

**Bedford Council on Aging**  
**Minutes**  
**September 26, 2023**  
**10:30am, in-person, COA Computer Room**

**Board Members Present:** Allan Morgan—Interim Chair, Sandra Hackman Vice-Chair (10:45am), Lewis Putney, Roberta Ennis, Karen Moore, David Santos, Paul Fath

**Board Members Absent:** Mary Lou Barsam, Thomas Kinzer

**Other Participants:** Alison Cservenschi, COA Director; Susan Schwartz, Board of Health; Don Hunt, resident

**Call to Order/Welcome and Chair’s Remarks:**

Acting chair Morgan called the meeting to order at 10:36am. Welcome statement made to incoming board members, followed by brief member introductions. Mr. Fath served as recording clerk.

Mr. Morgan made remarks pertaining to chair vacancy. Mr. Morgan nominated Sandra Hackman as chair. Mr. Morgan will serve as vice chair. Clerk duties to be shared by Mr. Fath and Mr. Santos.

Ms. Ennis moved to approve nominations. Mr. Putney seconded.

Vote of the Board: 7-0-0

Mr. Morgan encouraged new members to share new ideas and be patient with the process of change. He also recognized the tenure of other Board members and looked forward to everyone working together.

\*Ms. Hackman joined the meeting\*

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion: Mr. Putney moved to approve the June minutes. Ms. Moore seconded.

Vote of Board: 7-0-0

**Director’s Report:**

Ms. Cservenschi welcomed the new board members and thanked everyone for volunteering on the Board. Ms. Cservenschi provided updates on the COA’s busy summer activities and very busy fall season. The Hoarding Grant, in collaboration with Minuteman Senior Services utilizing \$30,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, is going well for residents needing support to clean out their homes. Another 15-week Buried in Treasures program will be offered in the new year.

Over the summer the Director met with the new CEO of Carleton Willard, Chris Golen, who confirmed that current funding of \$21,000 for medical transportation and 3X/week lunches will continue. He hopes to help Carleton Willard and staff to be more visible in the community and is open to attending a COA Board meeting.

The Director also met with Sam Jackson, Regional Director for LCB Senior Living, which is slated to open a new assisted living facility in Bedford in June 2024. This meeting was to discuss how the

COA and LCB might work together. The COA will host a presentation in November by the Bedford facility's executive director and a weekend presentation to reach adult children of potential residents.

The Director provided a brief update on current Town taxation aid programs, including the Tax Aid Donation Program, following dedicated work by former COA Board member Rick Rosen and approval at Annual Town Meeting in March. This new program will be rolled out in real estate bills in the new year, and the Tax Aid Committee is working on creating a process or evaluating eligibility and distributing funds.

An updated Tax Work-Off Program, which allows seniors and veterans up to \$1,000 off their real estate taxes in exchange for work within town departments, will be on the warrant at Special Town meeting in November. The Director is working with town departments to identify jobs for the workers, and the program will be fully developed and promoted pending approval by Town Meeting. The Board of Assessors also recently reached out seeking to present information to the COA Board regarding tax code 41C ½, which would allow a larger tax deduction. Assessor Nancy Wolp will make this presentation at the Board's October meeting.

The open position for a Saturday driver for Bedford Local Transit has received no applicants. The Director has applied for a Mass DOT Supplemental Community Transit Grant, which would allow the Town to move from the deviated fixed route schedule to a more appropriate and desirable on-demand service. Notice of this grant has not been received at this time.

The Director reported an increase in the annual state Formula Grant to \$14 per resident over age 60, based on the 2020 census, totaling \$55,902. The increase is considerable from \$39,000, as funding over the last 10 years has been based on the 2010 census. The formula already covers three staff positions, and the new 19-hour Marketing, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator will also be paid from this grant. The Director is also planning for the next fiscal year budget, which will be due before the end of the year. Chair Hackman noted a review of all financials would be helpful at the November meeting.

Program updates included a collaboration with Minuteman Senior Services and the Aging Project of Boston in support of LGBTQIA+ seniors for upcoming lunches on a Saturday in October and another in December. The program will be promoted regionally through the Aging Project and is a wonderful support for the community. The September Memory Café saw a better turnout, and the FBCOA has agreed to fund entertainers for this program.

An in-person Chair Yoga class is being added on Saturdays in response to requests, as all other yoga classes are held on Zoom. A free trial is being offered in October, with hopes to make this an ongoing program. Ms. Ennis inquired whether the COA has applied for Cultural Council grants this year. Ms. Cservenschi stated that the COA was providing support letters for seven grant applicants this year. Attendees thanked the Cultural Council for its support of programming and improving cultural offerings.

Ms. Cservenschi stated that the new Town Manager, Matthew Hanson, had been sworn in this week and is interested in attending a future Board meeting. The Director's goals for this year, explained in the COA's Annual Report, include continuing to pursue national COA certification and improving outreach and communications.

Mr. Putney recommended that Board members, especially new ones, attend the COA 2x/week to get to know the Senior Center.

**Refresher on Board Responsibilities:**

The Director provided an overview of the COA Board responsibilities document provided by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), which explains how the Board interacts with the Director and serves in an advisory capacity.

Board members were encouraged to speak up regarding unmet needs and areas of interest they discover through their work and community networks. These ideas can be incorporated into the COA's work with the right resources and support. The Director explained the contents of monthly Board packets and encouraged review of the monthly report and financials, as well as questions.

Ms. Moore inquired as to why the town allocation of funds to the COA is so low (0.01% of the town budget). Ms. Cservenschi stated that the schools and Town's infrastructure receive most Town funding, and recommended reviewing Town Meeting warrants to learn how the tax levy is distributed. The Director noted it is important for the COA to establish partnerships, receive donations, apply for grants, and gain support from the FBCOA. The Director also pointed out that tax abatement and tax workoff programs also benefit seniors.

The Director explained that additional funding requests and the need for them are presented annually to the Select Board and Finance Committee. Sometimes they approve these requests and sometimes not. Town Meeting typically supports COA requests when presented, such as \$35,000 for the UMass Boston survey a few years ago.

The Director reminded the Board of the ongoing \$21,000 annual contribution from Carleton Willard for the Wheels of Life Program, which provides up to \$300 per person annually for medical rides. Chris Golen expressed interest in strengthening this program.

Mr. Santos inquired about potential matching support from the new LCB Senior Living facility for medical rides. The Director hopes that LCB will provide support in the form of programs as well as paid advertisement in the newsletter.

**Liaisons:**

Bopha Malone, chair of the Select Board, provided a written update noting that the new Town Manager has been appointed and that Special Town Meeting will be held on Monday, November 6 at 6:30pm. Ms. Hackman encouraged Board members to attend to hear what is going on and support articles important to seniors.

Susan Schwartz, Board of Health liaison, reported on:

- Two successful gun buyback campaigns and thanked the board for endorsing the program.
- Hiring of a new Assistant Health Director, Marisa Morello
- Recent updating of the regulation of tobacco to minors.
- Continued quarterly PFAS testing; residents with wells are encouraged to test their own water.
  
- The town does not have the new COVID vaccines but local pharmacies do. The BOH will offer town-wide flu clinic on October 21.
- The search for a new Public Health Nurse is ongoing. The BOH is collaborating with other towns for nursing coverage.
- Ms. Schwartz also volunteers as a domestic violence advocate, and reminded the board these services are available and that Bedford has a need.
- Donations from the Greater Boston Food Bank have been cut in half owing to a lack of staffing at the Boston location. The Town is doing its best to keep up with demand, but food insecurity numbers are rising.

\*Mr. Fath and Mr. Morgan exited the meeting at 11:58am\*

**Next meeting and adjourn:**

The next COA Board meeting will be on October 10 at 10:30am in the COA's Computer Room.

Mr. Putney moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:03pm, and Ms. Moore seconded.

Vote of the board: 5-0-0.

**Documents used in the meeting:**

- Agenda
- Draft June Minutes
- Director's Monthly Report
- Monthly Budget Report
  
- Overview of Board responsibilities from EOEA