

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

February 10, 2022, 5:30 pm

Present: Jean Patel Bushnell, Dan Burns, Richard Carroll, Phil Doiron, Bill Neeb, John Pellegrino, Mary Riley, and Stephen Strykowski.

Absent: Barbara Flaherty and Mike Rosa.

The Zoom meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by Chair Mary Riley, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for the sick and departed with a special nod to Nick Rosa.

A motion was made to accept the Minutes of the January meeting. M/Phil Doiron S/John Pellegrino. Motion passed.

Director Jean Bushnell thanked the Board for their support over the past year during difficult times. A special thanks to Phil Doiron who recently assisted with a staff appreciation event. Ms. Bushnell went on to present an update on COA operations including:

- 1) **EARMARK CONTRACT:** Jean Bushnell, Mark LaLumiere, Bob Sallese, and John Pellegrino met to launch the project. John Pellegrino as BCOA lead person addressing Outreach and Transportation, Conference room and staffing, and Art Room.
- 2) **CAPITAL FACILITIES PROJECT:** A conceptual design summary reviewed on Feb 2. First rendition viewed as very senior-centric and underwhelming for the youths. The current 40,000 square foot intergenerational center was ballparked at around \$35-40 million. In terms of next steps there will be a public hearing on Feb 16th.
- 3) **COMPANION PROGRAM:** Low demand for the service continues due to Covid among other reasons. Demand slowly increasing. Marketing efforts needed. Reaching out for financial assistance from Enterprise Bank
- 4) **BOOSTER CLINIC:** on Jan 25th we hosted a Covid Booster Clinic led by Cataldo Ambulance
- 5) **BUDGET MEETING:** On Feb 2 the Director accompanied by Pat Zapert presented our FY2023 budget to the Town Manager and Town Accountant. We were able to get approval for a receptionist for 22.5 hours per week and an added \$2500 in the Mental Health Consultant line.
- 6) **MENTAL HEALTH:** Effort proceeding with Chief Frost who is introducing new partnerships to work collaboratively. We got connected to Wilson Paul, MPH, Program Manager, of The Front-Line Initiative, Middlesex County CIT-TTAC Program. The Front-Line Initiative has recently been awarded funding to launch the Middlesex County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) - Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC). The CIT program is an innovative national model of police-based crisis intervention with community mental health care and advocacy partnerships. Our Social Worker, Jeanne Teehan will help facilitate training at the Center.
- 7) **AARP TAX AIDE PROGRAM:** The program providing free income tax return preparation and filing for Billerica seniors starts on Monday and will run 3 days a week for 8 weeks. Bill Neeb supports this program with some 180 hours, plus a volunteer

team of three women have been working daily since mid-January. 285 tax appointments scheduled.

8) SNOWSTORM AT RISK LIST: In preparation for the week-end storm that hit us hard Jan 29-30, we prepared a list of 190 vulnerable, older adults in town with critical medical needs. Storm Prep meetings held Jan 28th and Saturday Jan 29th with our town's emergency planning

9) SOME EVENTS/ACTIVITIES since the last Board Meeting: 1) MLK lunch with movie Freedomland, (17), Lobby Library is back, A Tuesday Tech Table per month at the BCOA with Librarian Abby Sheikh is new and attracting many seniors, Chinese New Year (23) and planning for the Golf League is afoot.

10) CHANGES TO EXERCISE PROGRAMMING: Launched in January after a 6-month study. Added Beginners Line Dancing and consolidated classes given that several had low demand.

11) PATRON ADDS: November: 34, December: 18 and January: 30

12) LAHEY HOSPITAL & MEDICAL CENTER'S Community Health Needs Assessment: Director Bushnell recently led one of the breakout virtual Listening Sessions for Lahey. The 2020 census showed a great increase in the Asian, Hispanic and American Indian population segments in Lahey's region. 5 key themes or priorities identified: Mental Health, Social Determinants of Health, Access to Care, Diversity, Equity and inclusion (DEI) and Community Connections and Info sharing. Lahey will share more depth at their annual meeting in June and through the final report in September.

13) COVID POLICY: As per revised town masking policy released yesterday, Feb 8th, BCOA posted the change in Covid Safety requirements

Mr. Strykowski inquired as to the breakdown of square footage to each the COA and Recreation department with respect to the proposed new facility. Ms. Bushnell responded that the plan has 30,000 of the 40,000 allocated to the COA, however much of this is shared space, i.e., the gymnasium.

A lengthy discussion ensued as to the proposed plans for the COA and Recreation department. A comparison of facilities in other towns was discussed in detail, including the pros and cons of intergenerational use.

Ms. Bushnell stressed the importance of providing the availability of social services.

A question was raised as to discussions within a meeting amongst Board members while the meeting is in process. Rich Carroll offered legal precedent and decisions regarding how meetings are to be conducted in accordance with open meeting laws., defining that the Chair is responsible for controlling conversations. Selectman Dan Burns added that at the end of a meeting, ideas can be presented for addition to the following month's agenda.

It was agreed that that agenda items be submitted to the chair in a timely manner to be included with the meeting notice posted with the town clerk at least 48 hours before the

scheduled meeting. Therefore, the agenda needs to be in to Pat Zapert a few days prior to that deadline for preparation of the documents.

Next meeting date: March 9, 2022 at 5:30 pm

Motion to Adjourn M/Bill Neeb S/John Pellegrino, Motion Passed

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted

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

William Neeb, Recoding Secretary