

Council on Aging Board Minutes

Date: February 2, 2015

2015 JUL 25 PM 2:10

Venue: Beech Street Center

Present: M. Cahalane—chair, P. Schaefer, E. Hamann, T. Olson, J. Semuels, J. Singler,
C-Qiang Lai, J. Staton, T. Dukas, Nava Niv-Vogel

Absent: C. Bunyon, M. Scali

Call to Order: 7:35PM

Minutes: January 15, 2015, amended and approved

1. Senior Citizens' Concerns:
 - A. Communication between Belmont Police and the Beech Street Center. T. Olson mentioned that due to concern, she tried to contact a senior family. Upon receiving no response she called the police. They responded and found the couple unwilling to communicate. The situation was then settled, but there is concern that the police failed to contact Nava, who point out that in such situations, communication depends on the particular officer responding. J. Singler added that a task force was formed to address communication between various town agencies. Nava noted that, to date, the task force has not moved forward.
 - B. Snow shoveling-- J. Semuels mentioned the issue of seniors trying to shovel on their own and needing help. There is a high school program that awards community service points to students who assist seniors with shoveling, but current now levels are beyond student capabilities. Nava reported that some companies have exploited seniors by overcharging. The Center will maintain a list of reputable companies and individuals for this work.
- II. Snow events:
 - A. Nava pointed out that policies, regarding when the Center would be closed, due to heavy snow, are inconsistent. Recently a robo call went out informing Belmont citizens that the Center would be closed along with the announcement for school closings; however, Nava had opened the Center that day. Under the previous policy, if the schools were closed there were no Center programs; however, the Center itself only closed if Town Hall was closed. At present, the Town administrator does not want the Center open for informal gatherings if there are no regularly scheduled programs taking place. Current policy states that people are permitted to work from home when there are severe storm conditions.
 - B. Nava pointed out that Marie Poore picks up Center messages from home when she tela-works. However, J. Staton confirmed the Center's telephone system has call forwarding capability. Nava pointed out that staffers are paid regardless of whether the Center is open or closed.
- III. Further updates: J. Singler reported that the meeting for Springwell Program for Supportive Housing had been cancelled. Nava stated that cancelled February Programs were rescheduled.
- IV. Center events:
 - A. J. Semuels asked about the typical destinations of current users of Center transportation. Nava noted that the destination for various medical

appointments has expanded the reach of the service, however, most appointments are still local. P. Schaefer pointed out that a narrative of the complexity of providing seniors with rides should be presented along with budget requests. The current cost per ride, using paid staff, is \$15.40, excluding volunteer time: thus, without narrative, the cost is just a number. Seventy-two is the average age of rider. The Center's budget will increase this year because a new driver will require a family insurance plan.

- B. There was a discussion of the recent pipe leak at the center, which was found to be the result of faulty insulation work. M. Cahalane asked who might be held responsible for this, adding that accountability is an issue that should be addressed. The board wanted to know if extra town funds were required to make the repair.

V. Friends of the Council on Aging—

- A. Nava reported that Cambridge Bank Lifeline grants will be renewed for seniors who are ill but ineligible for state subsidies. The Friends continue to manage the funds because CSB can only donate to a 501c3 organizations. B. The Craft Fair grossed \$5,149.00 with a net of \$4,715.00. Five hundred People attended the 2014 craft fair. Scheduling the fair for the week before Thanksgiving remains to be discussed. There was some discussion of the use of social media to reach out to seniors. The new social work intern will study the situation and provide input.
- C. The Friends will provide up to \$500.00 for padded folding chairs. An Al Natale concert is scheduled for September 17, 2015.
- D. The next Friends meeting will be June 2, 2015, where a fundraiser for the Center will be on the agenda.

VI. Springwell—

- A. J. Singler reported that the role of nursing home ombudsman, which had been outsourced to Jewish Family and Children's Services, would now be done in-house. This presents a potential conflict of interest, because Springwell is contacted when a person enters a nursing home, and is involved in discharge as well.

VII. New business:

- A. The FY'16 budget has not yet been finalized.
- B. Seniors have called Nava, upset over increased rent rates at the Hill Estates. J. Semuels pointed out that tenants should contact Metro West Legal Services.
- C. The working group on Belmont Center accessibility met with town officials to present their concerns; however, it appears that plans will proceed as scheduled. J. Singler suggested that the group contact Belmont Savings Bank to suggest reorganizing parking in the Belmont Center Garage. J. Semuels raised the possibility of paid parking.

Next COA meeting: March 2, 2015, 7:30pm at the Center.

Adjournment: 9:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Dukas