

## **Bedford Council on Aging Board**

### **Minutes**

**May 17, 2022**

**10:30am on Zoom**

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

**Other participants:** Alison Cservenschi, COA director; Bopha Malone, Select Board liaison; Susan Schwartz, Board of Health liaison, Lee Vorderer, Community Preservation Committee; Jeffrey King, Bedford housing and economic development coordinator; Christina Wilgren, chair, Bedford Housing Partnership; Liz Rust, Bedford rep from the Regional Housing Services Organization

#### **Call to order/welcome and chair's remarks**

Chair Hackman called the meeting to order at 10:32 and read a statement regarding remote participation per 2022 state legislation. Alison Cservenschi recorded the meeting.

#### **Chair's remarks**

Ms. Hackman noted that even though the COA Board voted in April to authorize hybrid meetings going forward, the Town is limiting the use of the Select Board meeting room, which has the technology needed to run hybrid meetings. COA Board meetings will therefore remain virtual.

#### **Approval of minutes**

Mr. Rosen moved to approve minutes of 12 April 2022 with corrections, and Ms. Ennis seconded.

Vote of the Board: 9-0

#### **Director's remarks**

Ms. Cservenschi reported that part-time activities coordinator Haley Williams has left the COA for a full-time job. Attendance continues to be about 60 people per day, which is still lower than the pre-Covid 70-100 people per day, given the spike in Covid numbers in Bedford. The Jacob Wren Throckmorton Art Show raised \$1,400 for art programs for seniors.

Friends of the Bedford COA raised over \$1,000 through the Red Heat fundraiser. The first LBGTQ+ Café, co-sponsored with Bedford Embraces Diversity (BED), will occur on June 15 at 1:30 pm.

The COA would like to restart three-times-weekly in-person lunches, but provider Carlton Willard Village does not currently have the staff to support that effort. An informal poll shows

that seniors prefer the drive-through option right now anyway. Seniors can eat their meal inside after pickup.

Right at Home will begin hosting the Memory Café, which will restart with a simple meet-and-greet for those who want to attend in person. Use of Bedford Local Transit continues to grow.

Mr. Rosen said he is disappointed that the COA lost a good staff member owing to the failure of town leadership to find \$10,000 to expand her position to full-time. He asked whether the COA has any interns on the horizon, and Alison responded that she is interviewing for the fall. An intern working through the Town Health and Human Services Department is assisting at the COA on Tuesdays and Fridays.

### **Report of the Nominating Committee**

Mr. Rosen announced that Allan Morgan has agreed to serve as chair for one year, and that Cindy Tulimieri has agreed to serve as vice chair. The board will vote on these candidates at its June meeting.

### **Nesterly proposal**

Several guests joined the board to discuss the proposal from the CEO of Nesterly--who spoke to the board at its March meeting--to create a home-share program in Bedford. Nesterly facilitates agreements between homeowners and renters, who may assist with chores and provide companionship as well as income. Nesterly has created such a program in Boston and other cities, but a program in Bedford would be its first in a town. The cost would be \$25,000 annually plus \$40,000 if the town opts for day-to-day management of the program.

Mr. Rosen noted that 1,400 seniors in Bedford live alone, and could benefit from such a program.

Ms. Wilgren noted that a church in Watertown has done something similar by connecting participants and providing paper forms, letting participants figure out the rest themselves. She asked whether a similar entity could duplicate this effort in Bedford, to reduce the cost. Ms. Vorderer feels that such a program would require a full-time staff person, and asked whether non-profit organizations could help.

In response to a question about Community Preservation funding, Ms. Rust noted that it would need to be dedicated to low-income participants. Mr. Morgan asked whether Nesterly is a for-profit company—the answer is yes—and whether it is appropriate for Bedford because of that.

Mr. Kalb noted that the cost of a Nesterly program seems high if it assists only a few people. He also asked why renters and homeowners would not pay a fee for participation, to reduce the need for funding. Ms. Tulimieri suggested that because Nesterly is new to creating a home-share program in smaller towns, it might be willing to negotiate a lower rate based on the number of participants and whether they could contribute a fee.

Mr. Kinzer reminded participants that Nesterly's program does not set age limits on participants, and does allow renters to pay no rent in exchange for chores. He noted that Nesterly's presentation at the March meeting was impressive, and that he supports its proposal to create a home-share program in Bedford.

Ms. Hackman does not feel that the fact that Nesterly is for-profit is an issue. However, she supports the idea of asking whether it could create a program based on a sliding scale, and agrees that a survey to determine interest is important.

Mr. King asked several questions: What would be the goals of this program? How would we define success? Is the Nesterly cost fixed, or is a sliding scale possible? Should we do an interest survey first? Might programs provide this service less expensively? He agreed to follow up to find out more about the universe of organizations that create home-share programs, and to investigate whether and how the town might pursue such a program.

### **Liaison reports**

Ms. Malone informed the board that the Select Board voted to continue to meet virtually owing to the uptick in Covid cases. The Select Board has been working on appointing new people to open positions for boards and committees, as well as the application for state approval of the new requirement for housing near MBTA stations.

The state has extended the outdoor dining program, and Bedford has approved two applications. MassDOT--which would provide \$11 million to extend the Minuteman Bikeway through Bedford--agreed to postpone the deadline for approval of the required easements until Special Town Meeting in the fall.

Ms. Balsam reported that Bedford Embraces Diversity is preparing for the LBGTQ+ Café, co-sponsored with the COA on June 15. Communications regarding the event have begun, but will ramp up after Memorial Day. BED will donate \$100 for beverages and snacks at the event, which will include live music. Ms. Butler will bring a group from Bedford High School, with at least two people willing to tell their story.

Mr. Rosen reported that the Select Board is expected to approve the Taxation Aid Committee--composed of the Town treasurer, chair of the Board of Assessors, and three at-large residents--at its next meeting. The committee will oversee implementation of the new provision that allows property owners to donate money to help qualified seniors and disabled individuals pay their property tax bills.. Mr. Rosen also reported that Planning Board has reviewed several multi-unit townhouse projects as well as a commercial life sciences building.

Mr. Morgan reported that Minuteman Senior Services raised several thousand dollars through its annual Fun Run/Walk, and encouraged additional donations.

Ms. Ennis reported that the Friends of the Bedford COA is funding upgrades to tables in the pool room, as well as the Memory Café and snacks for the senior center. Residents have asked for more socials. The FBCOA needs two or three new board members.

Susan Schwartz, chair of the Board of Health, reported that Bedford is now in the high-risk category for Covid, and encouraged everyone to adopt precautionary measures. The community nurse will visit homebound patients to administer Covid boosters. Ms. Schwartz reminded everyone to take steps to avoid tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses.

#### **Next meeting and adjourn**

The next board meeting will be on June 14. Mr. Rosen moved to adjourn, and Ms. Ennis seconded.

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

Vote of the Board: 9-0

The meeting adjourned at 12:19 pm.

#### **Documents for the meeting**

Minutes from April board meeting  
Director's monthly report  
Monthly budget report  
Nesterly PowerPoint on its home-share program  
Nesterly proposal for the cost of creating such a program