

Bedford Council on Aging Board

Minutes

1/11/21

10:30am

Board members present: Sandra Hackman--Chair, Richard Rosen, Gene Kalb, Lew Putney via phone, Allan Morgan, Cindy Tulimieri, Tom Kinzer, Marilou Barsam, Bobbie Ennis

Other participants: Alison Cservenschi, COA Director; Bill Moonan, Select Board liaison; Susan Schwartz, Board of Health liaison; Catherine Perry, assistant planner; Lee Vorderer, Community Preservation Committee

Call to order/welcome

Chair Hackman called the meeting to order at 10:33, read a statement regarding remote participation per governor's order, and called the roll. Ms. Cservenschi recorded the meeting.

Chair's remarks

Ms. Hackman reported that she had participated in a small group meeting requested by Brian DeVellis, developer of the Carlisle Road property, to gather input from various stakeholders. At that meeting, Select Board chair Margot Fleischman specifically requested that the project include housing for older adults. The project design team will present a proposed plan at the Planning Board meeting on February 5.

Ms. Hackman also reported that she had asked for time on an upcoming Community Preservation Committee agenda, to discuss potential funding for senior housing. That discussion will occur after the committee completes its preparations for Annual Town Meeting—perhaps later in January.

Ms. Hackman spoke about the benefits of the LBGTQ training provided by the state Executive Office of Elder Affairs. In response to a suggestion during the training, Ms. Hackman, Ms. Barsam, and Ms. Cservenschi, who also took the training, would like to host an LBGTQ cafe for seniors in June, Pride Month, and also show the film Gen Silent. Both Mr. Rosen and Ms. Balsam noted that the training reveals the importance of building respect and support for LBGT seniors, and sensitizing people to the need for nuance in talking with those individuals, as many have experienced marginalization during their lifetimes.

Ms. Cservenschi will resend the link to the training so other board members can participate.

Approval of minutes

Mr. Putney pointed out a typo, and also asked about the implication in the minutes that the veterans' preference in public housing should be changed. Ms. Hackman clarified that she fully

supports the veterans' preference, but that she would also like to see greater preference for Bedford residents—veterans and non-veterans alike.

Rick Rosen suggesting delaying approval of the minutes to the next meeting, to allow board members to review further edits, and the board agreed.

Director's remarks

The Wheels of Life program continues to provide seniors with medical and non-medical rides. Bedford Local Transit is seeing steady use from existing riders while also attracting new ones. The BLT can accommodate wheelchair users.

Some 58-60 people per day are participating in COA programs, in person or virtually. Some programs have gone totally virtual owing to the spike in COVID cases.

Bedford Embraces Diversity has partnered with the COA and Bedford Rotary to provide a day of service to seniors. Ms. Cservenschi thanked Ms. Barsam and BED for that effort.

Ms. Cservenschi noted that her monthly financial report now includes information on grant, SNAP, and MBTA reimbursements as well as revenue from BLT fares.

COA staff will continue to assist with the Food Bank for the foreseeable future. Mr. Rosen noted that COA social worker Danika Castle delivered meals to seniors on 12/24 owing to short staffing. He also said he was amazed at the rising number of calls for social services, and is grateful to the social work team for responding to that level of need.

Ms. Cservenschi reported that the COA has received a \$7,800 grant from Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) to make the COA the "talk of the town" and engage more participants. The staff will use the funds to work on a new brochure, logo, postcard, and fridge magnets, as well as welcome packets and updates to the COA website.

Because COVID has had a huge impact on senior mental health, MCOA has partnered with Boston University to provide COA staff with training for a Certificate in Behavioral Health. Ms. Cservenschi is participating in this self-study program, and will also pursue certification for COA directors.

Lisa Templeton of LPi (newsletter contract company) annually reviews advertising in the COA Connections newsletter. The more advertising, the more pages the COA can produce. Since COVID hit, the newsletter has lost five sponsors, so Ms. Templeton is looking for new sponsors, both businesses and individuals. One square ad costs \$500/year, and advertisers can change the ad up to four times a year.

Re the FY23 budget, Ms. Cservenschi has requested 20 more hours a week for program staff, at a cost of \$9,000 per year. She created a presentation for Heidi Porter, director of Health and

Human Services, who will present this information to the Finance Committee. Ms. Cservenchi has also requested \$950 for a uniform, training, mileage, and supplies for the BLT driver as well as a new BLT brochure.

Ms. Cservenchi will share slides/summary of the 2021 MCOA annual conference with the board.

Presentation on potential home-share program for Bedford

The scheduled presenter from Nesterly was unavailable because of Covid, so board members took extra time to talk about their work with other committees, boards, and organizations.

Liaison reports

Ms. Balsam announced that Bedford Embraces Diversity will hold a virtual event on Monday, 1/17 in honor of MLK Day. Reggie Gibson, poet of the spoken word, will present a poem. A panel discussion will follow with parents from the Bedford Metco program.

Ms. Balsam mentioned that likely due to COVID spikes, only two people had signed up for home services provided by the Rotary, but that the club plans to provide them on an ongoing basis, as plenty of volunteers are willing to help.

Mr. Morgan reported growing need for services provided by Minuteman Senior Services, but many seniors lack awareness of the range of assistance the organization can provide. Pamphlets on those are available in the COA. Ms. Tulimieri suggested offering a webinar to make Bedford residents and their families aware of MMSS services. Mr. Morgan and Ms. Cservenschi will work on that.

Mr. Morgan also reported that Meals on Wheels, run by MMSS, is in desperate need of volunteer drivers. Another issue is that the senior lunch program run by MMSS cannot release its menus before the deadline for submission to the newsletter, making it hard for residents with specialized diets to participate. Ms. Cservenschi noted that the senior center has flyers on the menus, and that the staff is happy to mail them to those who are interested. The COA will also post the menus on the website. She will add this info to the newsletter. Mr. Kinzer recommended using Constant Contact to email menus and other information to COA members.

Mr. Morgan left the meeting at 11:36 AM.

Mr. Rosen reported that the Planning Board reviewed its first application for a detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU), now allowed under zoning approved at Special Town Meeting. The board approved the application with conditions to account for an abutter's privacy.

Ms. Ennis, president of Friends of the COA, reported that the organization hadn't met since November but hosted a very successful ice cream social in December. The FBCOA holds its meetings on the third Tuesday of the month at 1pm. The next meeting is January 11.

Susan Schwartz, liaison from the Board of Health, reported that the Bedford Health Department has hosted clinics for both flu and Covid vaccines. The mask mandate continues. The department ordered home testing kits from three vendors before the state ordered such tests, hoping that at least one order would be delivered quickly. Priority will be given to residents of senior housing and low- income housing as well as to schools.

The board continues to help clarify and answer questions regarding ever-changing Covid guidelines and requirements. The Board of Health has recommended vaccine mandates for school and town employees, and the Select Board and School Board will review.

Mr. Rosen noted that residents do not have to report positive home tests results to the state, although Ms. Schwartz said that school nurses do report positive tests. She urged residents to call the Health Department or check its website regarding what to do if exposed or testing positive.

Mr. Kinzer asked whether the Town is offering PCR tests. Ms. Schwartz said no, but that the Health Department website has a link for scheduling such a test.

Ms. Tulimieri asked if the COA coordinates BLT rides to and from vaccine clinics. Ms. Cservenchi responded that it has done so in the past, but has received only a few such requests, and none recently.

Mr. Moonan announced that he will be stepping down from the Select Board after its March meeting. The board has been meeting weekly to prepare for Annual Town Meeting. It recently voted to support spending \$800,000 over three years on a new accounting system for the Town.

Rick Rosen noted that the vaccine rate for Town employees is low, and that approving a mandate will be difficult. He also reported that the committee that will oversee the property tax donation program has not yet formed, partly because the new finance director is still getting up to speed, but that he hopes that the program will get under way this month.

Next meeting and adjourn

Next meeting will be on February 8. Ms. Ennis moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Putney seconded.

Richard Rosen: aye
Cindy Tulimieri: aye
Lew Putney: aye
Sandra Hackman: aye
Thomas Kinzer: aye
Marilou Barsam: aye
Gene Kalb: aye
Marilou Barsam: aye
Bobbi Ennis: aye

Motion passed 8-0

The meeting adjourned at 12:12 pm.

Documents for the meeting

Minutes from the November board meeting

Director's monthly report

Monthly budget report

Annual report from Minuteman Senior Services on services provided to Bedford residents

Updated Board Action Plan