

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

Wednesday, April 14, 2021 Zoom Meeting

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

Absent: Joan DiOrio and Mike Rosa

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM by 1st Vice Chair Mary Riley, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for the sick and departed.

Jean Bushnell and Mary Riley reported on the condition of Chair Joan DiOrio who suffered a fall earlier this week. Ms. Riley sent a bouquet of flowers to Joan on the Boards behalf. Mary is asking each Board member to contribute \$10.00 towards the gift.

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the March meeting as printed and distributed to the Board. M/Mike Rosa S/Dan Burns. With all members in favor the motion passed.

The floor recognized Ms. Jean Bushnell who presented a chart of graphics on Billerica Seniors published by the UMass Donahue Institute. Highlights of these Statistics were:

- 24.6% Billerica Residents are 60+, a population of over 10,500 seniors.
- 12% of that number are diagnosed with Alzheimer's or Dementia.
- Seniors represent the highest increase in the town's population.
- 12.5% of Residents 65+ annual household income is below \$20,000.
- 16.4% of residents live alone.
- 88.2% residents 60+ own their own home.
- 59% have 4+ chronic health conditions.

Following this presentation, Ms. Bushnell reviewed her Board Snapshot including:

- Spring has brought back some COA Activities including Horseshoes and Billiards.
- Volunteers are returning to duty for the COA where they make up 54% of the COA labor.
 - This presents challenging manpower management as volunteers are not as committed to keep their schedule as employees are, requiring frequent substitution on short notice.
- Transportation is seeing an increase in rides as more BCOA patrons are vaccinated.
- The Respite Program has been running a yearly deficit.
- The COA is renting a tent for May to September outdoor activities.
- The AARP Tax Aide Team had completed 302 tax submissions.
- The Exercise Programs have been running at a deficit since last July as patrons have not been charged for these activities, resulting in an \$18,000 cost covered by other donations and sources.
- The Front desk, a critical function of the COA, is staffed by volunteers. For several reasons this does not work efficiently and COA staffing is needed to assure it's proper level of functioning.
- Outreach/Human Services has seen a 40% increase in calls over the past 3 years, with no increase in staffing. Additional staffing is needed for this function. We need to add half an FTE to bring the capacity to 2.5 FTEs in this department in FY 2023. Gillespie was paid \$19.23 per hour for 20 hours a week or \$18,461 per annum, plus benefits.
- The cost of a full-time position paid at a \$25/hour rate amounts to \$48,937.50, plus benefits.
- Between the two, this results in a net increase of \$30,476.50 to the budget.
- An additional \$46,136.50 needs to be added to the FY2023 budget for staffing these departments.

Member Steven Strykowski inquired if clients pay for their support. Ms. Bushnell explained the process of funding, and that the clients are low income and do not pay for the services.

Member Bill Neeb recommended that the Friends use the COA/AARP client list to solicit donations.

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The role of the COA Board liaison fulfilled by John Pellegrino was explained by John. There has been sparse activity by the Friends Board over the past year. Discussion ensued as to how to help the Friends Board resume their activities.

Member Bill Neeb brought the Board up to date on the request for the Friends Board to provide discretionary funds. The most recent draft of a letter from the COA to the Friends was shared with the Board, which serves as a confirmation of their agreement made between them and John Pellegrino. Board members offered some minor changes before having Joan DiOrio mail the letter.

1st Vice Chair brought up the subject of Selectmen's appointment of members to the COA Board and the annual Selectmen's appointment of Liaisons to the COA Board, and the voting rights of these members. There was also a discussion of the several reappointments of COA Board members and how so many have the same terms of service. These positions were supposed to have been advertised, but have not been. Board members applying for reappointment will be keeping their current positions.

Board member Dan Burns did confirm that the number of members on the COA Board is in compliance with town bylaws.

1st Vice Chair Mary Riley raised a question if the Board will hold meetings in July and August. 2nd Vice Chair Richard Carroll made a motion that the Board not meet in July and August. S/Bill Neeb, motion passed.

Final Agenda item was the Strategic Plan Review. Director Bushnell explained the scope of the Plan, and recommends it be addressed by the Board in the Fall. Member Barbara Flaherty volunteered to assist Jean in beginning the update process.

Director Jean Bushnell explained to the Board that the next scheduled meeting of May 12th is in conflict with the Capital Needs Assessment Committee meeting that four COA Board members will be attending. It was therefore requested and agreed that the next COA Board meeting will be held May 19th at 5:30 via Zoom.

Motion to adjourn made by Barbara Flaherty S/Richard Carroll. Motion Passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted.

William Neeb, Secretary