

Bedford Council on Aging Board

Minutes

April 12, 2022

10:30am on Zoom

Board members present: Sandra Hackman--Chair, Richard Rosen, Gene Kalb, Lew Putney via phone, Cindy Tulimieri, Tom Kinzer, Bobbie Ennis, Alan Morgan, Marilou Barsam (arrived at 11:40)

Other participants: Alison Cservenschi, COA director; Bopha Malone, Select Board liaison; Susan Schwartz, Board of Health liaison

Call to order/welcome and chair's remarks

Chair Hackman called the meeting to order at 10:34 and read a statement regarding remote participation per the governor. Alison Cservenschi recorded the meeting. Ms. Hackman called the roll.

Chair's remarks:

Ms. Hackman welcomed Bopha Malone to her first COA Board meeting as Select Board liaison.

Ms. Hackman expressed her disappointment that a final article that would have authorized easements for the Minuteman Bikeway Extension did not pass at Annual Town Meeting. She noted that the project—in the works for more than 12 years--is very important in providing year-round access for older adults and other users of all abilities. She was also disappointed that a transportation article that would have helped launch a redesign of Wilson Park did not pass. The board had sent a letter to the Select Board asking it to move ahead with such a project as soon as possible, given the lack of safety for walkers and bicyclers at that site.

She noted that her comments to ATM regarding what the board feels is a short-sighted approach to the Select Board budget—which did not include a requested \$10,000 increase for the COA, or numerous low-cost requests from other departments—received attention in the *Bedford Citizen*. These requests were not funded because of the Finance Committee's 2.5 percent guideline for the increase in the Select Board budget. Mr. Rosen highlighted Fincom's response at ATM: the chair seemed to suggest that the Select Board can seek to adjust the Fincom guidance. Mr. Kinzer expressed surprise at that comment, as in his experience on town budget committees the guideline is firm. After ATM, Rep. Ken Gordon reached out to Ms. Hackman pledging to seek state funding to cover the COA request.

Ms. Malone said she is hopeful that the Select Board will revisit its budget in the fall, and that she will advocate for the COA's requested \$10,000 at that time. The extra funds would be used to allow an existing staff member to become a full-time program coordinator.

Ms. Hackman reported that a nominating committee is needed to find new officers for next year, as Ms. Hackman cannot run again for chair given the board's term limit of three consecutive years. She also announced that Mr. Rosen, current vice-chair, would not renew for a third term on the board, so unfortunately, he will not be a candidate for chair. Mr. Morgan and Mr. Rosen volunteered to serve as the committee.

A motion to approve the nominating committee was moved by Ms. Ennis and motion seconded by Mr. Putney.

Vote of the board

8-0

Ms. Malone reported that the Select Board is asking all boards and committees to decide if they would like to meet in person, in a hybrid format, or by Zoom. After a discussion in which many board members supported meeting in person, Mr. Rosen moved to conduct board meetings in hybrid format, and Ms. Ennis seconded.

Vote of the board

8-0

Approval of the March minutes

Mr. Rosen moved to approve the minutes with minor corrections, and Ms. Ennis seconded.

Vote of the board

6-0-2 (two members were absent from the March meeting)

Director's remarks

Ms. Cservenschi reported that attendance at the senior center continues to increase, and that mileage on the Bedford Local Transit bus doubled last month. Ms. Cservenschi is looking to expand BLT service to Saturday utilizing the 50% reimbursement funds from the SNAP project, addressing food insecurity. That will entail training a second driver, who will also serve as a backup to the full-time driver on vacation and sick days.

Ms. Cservenschi noted that besides a redesign of the COA logo and town wide mailing, the Talk of the Town grant from the Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) funded new promotional posters, welcome packets, new trifold brochures, and a tablecloth for Bedford Day and other events. The COA's social work interns, who performed much of this work, have completed their internships.

The Jacob Wren Throckmorton Art Show occurred on Poll-Capping Day, which meant that it drew robust attendance. The event raised \$1,300, which is used to fund art classes.

MCOA's first meeting on certification for COA directors is scheduled, and Ms. Cservenschi hopes to attend.

Mr. Rosen asked about the \$64,000 balance in the COA budget from the state formula grant. Ms. Cservenschi responded that the state now allows COAs to carry over that funding from year to year.

Steps to making Bedford dementia-friendly

Patty Sullivan, director of Dementia Friendly Massachusetts, a program of MCOA, noted that nearly everyone knows someone with dementia. She provided an overview of how communities can become more welcoming to such individuals. Some 83 communities in the state are now pursuing such efforts--some as individual localities and some, such as those on Cape Ann, working regionally.

Communities can do so by working on three key fronts: raising awareness of the needs of people with dementia, educating others on how to serve them, and following through on such efforts. Building awareness includes educating the public on the 10 warning signs of dementia, and how to distinguish normal changes from more serious declines. If people have trouble with daily activities, that suggests dementia. Building awareness also includes educating town employees as well as those at houses of

worship and main street businesses, such as bank tellers, about how to recognize signs of cognitive decline among their patrons. She mentioned a town clerk who noticed such signs in a 45-year resident and alerted town staff to check on that resident.

Also important is ensuring that signs on and in private and public buildings--including town hall, the library, and the senior center--are designed with people with dementia in mind, such as through the use of contrasting colors. Another step is to create a registry of people with dementia who may need assistance after major events such as storms. Ms. Hackman noted that the Bedford Police have created such a registry, and that individuals can enroll family members.

MCOA supports all such work through both introductory and more in-depth trainings. Ms. Sullivan also places social work interns with COAs to help connect families of people with dementia to services.

A community's first step in becoming dementia friendly, according to Ms. Sullivan, is to create an action team composed of representatives from both the public and private sectors. This core group can meet monthly to evaluate the needs of the community's residents informally or through a more formal assessment, and develop a plan to address them.

Ms. Hackman noted that the COA Board aims to meet with the Disability Commission to find out more about its town audit and collaborate on following through on the findings. Because dementia is a disability, that collaboration could include the work that Ms. Sullivan mentioned. She suggested that a member of the commission serve on the action team. Mr. Morgan recommended that the team also include a representative from Minuteman Senior Services, which provides assistance to Bedford residents on a number of fronts.

Ms. Tulimieri noted that residents of Carlton-Willard Village as well as the new Residence at Bedford—a development now under construction that will include both assisted living and memory care—are and will be in the community, and that the COA's efforts to make the town dementia friendly could help support them. Because Ms. Tulimieri works with people with dementia in her professional life, she agreed to collaborate with Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Cservenschi to create an action team for Bedford. She will report back to the COA Board on these efforts.

Liaison reports

Ms. Balsam, liaison to Bedford Embraces Diversity, shared a draft flyer for the LGBTQ Café in June, jointly sponsored by the COA and BED. Board members liked the flyer but asked for more clarity that the COA is a lead sponsor, and that the event will be intergenerational.

Mr. Rosen reported that the Planning Board continues to discuss expanded zoning for two-family housing, and it hopes to make a presentation at Special Town Meeting in the fall. The board is still brainstorming on both design requirements for such housing and where to zone for it.

Ms. Ennis, president of the Friends of the Bedford COA, reported that the organization is hosting two fundraisers this year. The first, held on April 11 at the Red Heat Tavern, was a huge success. Red Heat donated 15 percent of revenues to the FBCOA—a higher percentage than usual--and the event raised \$1036.00.

Susan Schwartz, Board of Health liaison, reported that Bedford rescinded the indoor mask mandate as of February 28, but also issued an advisory recommending that each resident consider their own risk and that of people around them. COVID numbers are rising, which suggests the need for mitigation strategies. She reported that Medicare recipients can get two free covid test kits, and that the town is also offering free kits. The Health Department will be offering a booster clinic.

Ms. Schwartz reminded everyone that flu is still in town. Checking for ticks is important, given the prevalence of tick-borne illness. Spraying to keep mosquito populations down will occur again this year. The department will install four sunscreen dispensers around town. Town social workers are offering a multigenerational anxiety support group. The Health Department received a grant to relaunch community dinners starting in June.

Next meeting and adjourn

The next board meeting will be on May 17, one week later than usual. Mr. Morgan moved to adjourn, and Ms. Ennis seconded.

Vote of the board

9-0

The meeting adjourned at 12:14 pm.

Documents for the meeting

Agenda

Minutes for the March meeting

Director's monthly report

Monthly budget report