

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

October 9, 2024, 5:30 pm

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

Absent: Barbara Flaherty

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 September 19, 2024, meeting was accepted as written with a correction of Phil Doiron's last name within the body of the report. M/Phil Doiron. S/ Dan Burns / Motion passed.

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

Partnering

YANKEE DOODLE HOMECOMING: : Through the Friends organization we were able to acquire attractive T-shirts and attractive giveaways to up our look this year. However, the continuous rain and chill in the air put a damper on the day. We are grateful to Jerry Johnson and Lynne Cloutier, together with many Tax Work Off Volunteers, for helping us to be there until 2 PM when the event was closed by the planning committee.

BILLERICA COMMUNITY PANTRY SESSION: Sandra Giroux was really happy with the 8 sign-ups acquired on Monday evening September 30th and wishes to return quarterly, which will be arranged by our Outreach Department.

BILLERICA HOLIDAY FESTIVAL: We are meeting with John Gagliardi, Chair and other members plus the Rotary Club on October 21 to tighten the details for:

Senior Dinner: Saturday, December 7, 2024, 2:00pm to wrap up (Setup & Event)

Free Pictures with Santa: Friday, December 13, 2024, 2:00pm - close (Setup), Saturday, December 14, 2024, 8:00am - 3:00pm (Event)

LIFE CARE CENTERS OF AMERICA (Acton, Nashoba Valley and Merrimack Valley):

Donated 3 gallons of Ice Cream and two bags of whip cream, toppings and bowls to our Billerica Family Fun Day on Tuesday Oct 8th, 3-5 PM at the COA. This event was a huge success with over 30 adults and 12 kids obtaining fire safety information from Captain Paskiewicz and 4 other Fire professionals. The kids loved their experience with the fire truck, the ice cream and giveaways. The 2 Bushnell grandkids living in Billerica had fun! The quiz with prizes was a huge hit too for the adults.

Planning

From the last Board meeting we expressed the desire to work with the town to invest in a serious facelift and functionality upgrade of the current center while decisions around a new center are being made. As requested by the Board, a group of us are in the process of meeting with Bob Sallèse to list necessities and nice to haves with costings to bring to you by year-end.

Operations

Hurdles to supporting older adults – why is the one-day wine licensing process so cumbersome. I share the following details to emphasize struggles to plan for and deliver events for younger seniors who are not attracted to our current menu of offerings or events held during the day time to mingle with the “oldies”.

RECEIVED
2024 NOV 18 AM 10:30
TOWN CLERK
BILLERICA

A Ladies Friendship Night of socializing and connecting is planned for Oct 21, an event to enjoy some finger foods, live music and a glass of wine with each other, for about 50 younger patrons, many of whom are also family caregivers for loved ones with dementia and chronic illnesses. In late August, we contacted our insurance agency for the liability insurance as required by the town, quoted to us as \$415. We received the invoice on August 30th and processed it for the first week in SEPT, with a check cut/mail-date of SEP13th. Our insurance agent was then out of the office for a three-week vacation. Thus paperwork was received on SEPT 30th, along with a check for \$131, as a 're-quote' amounted to \$285. On Oct 1, we completed the application for the special 1-day license, with possible dates for Select Board approvals being Oct 7th given the event is on Oct 21 and Oct 14th is a Holiday. Trying for the OCT 7th meeting, required a waiver of the requirement to have completed application to the Selectboard 10 days in advance. On Oct 2nd we took the application, insurance documents, and TIPS certification for C. Panasuk to serve, to Town Hall to collect the **five signatures** of peer department heads: Treasury, Board of Health, Building Inspector, Fire Dept. and Police Dept. Lt. Coffey, was unable to run the background check on Jean Bushnell due to an issue at the BMHS. He told us we'd have to arrange a police detail to work at the event, as it's a requirement of the town which was later negated by the Chief. Coffey was able to complete the background check and turn the approved application to Dawn McDowell by the required time on Thursday Oct 3rd. The request for the license was added to the posted agenda for the Selectboard meeting on MON OCT 7th. On Friday OCT 4th, we found out that our request for the waiver of the 10-day application deadline was not granted, and the license request was removed from the agenda. Select Board Secretary Rosa did detail with Jean Bushnell why our request was denied and she underscored that we are not into circumventing town rules.

We immediately pivoted to mocktail choices and a 'sweets-bar' for patrons to create their own 'take-home' selection of chocolates. We reduced the price of the event and calls to all attendees affirmed that they would still attend.

We've notified our insurance agent that our special license for alcohol was not granted, and we no longer needed the insurance coverage, however the costs are non-refundable. Based on the risk-assessment requirements of the town of Billerica, employee Panasuk will no longer volunteer to be the server of alcoholic beverages at events in the BCOA building – either for the COA events or the Friends fundraising events. In the future, a professional bartender with private liability insurance will need to be contracted. Panasuk indicated that the personal liability is now apparent to her, and she's not willing to be included in the risk.

More fundamentally why is this process to offer a glass of wine at one of our events so cumbersome? Can the Board work on getting this to be simplified as younger seniors who want to come to evening events at 25 Concord Rd would be attracted to a glass of wine and finger food for lectures, connecting to others, learning skills and so on.

A discussion ensued regarding the proper procedure and obtaining a liquor license.

- Five Signatures are required from: Treasurer, Board of Health, Building Inspector, Police Dept., and Fire Dept.
- The State allows 21 licenses per year per organization
- Town of Billerica policy that the request for our license must be submitted 10 days Prior to a regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting.

The Director expressed her desire that Board members assist in the process moving forward.

Staff Add

Rylee Pratt is our new Events Coordinator, starting October 21. In her current role as a Program Coordinator at Cooperative Elder Services Inc, (CESI), she has created and implemented monthly activity calendars with exercise, cognitive, and physical activities. Her previous role as a Lead Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at CESI gave her valuable experience in ensuring high standards of care and maintaining effective communication with participants' families. Her hands-on experience with Alzheimer's patients required a high level of compassion that was clear throughout the interviewing process.

Programming Plus

TWO

The Veterans Department used the capacity of 3 volunteers, from 10 AM to 12 noon on Friday 10/4th to prepare 1000 invitations/envelopes for a Halloween lunch on 10/25.

Charlene Yeo is doing an excellent job with the Planning Board and was able to share details about the program with Dawn McDowell, confidential Executive Assistant to the Select Board. We will now have people ready to assist with scanning past-minute notes that Dawn wants to have digitized to make searching for specific notes easier. Dawn is setting up a workstation to leverage this skilled capacity.

In addition to the COA, Volunteer labor is utilized by: The Planning Board, Select Board, Facilities, Veterans Dept, Library, Schools, and the Police Dept.

GIFT SHOP

Delivered \$775.75 in sales for September, all going to support our programs. Join us in the Gift Shop to place a bid at our Silent Auction to be held for one week only - December 2nd through 6th during Gift Shop hours for high-end items. Winning bidders will be notified by telephone on Friday, December 6th after 3:00PM as bidding closes at 2:00PM that day.

The gift shop produces at minimum \$7,000 per year, engages volunteers and provides connections and great items at cheap prices to Billerica residents as one does not need to be a member to shop there. Families are overjoyed to find a place to deliver parents' items when they pass away or move to Assisted Living and feel good that the sales support programs. We ought to consider whether or not the new building will have a GS space as we have seen several well-designed gift shop at new centers. The current location and layout are far from attractive and in our work with Bob Sallesse we will obtain ideas of what to do with the current gift shop. The space is ideal as a hang-out since the opposite side of the lobby gets extremely crowded as trips are leaving, walkers are resting and blood pressure is being taken. All food for thought.

Italian Dinner 9/23: Big Success underpinned by Kitchen Leadership from John Pellegrino supported by Jerry Johnson and other members of the events team. Christian Panasuk made 50+ desserts and an amazing salad. We also used TWO volunteers to support the event.

Other

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Knitting Group is phenomenal. They are donating to:

Homeless Housing in Lowell – 110 scarves. This is part of a movement now known as “scarf bombing” — leaving handmade scarves in public places to warm people up during the winter months. The scarves are typically tied around fences, benches and railings, and are especially intended to support those experiencing homelessness. This year on Dec 4th at Elliot Church in Lowell, 10-2 PM they will be giving out the scarves. Joanne Bergamini picked up the scarves from Eileen Ciccarelli, our new leader of this group. They will make 120 for our Holiday happiness tree for the community. They will make lap robes for the Veterans in Tewksbury. They are producing 400 hats for the Food Pantry.

New Center Update

Mike Rosa informed the Board that acting Town Manager Clancy Main is trying to get a copy of the plans of the Wilmington Senior Center

Creation of HR Subcommittee

Chair Rich Carroll revisited the Director's issues raised in the last meeting regarding a number of HR issues pertaining to job classifications of several of staff members. He felt it would be appropriate and prudent that the Board establish a subcommittee to address these issues. In particular, many jobs that were originally designated as clerical have evolved into Human Services positions. This has an impact on the wages of several staff members, including Christian Panasuk who often serves as an assistant Director, not as an administrative clerk.

Mike Rosa offered the fact that Clancy Main is currently evaluating and reviewing positions throughout the town, so that Jean should give him her input on COA job descriptions.

Rich Carroll would like to see the Subcommittee work with Jean to drive that interface. Phil Doiron, Mary Riley, and Mary Jones volunteered to serve on this Committee.

Next meeting date November 13, 2024. M/Phil Doiron S/Mary Riley/ Motion passed.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted



William Neeb, Recording Secretary