

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

June 14, 2023, 5:00 pm

Present: Jean Patel Bushnell, Richard Carroll, Phil Doiron, Barbara Flaherty, Gerald Johnson, Marguerite Massey, Bill Neeb, John Pellegrino, Mary Riley.

Absent: Kim Conway, Mary Jones, and Mike Riley.

The meeting was called to order at 5:25 PM by Chair Mary Riley, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for the sick and departed.

The Board recognized Town Manager John Curran for a presentation of the proposed Town Center reconstruction project. John was accompanied by Clancy Main and Robert Maynard.

Following the presentation, with no meeting called to order in May, a motion was made to accept the minutes of the April 12, 2023 meeting.
M/Phil Doiron S/Richard Carroll. Motion passed.

COA Director Jean Bushnell reported on the Following Activities and events.

Partnering

- The Friends organization gave us \$2,025 in May totaling \$5,605 for June to August primarily subsidizing 3 exercise classes.
- The \$9 million investment in the Howe School has provided us space for events to help us attract the younger seniors and facilitate getting our programs on BATV. Our Caregiver event session there on May 23rd, led by Dr. Julie Norstand, who earned her master's and PhD in Social Work from Boston College and a master's in clinical psychology from Drexel University. She is the founder of Help My Aging Parents,

Planning

- Support needed for all the paving projects in town. Sidewalks truly improve the walkability of our neighborhoods as it allows for activity built into each day benefits every age group and helps people to live longer
- New senior center – Kitchen Design. On May 22 Hamdi Cobanoglu, Project Manager, Leftfield met with the Director and April Laskey, Billerica Schools Nutrition Services Director, at the Parker School to look at the kitchen. April advised that kitchen design should be driven by what meal offerings will be. Subsequently Director had gotten several COA's offering lunches and full meals to send meal plans which Hamdi now stores on a Google drive for us to use as input for the new center's kitchen.
- Seminar - The State of Today's Senior Centers: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities: The Modernization of Senior Centers: May 2023: 310 participants, 42 focus groups, study conducted by Hunter College. (See COA director's report dated 6/13/2023 for more detail on discussions.)

Operations

HR

- We have hired 3 new Companions to address our expansion strategy into Carlisle, Burlington, Bedford, Wilmington and Tewksbury. They have all attended orientation.
 - David Lamore, Associate in Wellness will now begin to market the service aggressively in these new communities to drive demand and work volume for the new hires.
- Excellent candidate identified for front desk receptionist – hope to have her in place by July 10th.
- The Volunteer Recognition Event on June 6th was a huge success for close to 90 volunteers who have supported our work on numerous dimensions over the past 18 months
- Christian Panasuk has added to her responsibilities the creation and production coordination of the monthly newsletter, Outlook

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

- We are at the tail end of updating and renovating our physical premises adding a small conference room and a modern transportation office.

Programming

- The Memory Café as part of Dementia Friendly Billerica is integral to our work – Carolyn Savio co-chairs these monthly events with Kathleen Kenny, Assistant Director and Lindsay Kesten, the new Reference/Community Services Librarian from the library.
- Belly dancing has been added after a survey showed interest among 15+ patrons.
- We continue to seek ways to attract that younger senior. A focus on upgrading health and well-being through education, information and fitness programs is a major push.
- We are disappointed in the slow uptick of qualified Tax Work Off applicants taking advantage of the opportunity. To stimulate responses David Lamore is embarking on a wide promotional strategy to increase submission of qualifying applications.
- Our social health and wellness are measured by the relationships and connections we have to others in the world around us.
 - Country-wide listening tour gives Surgeon General deep insights into the state of loneliness across our nation among people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. Social disconnection is far more commonplace than he had realized.
 - Social connection is a fundamental human need. Social health is part of holistic health. Dr Vivek H. Murty, 19th and 21st surgeon general of the US, said he was so surprised about some of his discoveries. People began to tell him that they felt isolated, invisible and insignificant.
 - People knocked bingo at the Senior Center, but many seniors go out just once a week and get to Bingo at 10 AM for a noon start to meet friends,

engage, connect, feel whole, feel valued, feel alive, feel as if life was worth living.

- The surgeon general's 70-plus-page Advisory lifts the topic of loneliness to a new public health high reinforcing the fact that millions of Americans lack adequate social connections with the harmful consequences being felt in our schools, workplaces and civic organizations.
 - Dr Murthy's plea is for us to band together to "mend the social fabric" of our nation while at the same time strengthening our own connections and relationships to help us live richer lives of meaning.
- The Lahey market had a very exciting kick off on Tuesday June 13th. Some 65 patrons. This weekly program provides socialization time in addition to the distribution of fresh vegetables.

Election of Officers

2nd Vice Chair Phil Doiron raised the subject of a nominating committee. Chair Mary Riley spoke out that she did not want a committee. Therefore it was suggested that we keep it the same if no one wants to change and hold the elections at this meeting. Suggestion moved by Jerry Johnson S/Marguerite Massey. M/Passed

Next meeting, September 13, 2023, at 5:30 pm

Motion to Adjourn made by Phil Doiron S/Richard Carroll

M/Passed Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted



William Neeb, Recording Secretary