

**Billerica Council on Aging
25 Concord Road, Billerica MA
Board Meeting Minutes**

April 10, 2024, 5:30 pm

Present: Jean Patel Bushnell, Richard Carroll, Kim Conway, Phil Doiron, Gerald Johnson, Mary Jones, Joseph Marino, Marguerite Massey, Bill Neeb, John Pellegrino, Mary Riley, and Mike Riley.

Absent: Barbara Flaherty

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by 1st Vice Chair Richard Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for the sick and departed.

The minutes of the March 20, 2024, meeting accepted as written. M/ Phil Doiron. S/ John Pellegrino - Motion passed.

COA Director Jean Bushnell reported on the following past activities and events and plans for upcoming months.

Partnering

FCOA: The 2024 Black tie Bingo event was a huge success due to the partnering of both boards and the support of staff and volunteers.

The Friends Board has given \$4,430 to the COA in funds this year for events and activities.

BILLERICA LIONS CLUB: The group regularly creates wonderful little items to go out to our meals on wheels seniors to make them feel remembered.

Planning

- On March 13th the Director and several members of the Board attended the CFC presentation at town hall led by Abacus planners and Lefffield on the status of the COA/Rec project.
- On April 8th the Director attended the select Board meeting (virtually) with some Board members in person when the reorganized Select Board unanimously voted to recommend the COA and Rec Project to Town Meeting.

Operations

BUDGET FY2025: successful presentation to FinCom on April 4th at 8.30 PM by the Director. The PowerPoint slide deck used has been distributed to Board Members.

Social Workers Month: In March we celebrated the contributions of Jeanne Teehan, our licensed Social worker to our impact with gratitude.

Programming

- **KEY CLUB:** Working closely with teacher Christopher Peterson at Billerica Memorial High School, Family and Consumer Sciences Department we have launched a Key Club collaboration with 4 students to work with Donna Robinson, our Volunteer Services Coordinator on several projects at the COA. We are supporting Club members assigned to the COA with information, training, space and resources needed to achieve success in the program.
- **IAGB SENIOR EXPO:** Details of the Senior Expo hosted by the town of Billerica and IAGB distributed to members.
- **AARP Income TAX ASSISTANCE:** Plan to complete some 375 cases which is about 25 more than last year. The accommodation this year was very difficult for the team, they were moved around a great deal and the space given to them of the downstairs conference room was sub-optimal. Thanks to the leadership of David Petersante and others for another year of community support.
- **2024-2025 Tax Work Off Program:** Applications were made available on April 1. A new complete compendium covers the program in its entirety and addresses key questions, copies handed out to the Board. A TV session with Sandra Giroux on *Our Town Live* on Wednesday April 4/3 at 7 PM got us on town news. Two coffee sessions at the COA on April 18th and 25th by David Lamore,

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program Coordinator, are expected to address lingering inquiries. As of April 10th we have a total of 45 applications in, 40 being seniors and 5 veterans. Applications close June 14th.

- **CONTRACT RENEWAL submission:** We plan to submit our contract renewal materials to AgeSpan for the EOEA Home Care Contract, aka our Companion Program, on time. The contract renewal period will be from Oct 1, 2024, to September 30, 2027.

Regarding Transportation, John Pellegrino offered that rides are up 12% this year.

Regarding the Tax Work Off Program, COA is working on job carving wherein the staff is discussing job opportunities with different departments within the town looking for work for the volunteers. It is expected that due to the changes in the qualifications needed to meet the revised Tax Work Off criteria, demand for volunteer positions will rise to near capacity. We will want enough assignments to offer these volunteers.

Regarding operations, a question was raised as to the effectiveness of the hire in 2023 of a 22-hour position for the front reception desk. Ms Bushnell responded that the latest hire, Lorraine Ronan, has worked out very well. She has provided the consistency needed for the proper operation and effectiveness and communication at this critical function. Ms Bushnell thanked the Board for their assistance in supporting the creation of this position.

The New Center: Updates and Discussion

Select Board member Mike Riley reported that one of the new select board members at their recent meeting requested that the COA and Rec Center projects be separated. The town manager advised that this could not be done at the Select Board meeting. However, this action can be taken from the floor at the Town Meeting.

Board member Mary Jones reported that she contacted Town Meeting candidates polling them on their opinion of the project. She reported that 50% of those polled thought it was too much money, and that the REC Center was a priority. However, after have speaking to them they had a better understanding of the need to increase the capacity at the COA.

Mr. Riley went on to report that during the Capital Facilities studies determined that the Cider Mill location costs would be unreasonably high, which is why the decision was made to locate the new buildings add PHR and the current COA location. Even though the newly designed COA does not increase square footage significantly, the interior design provides for better utilization. This includes a better functioning kitchen for Meals on Wheels, community breakfasts and lunches. Outreach and Health and Wellness warrants private discussions with seniors regarding affordable housing, Medicare, grief support, family caregiving, and more. The facility will provide appropriate areas for meetings with Outreach, Health and Wellness, AARP Income Tax program, Shine and others requiring privacy for confidential conversations. These conversations are currently being held in generally populated areas.

Regarding these concerns, the Board discussed the importance of preparing a presentation to be held at the town meeting to educate town meeting members on the role of the COA. A motion was made to form a subcommittee to create such a presentation. Motion/Vice Chair Rich Carroll S/Phil Doran /M passed.

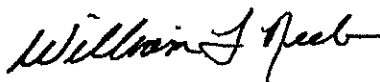
To prepare for the town meeting presentation, it was recommended that the COA Board holds its May meeting one week earlier than the planned date of May 8th. A motion was made to hold the next board meeting on May 1 at 5:30 PM M/Phil Doiron S/Bill Neeb. Motion passed.

Next Meeting Wednesday, May 1, 2024, 5:30 pm

Motion to Adjourn Bill Neeb / S Jerry Johnson - Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm.

Respectfully Submitted



William Neeb, Recording Secretary

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