

Bedford Council on Aging Board
Minutes (April 5, 2023, at 6:44 p.m.)
March 28, 2023
10:30 am on Zoom

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

Absent: Bobbie Ennis; Bopha Malone, Select Board liaison; Susan Schwartz, Board of Health liaison. (COA Board now has one vacancy since resignation of Virginia Wang.)

Other participants: Alison Cservenschi, COA director.

Call to Order/Welcome and Chair's Remarks

This meeting was a re-scheduled from March 14th, a date on which the Town of Bedford closed for the day due to inclement weather.

Chair Morgan called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., read a statement regarding remote participation per state legislation, and called the roll showing a quorum of members present. Ms. Cservenschi recorded the meeting via Zoom.

Chair Morgan announced that Ms. Ennis and Bedford Board of Health liaison Susan Schwartz would not be participating. He also noted that Annual Town Meeting had been completed the prior evening, March 27th, and that the warrant article making it easier to build two-family dwellings in Bedford had in fact been passed. This item was of interest to the COA Board but had not been voted on to support at the Town Meeting by the Board.. Ms. Hackman stated that she spoke in favor of two-family dwellings at Annual Town Meeting as an individual.

Minutes of February 14, 2023

The minutes of the February 14, 2023, were reviewed. The most substantive concern was that Ms. Ennis was in fact present at that meeting but was listed in the minutes as having been absent. A few other corrections were noted. Mr. Putney moved to accept the minutes as amended and Ms. Hackman seconded the motion. **Vote:** 6-0-1, minutes accepted. Ms. Tulimieri abstained, since she had not been present for the 02/14/2023 meeting.

Report of the COA Director

Ms. Cservenschi said the COA is still welcoming up to seventy visitors a day! She added that the MCOA (Massachusetts Council of Aging) is holding a recommended training session for COA Board members on May 9th at the Lexington COA. This training is an additional opportunity along with diversity training sessions. She referred the Board members to her published reports for detailed information on COA activities.

Ms. Cservenschi informed the Board that Annual Town Meeting (ATM) approved our funding request for a Saturday BLT driver and additionally our other funding requests, for a part time marketing, outreach and volunteer coordinator, would be funded via additional monies from the Formula Grant.

Ms. Hackman added that ATM also approved separating the COA recreation revolving fund from the recreation revolving fund which will help the COA keep track of payments and allow easier tracking of the fund rather than going through recreation for fund inquiries.

Marilou Barsam: Diversity in Bedford

Board Member Marilou Barsam is one of the two co-founders of Bedford Embraces Diversity (BED), a local organization and non-profit corporation supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in the community.] She presented ideas and suggestions, following discussion with Ms. Cservenschi, on how the COA can offer more diverse programs to attract under-served residents in the community.

Ms. Barsam identified a long-term goal that she hopes can be achieved with the COA to “celebrate, educate, and participate” in support of diversity in Bedford, MA. Participants from Bedford are needed to support diversity in all its forms. It also means that “champions” are needed from each identified group.

Bedford contains a core group that participates everything related to DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), but individual groups work individually as well. The COA could participate by having events featuring various diverse groups, for example having dancers from various groups dance at the COA. The Select

Board's Bopha Malone (that Board's representative to the COA) could use our cooperation on such events. Ms. Malone is working on a three-year plan to support DEI at the Town level, and marketing materials are needed for the resultant specific plans.

Ms. Barsam and Ms. Cservenschi shared what had been learned from other COAs and Lexington, Arlington and Lincoln responded

Ms. Cservenschi reported that other towns specifically doing something include Lexington, Arlington, and Lincoln. Harvard stated they would be interested in learning of what others are doing since they have few offerings in this area. Each of these towns has a list of things we should consider. Lincoln seems to be a step ahead of most other towns.

Both Arlington and Lexington hold Luna New Year, Holi and Diwali celebrations. Lexington holds Indian lunches twice a quarter through the Indian Affinity Group. Lexington offers a zoom program entitled 'Coming Out Across the Ages' and also co-sponsors the LexPride events.

Arlington holds a weekly LGBTQIA+ program on zoom, karaoke during pride week and has a dedicated person who works on specific activities for this part of the community. They also use Rapport International to translate their documents.

The Lincoln COA works to ensure their work is purposeful and always inclusive, equitable and anti-racist. They offer integrated movies, special programming and updated their policies by removing pronouns. When choosing movies, they look for female directors or black/Asian starts on purpose. The description of the movie is also intentional if it includes women or diverse people.

For their recreational day trips, Lincoln researches the location and reaches out to the docent and asks that anyone of color or diverse backgrounds be highlighted. They also purposely choose restaurants owned by diverse people. Lincoln uses Wikipedia to research interesting location with diverse history and makes efforts to plan trips to these places.

On review of the Lincoln COA policies, any language construed as offensive was removed and guidelines for home visits were re-wrote putting the resident in the position of power instead of from a vulnerable point of view. The Lincoln COA

also went one step further in encouraging the Massachusetts Council on Aging to include diversity, equity and inclusion on their website.

Ms. Cservenschi outlined what the COA has offered this year including the Luna New Year and Holi celebrations and discussed the upcoming Community Conversation with the Aging Project of Boston around the LGBTQIA+ Ms. Barsam offered from BED \$300 to kick off “speakers” from a diverse background for the upcoming monthly lunch programs.

Chair Morgan posed the question to Ms. Barsam and Ms. Cservenschi about next steps to “celebrate, educate, participate” and wcapacity do we have to plans events and event evaluation. Ms. Barsam will report back to the COA Board. Ms. Barsam planned to research the the diversity makeup of the COA population.

That question triggered a discussion on the general topic of Board members’ presence at and participation in the COA in general. Board members need to meet the actual COA participants to a greater extent than they do at present!

Adjourn

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

Vote: 7-0 in favor.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2023, at 10:30am on Zoom. The principal topic will be transportation for seniors, presented by Tom Kinzer and Lew Putney.

Respectfully submitted by Tom Kinzer, acting clerk.

Attachments:

Agenda

Minutes for February 14, 2023, meeting

COA director’s report on COA activities

Monthly report on COA finances

PowerPoint on diversity submitted by Ms. Barsam