charge should be part of the Public Comment period at the next full Select Board meeting on May 17th.

B. Assistant Directors Report

Dana reported that April was a good month. There were a couple of Programs that would have had more participation if they were in person and not through Zoom. May is a busy month with various programs highlighted in her written report. Dana is working on getting more outdoor fitness programs in June. She will communicate with the Board of Health to ensure that classes are following current COVID-19 protocol. For July, Dana is working with the Recreation Dept. to have water aerobic exercise classes.

Tomi asked about the Bel Aires group singing and Dana said that it was being done on Zoom.

C. Friends

Joel Semuels sated that the next Friends meeting is June 3rd at 3pm. The newsletter was published and mailed out on April 5th. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the Concert & November Craft Fair is still up in the air for 2021.

D. Springwell

Judy Singler said there is more in-person programming happening.

Nava updated the group on the new transportation grant from Springwell that takes seniors to appointments. Springwell is using Alternative Transportation Systems LLC of Arlington. So far there have been positive responses that the drivers are very professional, and the vehicles are nice. The only glitch so far is that some of the Alternative Transportation dispatchers are telling seniors that they must book on-line for the ride but that is not true. Seniors can call the company directly. The Belmont COA also has a transportation grant with Belmont Taxi to provide out of town rides. When a senior calls Beech Street for transportation they are given both options and can choose which one they would prefer.

4. Old Business:

A. Vaccination Planning for Town's Senior

Nava stated that the local vaccine clinics are done and if anyone calls needing an appointment places to call are provided. Wesley Chin, Director of the Belmont Health Dept. at the May 3rd Town Meeting stated that 49 homebound seniors had received J&J vaccines.

Dana stated that she had received an email from CVS to find out if the Beech Street Center was interested in holding a vaccine clinic. Dana completed the survey agreeing that there is interest in holding a clinic.

Questions were asked about percentage of seniors that were vaccinated in Belmont and Nava and others stated there were documents on the Belmont MA website and Nava would send out the link to the MA.gov COVID-19 statistics.

5. Minutes of meeting: 4/5/21

Minutes amended under 3. Senior Concerns- home-bounded should be homebound. Minutes approved and accepted with correction.

6. New Business:

A. Discussion of Election for New Chair

Due to Mark's resignation the Chair position is open and the Rules state that the Vice-Chair steps in when the Chair cannot fulfill the role. This would mean that Ellen would become the Chair. However, at this time Ellen stated that she can only resume the Chair on a short-term basis. A nominating committee of Chao, Mary Ann and Judy will meet and report back their recommendations at the June 1st meeting.

B. Discussion of Age Friendly Action Plan

Nava stated that the Action Plan was completed and the COA Board was the first to see it. The next step is for members of the Age Friendly Council to present the Action Plan to the Select Board. The Action Plan was shared with AARP who is the group that nominated Belmont as an Age Friendly community. AARP said it is a good document and reflected the Belmont community. A few tweaks are needed and then the AARP Review Board will look at it. AARP said the Belmont was one of the communities that completed their Action Plan within the allotted time frame.

Ellen thanked Nava for all her hard work and in addition, keeping the project on track. Nava said it was an intellectual challenge but learned a lot doing this project. Once the Select Board sees the Action Plan maybe it should go to Michael Widmer, Moderator, to report on the Action Plan at a Town Meeting. Once the Action Plan is approved, the current Council will be disbanded, and the Select Board will appoint an Action Plan Committee to be responsible in continuing and implementing the 5 different domains with Long- & Short-Term goals. Mark asked what areas should be represented on the Action Plan Committee. The School Department, Recreation, Board of Health, COA and other groups and committees were mentioned.

C. Discussion of Honoring Phyl & Paul Solomon

Nava stated that the Solomon's were leaving Belmont, and both have done a lot for the Town and asked if and how they should be honored. The Board discussed options including honoring them at the Volunteer Appreciation Event in June at the Beech Street Center possibly with a couple of members of the COA and Friends Board members. Also mentioned was that the Select Board may want to do something.

It was decided to honor Michael Cahalane who retired from the Board with an appreciation plaque for his service on the COA Board at the June Zoom meeting.

Next meeting set for June 1, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Margie Wayne