

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

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November 13, 2024, 5:30 pm

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TOWN CLERK
BILLERICA

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

Absent: 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 October 9, 2024, meeting was accepted as written M/Phil Doiron. S/ Dan Burns / All in favor with Barbara Flaherty abstaining as she was not present at the October meeting. Motion passed.

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

Partnering

Over the past 8 plus years we have cultivated relationships of trust with the following key community partners that should be maintained with the help of the Board. There are other community partners we work with too.

Agency/organization	Areas of help and support
Cabot Corporation	Major sponsor of Holiday Extravaganza over the past 10 years in December plus project support over the years led by Phil Doiron.
AgeSpan	Meals on Wheels some 160 meals out daily to the needy, massive support during Covid for our food programs. Monthly meal event for some 50 called travelling chef, support of sweetheart dinner dance 2024 with 250 red velvet cupcakes with vanilla frosting. Deliver educational programs like Nutrition Bingo.
Beth Israel Lahey health	Summer/fall fresh produce program, 8th year of supporting our efforts to address nutritional insecurity, a critical health issue for our older adults. It is a valued collaboration to promote healthy eating behaviors among our patrons by serving between 65-70 seniors each of the 22 program weeks

Panera	Products are distributed Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays for at least 30 patrons per time.
Billerica Fire Dept	Educational and Family fun programs for safety and community cohesion, Captain Paskiewicz is the true leader here.
Mister Fix-it	Dave Moccia dedicates time to returning many items patrons would toss to full functionality form, lamps to vacuums and more. They pay for parts and make a \$5 donation to COA.
Cook and Company Real Estate	Big supporter of our holiday gift program for over 100 lonely seniors. Kim Cook, last month donated a large assortment of lightbulbs from a home she was selling which was distributed to patrons and staff.
Life Care Center of Merrimack Valley	Food support for many programs
Assisted Hands Homecare	Program Support
Billerica Lions Club	Quarterly items go out to the homebound through the MOW program, support for Holiday gift program to 130 homebound seniors led by Outreach. Also, we are one of the sites of their December Coat Drive.
Billerica Police Dept	Chief Frost and his team support events and more
The Sunshine Gals	Monthly free lunch for 38+ patrons
Billerica Cultura Council	underwriting several programs either fully or partially.
The Alger Family	Support allows reduced fee for Ceramics; free <i>everything exercise</i> for 20 patrons on Wednesdays – over a year of support
Beatrice Ames family	Supporting Yoga hour Mondays for over a year
AARP Tax Aide Program	This year completed 376 returns; the local community saved about \$75,000 in filing fees. Also, seniors reaped a total of \$244,129. in extra credit from the MA DOR.
Substance Abuse and Mike Higgins	Past few years thanksgiving meals for over 75 patrons who cannot afford a

	meal from Outreach data also other help throughout the year
The Residences at Bedford	Fast becoming a partner for health education and food
Brightview	Support food needs at least 3 events yearly.

Flu clinic on October 16 at the COA.

Well-run event partnering with the Board of Health.

AgeSpan Focus Group:

AgeSpan led a group discussion on community and social support with 10 patrons on October 28th. They explored several important topics, including social isolation and loneliness, leisure and recreation, and civic engagement. This is part of their 3-year annual assessment of community needs.

Planning

From the past 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. We have met with Bob Sallesse, Facilities director, who is putting together a list of easy fixes and long-term investments for the town manager to review.

Operations

Ladies Night: it was a huge success without alcohol! Some 40 + attendees laughed together, enjoyed a spread of finger foods from Brightview and welcomed Rylee Pratt as this was her first day. We were happy to see the HR Director of the town at the event. Truly fun night. The bulk of the work however fell on Christian who worked that week-end and many days to make the event a huge success.

Staff Relations

- The Director with Clancy Main, Michele Riveria and Robert Maynard are in the process of screening 6 candidates for the Director's position. We are seeking a visionary leader who motivates staff, maintains strong community partnerships, works well with our Boards, add creative programming in the areas of intergen, younger seniors , LGBTQ patrons, etc. , works well with budgets and operational efficiency and can support discussions and plans for a possible new building.
- Christian Panasuk will be leaving us on December 13th to return to Harvard University in a bigger role of Sales and Marketing Director of a one-of-a kind conference center being built in the business school area.

Working with Clancy and Michele we will support the new Director effectively as we hire a new admin lead for the COA.

Programming Plus

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This program continues to support many departments in town.

GIFT SHOP hits \$1,029 in sales for October!

The success of October was due to Carolyn King who was managing, staging merchandise, and filling all open shifts. Followed by Barbara Leonard who carefully cleans the merchandise before it is priced and set out. And Donna taking pride in running the Gift shop as she recruits, trains and motivates 100 volunteers and manages front desk operations. Thanks for the support at the last Board meeting for keeping the Gift Shop in a possible new building as it is also a connections site as folks shop.

Cabot Extravaganza Dec 19th at the Elks

A team is working on making this event another smashing success with major support from Cabot.

History Lectures by John Bartlett

John has become a valued session leader, the last being *Update: Billerica's NEW time capsule* which he delivered on October 21.

- **Future Plans for the COA by Town Manager Clancy Main**

The floor recognized Billerica's new town manager Clancy Main for his insight into future plans for the COA. His first order of business is to continue the hiring process for a new COA director. He and Jean spent several hours interviewing candidates. They started with fifteen applicants and have identified two or three very good ones.

Regarding the HR subcommittee established by the Board to address the reclassification of many COA staff, Mr. Main elaborated that these are union jobs. Over time, Town management has been unsuccessful at pulling jobs out of the union. A possibility exists to reclassify to another union position to fit into Human Services, but otherwise these jobs will remain as is.

Mr. Main is calling upon University of Mass Lowell students to conduct a consulting project to further identify the needs and desires of Billerica seniors. The study will include the rebranding of the Council on Aging, programs attracting younger seniors, interviewing COA directors, and surveys,

The Board was quick to respond that work had already been done internally.

Regarding a new COA building, the Select Board tabled warrant article in the Fall until new COA Director and new Town Manager are hired. A discussion ensued with comments about putting more money into the existing Senior Center, while continuing planning of a new center at a new location. Space accommodations for a new building design has already been presented to the COA Board and Town management with the knowledge gained by visiting other senior centers in addition to the experience from our own programming.

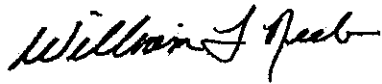
Finally, there needs to be an increase in cooperation and communication between the COA and the Recreation Department to enhance programs by both. The library should also be in the loop on the activities for seniors.

Next meeting date January 15, 2022. M/Phil Doiron S/Mary Riley/ Motion passed.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William J. Neeb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "W".

William Neeb, Recording Secretary