

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

September 19, 2024, 5:30 pm

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

**Absent:** Mary Jones

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 June 12, 2024, meeting were accepted as written. M/Phil Doiron. S/Mary Riley / Motion passed.

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

**Partnering**

**NEIGHBORHOOD LISTENING SESSION:** The first listening session by the interim Town Manager was held on the Council on Aging front lawn on June 11<sup>th</sup>. Among the 35-40 attendees were over 60% COA patrons. Key topics discussed were a new Council on Aging building, additional housing options for seniors and pedestrian safety around the Town Center.

**CELEBRATING INDIA'S 78<sup>TH</sup> INDEPENDENCE DAY ON AUG 11<sup>TH</sup>:** The Director joined John Burrows, Mike Riley, Michele Rivera and Robert Maynard to celebrate this event with the Indian community in Billerica. It was a huge success with speeches, a declaration and a great community time of unity and mutual respect.

**SUPPORT FROM FACILITIES DEPT.:** We have been more than pleased with the support we get from Bob Salles and his team. While Jerry Keefe our Facilities Help was out on vacation for 2 weeks this summer, we were able to rely on this group to effectively fill need gaps.

**BILLERICA COMMUNITY PANTRY SESSION ON JULY 15<sup>TH</sup>:** We thank Sandra Giroux for a comprehensive session on the pantry. We captured key details including:

- Market does not dismiss potential patrons based on income.
- An income ceiling only applies to 4 – 6 products offered by the USDA.
- Foods distributed include farm fresh groceries, frozen vegetables, tuna, cereals, meats, and more.
- Proof of residency is required.

**Planning**

As the Board looks ahead to the next 12-18 months there are several areas you might consider taking a leadership role in to advance the work and well-being of the COA as follows:

- 1) Advocating for accurate job descriptions and compensation scales for COA employees. We are still locked in as a town classifying COA employees as clerks when they are human services specialists. Jeanne Teehan is a Social Worker

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and should not be in the clerical union, this is a healthcare position involved in case management, mental health, homelessness, outreach to families and more. The Events Coordinator position requires a high level of planning for the smooth delivery of several categories of events. The individual markets and publicizes events, manages all costs and works with sponsors, volunteers and more for events for 25 to 300. The Wellness Coordinator is charged with building relations with healthcare entities to offer wellness programs and preventative healthcare seminars. She leads the Dementia Café, manages our companion program with 11 or so companions whom she coaches daily as they work in the homes of seniors. The Administrative Assistant needs to be reclassified as an Assistant Director. The position acts as the Director in her absence and helps to run the operations as the Director builds partnerships and strategic relationships and leads in a highly dynamic environment, motivating and supporting staff for whom burnout is a reality given the intensity of problem solving for human services cases.

- 2) Proactively engage in working closely with the Select Board and Town Manager to design a new senior center over the next 3+ years.
- 3) Work with the town to invest in a serious face lift and functionality upgrade of the current center while decisions around a new center are being made. This building can be repurposed as the Veterans affairs office and a revenue generating Adult day care.

Chair Rich Carroll requested a list of desired upgrades. Jean will work with the Town's Facility Director to compile a list of possible improvements. Mike Rosa stated that the importance of a list so it can be used for budgeting in the Spring or soliciting free cash.

### Operations

**Pilot Schedule:** In adhering to the work hours for the town's pilot during the period of June 17th to October 31st, 2024, two schedules were offered to full-time COA staff that picked as follows:

SCHEDULE A	SCHEDULE B
Monday: 8 AM -6.30 PM Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 8.30 AM to 4 PM Friday: 8 AM to 12.30 PM <i>Bushnell, Teehan, Cusack-Bouvier, Events Coordinator</i>	Monday to Friday 8.30 AM to 4 PM <i>Panasuk and Savio</i>
<i>Robinson: Monday: 12.30 to 6.30 PM, Tues/Wed/Thurs: 9 AM to 3 PM, Friday: 10 AM -4 PM</i>	

Patrons have gained 3.5 hours of extra opening time for their entertainment, connectivity and overall health and wellbeing. On Mondays after 4 PM we typically have a movie, the pool room is open, appointments can be made with Outreach who also address the needs of walk-ins, the gift shop is open and we have had presentations such as details on the food pantry to dispel several myths We continue to explore ways to bring folks in.

**LRTA Contract for FY25:** LRTA redesigned, reformatted and re-wrote the annual transportation contract. We felt it was a good time to have the document reviewed by the new Town Counsel firm. The firm made a few clarifying statements as to the scope of the agreement to lease three vehicles and the budget allotted for reimbursement to the town of the expenses related to transportation, etc. The LTRA budget for the BCOA is \$70,680 to cover Driver & Coordinator salaries and miscellaneous maintenance and other expenses. In this agreement, there is notification that the 2014 Van will be replaced with a 2024 van, in this fiscal year. We are currently working on the transition required to take delivery of the new van in mid-to-late October.

**Window Treatments:** We are thankful for the support and urging of Mary Riley to upgrade the window treatments along the Concord-Roadside of the building on the first floor. The original vertical blinds from 2004, were damaged and worn and no longer repairable. Toward the end of FY24, we had the opportunity to spend down an earmark allocation from the Commonwealth, before its expiration date. We contracted with The Shade Company in Burlington for 8 shades in the gift shop area, 3 shades in the lobby area, 4 shades in the pool room, 4 shades in the community room, and 8 shades in the exercise room. The total expenditure for the project was \$38,243.71 which includes a lifetime warranty (if The Shade Store is in business) on the product, motors, remotes, etc.

**AgeSpan, Inc. Contract Renewal:** We've renewed our contract with AgeSpan, Inc. to continue to provide Respite Care Companion Services, through 2027. As part of this contract, and that with Minuteman Senior Services the BCOA must address and implement compliance with EVV for companions.

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) is software that electronically verifies whether personal care providers and home health providers have delivered or rendered services as billed. EVV is a federal requirement for Medicaid-funded in-home personal care and home health services in all 50 states. The Wellness Coordinator Carolyn Savio is attending all the information sessions to implement compliance by the required date.

**Staff Advancing Skills:** Several staff including Jeanne Teehan, Donna Robinson, Karen Cusack Bouvier and Lynne Cloutier took the opportunity to attend the all-day Mental Health First Aid Training program offered by Beth Israel Lahey, (see flyer).

**Staff Transitions:** Melissa Paolicelli departed the COA at the end of August to take up a clerical position at the Board of Health. We wish Melissa every success as we move to find a new Events Coordinator. In the interim we have established an events team led by the Director consisting of Linda Matte (contract services), Lynne Clouter (staff/TWO), Jerry Johnson and Christian Panasuk for Admin support. So far, we have been able to keep processes running smoothly and event quality high.

- Working with the Director of HR we created a job description that described today's requirements of the job that was posted. This posting on the town's web site had to be taken down for a 3-week period as the Head of the clerical union required a rewrite in keeping with a job description from 5 years ago. The current posting reflects the union's requirements.

Jean Bushnell will be moving on after January 31, 2025, to care more comprehensively for family and self and choose professional and community engagement readily accommodated in a flexible schedule. Jean provided copies of her Letter of retirement given to Clancy Main on September 16<sup>th</sup>, and thanked the Board for their support.

## **Programming**

**Breakfasts:** continues to be a hit with over 55 attendees truly enjoying the food, the service and the company. John Pellegrino leads this effort with help from Mary Riley, Marguerite Massey and other volunteers. Perhaps we will see you on September 27<sup>th</sup>!

**New Monday Night Event:** Italian dinner with a movie led by John Pellegrino. Sold out with 50 people. Tax Work Off volunteers working under the leadership of Jerry Johnson will work the dinner.

**Sunshine Gals Lunches:** every other month Jo Leary and her ladies serve some 35 patrons free of charge.

**AgeSpan Lunches:** On a monthly basis we bring lunch to some 35 patrons at a modest price of \$5 per person. Our community partner AgeSpan provides a great lunch and volunteers help to plate, serve and clean up. The next lunch is October 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Tour of the Residences at Bedford:** On October 8<sup>th</sup> we will take patrons to this new Assisted Living community in Bedford for a lunch and learning session. Transportation is via our vans. Patrons get to compare the different communities as they plan for their own needs or that of family members.

**Flu Clinic Wednesday October 16<sup>th</sup>:** working with the BOH we will co-host a clinic typically for about 250 residents aged 55 and over and those 18+ with chronic conditions including pregnancy. Our Wellness Dept actively assists patrons to sign up as several do not like using the BOH/town link.

## **Other**

The staff commended the interim Town Manager for bringing over the HR Director and the Director of Operations for the town for them to meet with the COA team to fully grasp the full range of what we do, our challenges and opportunities for added success. During this 3-hour session the staff were able to share actual circumstances, stories and storms that make up a day's work.

## **New COA Center Updates**

Selectman Mike Rosa reported that a warrant article was submitted for \$200,000 for a feasibility study. With one exception the finance committee voted it down. Then at the Monday night Selectboard meeting it was decided to pull the warrant until this Spring when we know who the new director of the COA is as well as the new town manager. In

the description of the article, it said it was looking at 25 Concord Road, the Cider Mill property, 250 Boston Road, and others.

A discussion ensued about the designs and layouts of senior centers visited in other towns, and what worked well for some of these locations. A single story structure was decidedly the best approach.

The construction of Wilmington's new COA building is nearly complete. It is a good study of a well planned building on the same square footage as 250 Boston Rd. Single story building, plenty of parking, with the room for expansion. Being a wooden structure, the construction costs are much less than the brick and mortar building that we in Billerica were looking at.

Although the feasibility study has been pulled in the October town meeting, town staff we'll still be looking at options at building a Senior Center at 250 Boston Rd., Cider Mill, and Pollard field. Doing so may help reduce the amount needed for the feasibility study by reducing the reliance on outside contractors.

A discussion ensued on revising the building design from what was proposed when the structure was to be on the COA's current site. Ms. Bushnell reminded the Board members that she has the plans for what is needed in the design for proper layout and utilization.

#### **Election of board officers for September 24 to June 2025**

The nominating committee led by Phil Dorion made the following recommendations:

Richard Carroll remains Chair  
Phil Dorion First Vice Chair  
Bill Neeb, Second Vice Chair

With no positive response from any regular Board member to fulfill the Secretary's position, Bill Neeb agreed to continue in that roll for one more year.  
Phil Doiron then recommended Mary Riley for Second Vice Chair.


Motion made by Phil Dorion to elect the slate of Officers as recommended.  
Seconded by Dan Burns. With all in favor the motion passed.

Next meeting date October 9, 2024. M/Phil Doiron S/Mary Riley Motion passed.

Motion to adjourn made by Phil Doiron S/Mary Riley Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted



William Neeb, Recording Secretary