

Bedford Council on Aging Board

Minutes

February 14, 2023

10:30 am on Zoom

Board members present: Allan Morgan--Chair, Gene Kalb, Tom Kinzer, Sandra Hackman, Marilou Barsam, Lew Putney

Absent: Cindy Tulimieri, Bobbie Ennis, (Virginia Wang- served notice of resignation to COA and Select Board)

Other participants: Alison Cservenschi, COA director; Bopha Malone, Select Board; Susan Schwartz, Board of Health; Catherine Perry -Bedford Housing Board Assistant Planner, Jeffrey King -Bedford Housing Coordinator

Call to Order/Welcome and Chair's Remarks

Chair Morgan called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m., read a statement regarding remote participation per state legislation, and called the roll showing a quorum of members present. Alison Cservenschi recorded the meeting via Zoom.

Mr. Morgan announced the topics for the meetings from February to June. Today Sandra would be presenting on the subject of affordable housing in Bedford. In March Marilou will be presenting on diversity. In April, the subject will be transportation presented by Tom and Lew and in May it will be Communications and messaging presented by Gene. Alison and Allan will prepare a discussion around governance and related subjects for the June meeting.

Minutes of January 12, 2022

Chair Morgan moved to accept the minutes. Ms. Hackman seconded the motion but said there were some typos that she would fix herself having been the clerk for those minutes.

Vote: 6-0, minutes accepted.

Report of the COA Director

Ms. Cservenschi said she included the February newsletter in this meeting packet for all to see saying it reflects a very busy season as things are notably ramping up to pre-Covid times. On average, the COA is welcoming 70 visitors a day. With tax season she expects even more foot traffic.

She also reported that she is working with Jennifer Stiff, Nutritional Director from Minuteman Senior Services (MMSS), to bring back the Monday, Wednesday, Friday lunches from Carleton Willard Village to the COA, which have been suspended during COVID.

Ms. Cservenschi stated she is working with our Social Worker and Social Service interns on an ARPA grant with MMSS on hoarding issues that will include two Buried Treasures Group workshops following a workbook. This book is a guide on the best ways to help those with cluttered homes clear them out. Chair Morgan commented that our COA was the only group to apply for this grant thanks to the COA's initiative. Ms. Cservenschi stated that the grant application and follow through would not be possible without the support of the social service interns.

Rita Shah, founder of the Friends of Indian Senior Citizens Organization (FISCO), with a grant from Emerson Hospital, approached the COA and offered to provide an India lunch from Holi for seniors. This special lunch will be held on March 27.

Hilary Viola, Director of Community Programs at MMSS also approached the COA about holding monthly lunches or dinners for LGBTQ seniors, sponsored by the Aging Project in Boston and MMSS. Ms. Cservenschi has provided a contact, and Ms. Barsam will be following up to find out more and determine if Bedford Embraces Diversity has any interest in getting involved.

Ms. Hackman inquired about the COA Budget request for FY24. Ms. Cservenschi stated that with additional monies as a result of the 2020 census from the state Formula Grant, the COA will be able to fund a 19 hour position with a focus on marketing, communications, and outreach. Also, by re-working the existing budget of the Bedford Local Transit, Ms. Cservenschi was able to add Saturday BLT service from 10am – 3pm, when the COA is open, while also providing a trained back-up driver.

Housing Discussion- led by Sandra Hackman

Ms. Hackman explained that the focus of this discussion is to consider housing options, especially affordable housing, for Bedford seniors. She introduced Ms. Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner from the Planning Department, who

summarized all construction underway and new proposals, such as the proposed project at 139 Carlisle Rd., and a proposed two-family zoning amendment, which will be voted on at Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Kalb asked a question about the status of accessory dwelling units in Bedford, and will share an article from the New York Times on this subject. Evidently, there has been little uptake by town residents on detached ADUs, which ATM voters approved last year. Ms. Hackman and Chair Morgan gave a summary of their research into Carlisle's Benfield Farms, a mostly affordable senior housing development, and Acton's low-income complex that is much like our Ashby Place. Ms. Barsam asked what their goal was in doing so, to which they responded they wanted to get an idea of what our neighbors were offering and what the pros and cons of these housing solutions were.

Mr. Jeffrey King, Bedford Director of Housing and Economic Development, then presented a summary of the different types of home-share options that are available, noting that most are nonprofit and accept applications online, with the exception of Nesterly which is very tech-driven and for profit. Ms. Barsam noted that Nesterly presented to the COA Board last year and asked if Mr. King considered one provider better than the other. Mr. King stated that he had no preference but that there are options as to how to set-up shared housing and that the best programs had an application for both the homeowner and the renter, an agreement, and an exit policy.

In closing this discussion, Ms. Hackman suggested the COA Board think about a letter of support for the Carlisle Road development and the two-family zoning proposal. Mr. Morgan stated that we should consider a general endorsement of support for affordable housing but not name specific ones as to not appear biased. Mr. Hackman commented that she will write a personal letter regardless of what the board decides.

Liaisons

Ms. Malone, Select Board liaison, updated the COA Board regarding the proposed Carlisle Road project. The proposal provides options for seniors. There will be a public meeting with the developer this evening, February 14. Board members were encouraged board to attend. Ms. Malone also reported that the Select Board voted

to support the warrant article addressing two-family zoning, to be voted upon at ATM in March.

Ms. Malone announced ATM will be held on March 27 with a new start time, 6:30pm, at the high school. The Select Board appointed 6 members to the committee overseeing the redesign of the new fire department. She also suggested that the board get in touch with Christina Wilgren from the Affordable Housing Trust who has previously completed an analysis of affordable housing options in neighboring towns.

Ms. Schwartz, chair of the Board of Health, thanked the COA for supporting the Bedford Safe Campaign, citing a public forum set for March 1. She also referenced links on the town website posted by Town nurse Chris Bang about social services available to residents. Ms. Schwartz urged town residents to continue with Covid mitigation.

Adjourn

Mr. Morgan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Putney seconded it.

Vote: 6-0 in favor.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2023, at 10:30am on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted by Marilou Barsam, acting clerk.

Attachments:

Agenda

Minutes for January 10, 2023, meeting

COA Director's Monthly Report

Monthly report on COA finances

PowerPoint on housing submitted by Catherine Perry

February newsletter