

Belmont Council on Aging  
Minutes of the Board Meeting  
Beech Street Center  
Tuesday, May 4, 2010

Attendance: Diana Dick, Neil Hegarty, Henry Kazarian, Anne Lougee, Angela S. Mullin, Phyl Solomon, Joel Semuels, Jacob Kantor, Ethel Hamann, Michael Cahalane, Nava Niv-Vogel, Director

The meeting was called to order by the chair at 7:35 PM.

Senior citizen concerns: concern was expressed about what can be done regarding efforts to undermine the Council on aging by pitting us against other groups was expressed about Nava's position. Particularly distasteful was making it appear that children have to compete against seniors. Seniors left the warrant committee meeting with worries that if they don't vote for an override the Town will close their Senior Center.

Members of the board expressed concern that poor politics was at play by using financial scare tactics.

The minutes of the May 4, 2010 meeting were accepted unanimously with two typographical corrections.

Reports and correspondences:

Springwell: Their major contract with the state is out for public bid. Springwell is focusing its efforts on this project at the moment.

Director's report: There was a kitchen issues meeting last Monday. It was felt that volunteers need additional training. The Board of Health is still pursuing Safe-Serve certification. That's a higher level of certification than what Springwell or any of the ASAPs have. The Board of Health has asserted that the Safe-Serve certification is necessary given that there is a level of food preparation at the center, albeit minimal. Putting together a sandwich is an example of the level of food preparation. The Buildings and Grounds department is to take care of recycling in a timely manner. Kitchen use over the weekends should not impact the meal operation. Springwell is doing its job although there are growing pains. An eyesore is recycling. We recycle tins and paper and they are piling to the ceiling. The trash is now in bins. The town is on a two-week cycle for recycling. There is a move afoot to put a dumpster here. The building committee has made it clear that they are not responsible for this issue. However, the matter may go before the Planning Board. This may be a long process. This should be a matter for the Buildings and Grounds budget. Trash from the schools gets picked up every day. The needs of the center may not be for daily pick up but frequent pick is necessary. Even if a dumpster were installed trash would still need to be carried a long distance to the potential dumpster site. During the recent water crisis, the town's emergency management office gave 1 gallon of water per day per senior to the center for any senior requesting it. Deliveries from COA staff were made to homebound people who did not have anyone to

assist them. The sanitization function in the dishwasher at the Center satisfied Board of Health regulations during this crisis. The water problem occupied staff time yesterday. Word got out beautifully using e-mail and voicemail as well as reverse 911 call.

#### Senior Center Building Committee:

In terms of landscaping three trees have been removed but the water must be turned on. We have a ground irrigation system but this has not been turned on. The landscape architect is willing to do cleanup and seeding but not until we are sure we have water.

Patio furniture hasn't been ordered (we have to get three quotes). The bench for the front may come as a gift from a private donor. During the construction phase of the center patio furniture was selected from a company which is now out of business. The architect recommended a new vendor but the products of the two vendors are different enough that any new order still needs to be looked over carefully.

Friends of COA: The next meeting is June 2, 2010. The friends are working on a newsletter that didn't go out last week - it will go out in May. Bricks have been installed, and as soon as 25 more are purchased a new batch will also be installed.

The new bricks have no holes and the engraving is different. Nava is not aware of any warranties on the bricks. The friends paid for 151 so far.

#### Long-term financial planning group:

The group wants to revise the capital improvement stabilization fund. They want to make it available for taxpayers to place money into this account. Except is to take it up with the selectmen and warrant committee.

Fitness room working group: slowly moving forward.

#### Old business:

Report on reduction in school-based community to seniors. Charlie received a call from the superintendent's office. Apparently, next year the community service fee in the middle school will be waived.

Report on survey of 50+ aged residents: analysis has just begun of the data and recommendations have not yet been made. It was noted by younger seniors that programs are not currently geared to younger seniors. Many were not aware that selected programming is available for younger seniors. Not many indicated wanting after hour and weekend hours. Nine hundred surveys were sent out and close to one hundred were returned. It was noted that most people do not use social networking as a means of communication, but they do use e-mail.

One of Charlie O'Brien's recommendations is to employ names that appeal to younger seniors. Names like "Senior Notes" turn off younger seniors. It might be useful, instead, to use a name like "Beech Street News".

The ping-pong tournament was very popular. The IT department has volunteered to donate computers as prizes. Nava stated that seniors generated this event and did all the organizing. The use of ping pong should be emphasized in the newsletter.

A conversation was had with Lillian Glickman re: Boomers coming to the senior center. In her expert opinion younger seniors like good fitness and educational programs (on topics such as retirement).

Town meeting is the 25th and 26th of May. The director will inform the board about specifics once they are made available.

There are several applicants for the position on the board vacated by Judy Morrison. Of the candidates Daniel Leclerc was the one most highly recommended. The selectmen will decide this on Monday. Neil passed around an advertising book from New Hampshire, where he found that on the back page is an advertisement from Catlin Architecture featuring the Beech Street Center.

The Advisory Council at the Cheney middle school after school program worked to create an intergenerational event at the center. Children will make the refreshments. For those interested in attending the event takes place on May 18 from 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM, and sign up is requested. They would like a count by Friday, May 8.

#### New business:

We discussed the recent warrant committee meeting where members deliberated over the issue of transferring funds from the town side of the budget to the school side. The Town departments were asked to prepare level service budgets, and the School Department was asked to prepare a needs based budget. The Council on Aging is not legally mandated; neither is the library. Many people donated for construction of the center for the express purpose of it being a senior center. It was felt that the \$375,000 savings that some believe would be achieved by eliminating the Council on Aging would not be a savings if those pledged donations were retracted.

Seniors are urged to be present at Town Meeting and at every warrant committee meeting until the situation resolves.

The Board of Selectmen is handling rentals of the center. The director is concerned about the use of the building. We have someone on staff who has been an event coordinator (Kristen Eaton). To leave the center has no marketing materials or towards to offer prospective renters. The Town of Arlington has a similar situation in that it rents out the Whittemore Robbins House. There a public official meets with prospective renters at the

site and handles the arrangements. There is a possibility that National Senior Network would provide a worker skilled in graphic design. The board is in favor of turning the oversight of the rentals to the Council on Aging.

There was discussion about how the COA can craft a marketing proposal for rentals at the center. It needs to be clear before it is submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

It was decided that the board's presence is important at the weekly warrant committee meetings. Several board members committed to attending on May 12 and Ethel will go on May 19.

At last night's Town Meeting the COA revolving account was approved for \$50,000.

At 9:10 PM, the Board went into executive session when all members voted unanimously by name. At 9:30 PM, all members unanimously voted to come out of executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Cahalane