

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

June 12, 2024, 5:30 pm

**Present:** Jean Patel Bushnell, John Burrows, Richard Carroll, Phil Doiron, Barbara Flaherty, Mary Jones, Marguerite Massey, Bill Neeb, John Pellegrino, Mary Riley, Mike Rosa

**Absent:** Gerald Johnson, Joseph Marino

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

The minutes of the May 1, 2024, meeting accepted as written. M/ Mary Phil Doiron. S/ Barbara Flaherty / Motion passed.

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

### **Partnering**

**PUBLIC LIBRARY:** On May 9<sup>th</sup> our 2 departments led the Memory Café at the library with flower therapy by Power of Flowers.

**CABOT CORP:** We thank Phil for hosting us and other community organizations on June 4<sup>th</sup> so staff can see how Cabot is uplifting Billerica. We thank Mary Riley and Marguerite for managing our information table at Cabot.

**IAGB:** The "New England Seniors Expo & Cultural Exchange 2024" hosted by the town with IAGB on Sunday May 19<sup>th</sup> was a great start as year one. Robert Maynard was exceptional with his support pre-event and day of as the weather required many last-minute changes and shifts.

**POLICE DEPT:** We thank Chief Frost and the force for a well-attended BBQ on June 4<sup>th</sup> on our Lawns. Some 80+ patrons were treated to burgers, dogs, chips, drinks and watermelon. They even had veggie and turkey burgers.

### **Planning**

**NEW CENTER:** As we evolve our thinking around a new Center there are some core principles that ought to stay front and center of our considerations, our rationale and our choices as follows:

- 1) We have advanced from a recreational model to a comprehensive, holistic approach that addresses overall wellness for older adults.
- 2) We are part of the healthcare network as Health Services Extenders  
**What this means is that we need ample confidential space for Case Management and Emotional Support (bereavement, mental health sessions)**
- 3) A critical part of our work is to build connection and engagement among our patrons so that they do not feel isolated, invisible or insignificant  
**What this means is that we need a welcoming, warm environment that offers throughout its layout spaces for kind conversations**

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**among our patrons – cozy corners, lots of light and positive energy in its surroundings.**

The words Senior Center are fast becoming extinct in the lexicon of aging today. Yesterday at Lobby Day at the state house the Director joined forces with Senator Jehlen and Friedman and other leaders to destigmatize loneliness. The Executive Director of MCOA, Elizabeth H. Connell , addressed us as Centers of Active Aging. **Active rebranding of COA across the commonwealth as follows**

Oxford Council on Aging became the Oxford Social Center  
The Arlington Senior Center became the Arlington Community Center

Barnstable Senior Center became the Barnstable Adult Community Center

Plymouth went with the Center for Active Living

Salem opened the new Mayor Jean A. Levesque Community Life Center

***Beyond MA we have***

Lakeville Senior Center became The Heritage Center

Rochester Senior Center became 125LIVE

- 4) The whole dining experience must be re-envisioned as we build a new home. Today we struggle to accommodate a breakfast of 50, twice a month. Being able to offer regular lunches and breakfasts not only addresses the nutritional needs of patrons but also helps us to address the harmful consequences of disconnection.

**What this means is that kitchen design is a key part of the new building, as it offers a vital means to health and happiness at the center**

- 5) We work with many community partners who need ample space for joint programming  
**As a start this means, for example, for the AARP Tax Aide Program – ideally we need space for confidential conversations when financial information is being processed by 5-6 preparers all at individual desks with laptops,.**
- 6) Parallel programming space is vital. We need rooms for health services (blood pressure 4 times a week, foot care, reiki) at the same time we could have 2 exercise programs, a lunch, a lecture on physical therapy and so on.

**This means there can be some 150 patrons in the building at any given time. After a program they proceed to get coffee/tea and sit with a friend or friends to chat and connect.**

- 7) It is typical in the June – July -August period to move events outside. The summer atmosphere adds a layer of enjoyment. Tents to accommodate events for 80-100 people could be used for these events.

**This means that external space is needed to accommodate tents, BBQ grills/pits with electrical hook-up for music and entertainment and the like.**

## **Operations**

### **STAFF RECOGNITION:**

We do a wide range of events monthly. While Melissa Paolicelli is the Events Coordinator I want to particularly thank Christian Panasuk for applying some 40 years of experience with hotel events in the hospitality business and John Pellegrino for his 30 years of Food Service experience where they can quickly identify opportunities for efficiency, cost savings, logistics management and capacity deployment.

## **Programming**

- **THE MASSHEALTH/MEDICARE SESSION WAS A SUCCESS on May 22 at the COA:** Thanks to Nancy Cadigan, Legislative Aide, Marc T Lombardo State Representative, Billerica for working with us to bring together Belkis Candelario, Member Outreach and Education Manager, Dept of Learning and Development at MassHealth, Kara Chieve, Manager of External Training and Communication, also at MassHealth, Lisa Rose, Regional SHINE Program Director and Laura Marsan, SHINE Counsellor, Olivia Paquette, Medicare Counseling Program Specialist, all 3 at AgeSpan – to offer a range of answers to burning questions that consumers struggle with regarding MassHealth Benefits, the Medicare Savings Program and more. The Health Safety Net and all the parts of Medicare were reviewed in detail. Bob Correnti ,Executive Director, Billerica Housing Authority attended and gave an overview of housing that answered many questions that get asked on housing.
- **AARP TAX ASSISTANCE:** We were happy to recognize the contribution of the team with a nice breakfast and token of our appreciation on Friday May 31<sup>st</sup>. Christian Panasuk did a fine job setting the right ambiance of gratitude. We thank Board members Bill Neeb, Marguerite Massey and Joe Marino for their active role in the success of this year's program. Marguerite should be commended. She began helping with the operations of the program years back, and like Bill then moved on to be trained as a preparer.
- **2024-2025 TAX WORKOFF PROGRAM**  
As of today, all participants from FY 2024 who were approved due to financial qualifications have already been enrolled into the FY 2025

program, except for a few who decided not to apply due to health issues. Comparing 2 years of participation –

July 2023 to February 2024	July 2024 to February 2025
Seniors 68, Veterans 8 = 76 participants	Seniors 97, Veterans 13 = 110 at 6/6, INCREASE: seniors 43%, veterans 63%, Overall: 45 % increase in participation

We are hosting 2 info sessions to review key details of the new program. We can work with the schools more closely. Here is what is being requested so far by Debra Vartanian, Director of Human Resources, Billerica Public Schools-

We can use volunteers to help out in the cafeteria (the same as last year and they support students during lunch and wipe down tables, etc.) - We need the below volunteers:

**Kennedy Elementary School - 978-528-8570**

5 days/week - 2 volunteers per day (2 hrs per day) - cafeteria support - TIME: 10:45-12:45

1 day/week - 2 volunteers (2 hrs per day) restocking library shelves - TIME: Anytime

2 days/week - 2 volunteers (1 hr/day) - classroom support - TIME: any days 1:00-2:00

3 days/week (any days); 2 hours per day (any hours) - Laminating volunteer - Joann Belanger has been doing this and would love her back.

**Ditson Elementary School - 978-528-8510**

5 days/week - 2 volunteers per day (2 hrs per day) - cafeteria support - TIME: 10:45-12:45

**Hajjar Elementary School - 978-528-8550**

5 days/week - 2 volunteers per day (2.5 hrs per day) - cafeteria support - TIME: 10:30-1:00

**Parker Elementary School - 978-528-8610**

2-3 day/week - 2 volunteers (hours are flexible) - cafeteria support - TIME: 10:30-1:00

**Dutile Elementary School - 978-528-8530**

5 days/week - 1 volunteer per day

AND volunteer(s) need for light landscaping/garden help - hours/days are flexible

- **PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: PANERA**

**This is an important program to help reduce food insecurity that is well run by volunteers.**

“Often, older adults with food insecurity must choose between buying food and visiting their doctor or paying for medications that keep them healthy.”

"The constant worry and uncertainty associated with food insecurity can take a toll on a person's psychological well-being. One study showed a clear connection between food insecurity and depression."

Time picked up for next day	Who does pick up	Average # served
9 PM Sunday	Dave Stanley	MON: 30
9.30 PM Wednesday	Mary Jones Donna Robinson	THURSDAY: 40 We add produce from Food Link/Arlington
Thursday 9.30 PM	Marguerite Massey	FRI: 30

The program is led by Joe D'Arrigo supported by Dave Stanley, Paul Giangrande, Beverly Astourian, Marguerite Massey, Janet Stuppia and Donna Buczak.

- **ADDING SCRABBLE:** has increased the number playing tile games with Rummikub, from 6 to 16.

### New Center Updates

- The select Board still supports a New Senior Center. Prefer different location to avoid closing the existing facility during construction.
- Create a warrant article to present in the Fall looking for funding for design work for a center at a new location.
- The COA under construction in Wilmington is a sample of a well designed Senior Center. Ability for expansion and better parking,
- Potential remains to repurpose existing building.

### Appointment Nomination Committee for September elections

Phil Doiron, Mary Riley, and Barbara Flaherty appointed to nominating committee to create a slate of officers for the September COA Board elections. M/Phil Doiron S/Barbara Flaherty M/passed

### COA Participant Agreement led by Rich Carroll

The Board reviewed a document to be agreed upon by seniors utilizing the BCOA and its activities relative to the independence of participants.

The basis being " This Agreement has been developed in recognition of the fact that the BCOA staff, as trained and qualified, cannot responsibly provide oversight and care for those participants who, due to physical and other limitations, cannot maintain a level of independence whereby their safety can be assured. The Billerica Council on Aging will provide whatever accommodations are feasible for such individuals within the scope and limitations of its mission

and resources, however, participants are urged to arrange for personal companions if they require special assistance to complete their daily routines, including personal and medical care.”

Motion to accept the full document was made by Phil Doiron, S/Bill Neeb M passed

**Vote to dismiss meetings for July and August**

M/Phil Doiron S/Barbara Flaherty M/passed

Next Meeting Wednesday, September 11, 2024, 5:30 pm

Motion to Adjourn Barbara Flaherty S/Phil Doiron - Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Neeb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

William Neeb, Recording Secretary