

Town of Belmont
Human Services Subcommittee of Warrant Committee
Minutes of Meeting with Council On Aging
March 22, 2022 – 8:00 a.m.

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DATE: May 16, 2022
TIME: 5:27 PM

Present: Chairman Robert E. McLaughlin, Members, Jenny Fallon, Lynn Read

In accordance with the legislature's extension of authorization for virtual public meetings, the Chairman, Robert E. McLaughlin, called the meeting of the Committee to order at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, by remote access on the Zoom platform.

In addition to the members of the Subcommittee, also present was the Council on Aging Director Nava Niv Vogel and several members of the Council on Aging Board. The purpose of the meeting was to meet with the Director and the Council to discuss their budget requests for fiscal 2023. Director Vogel gave a narrative of the accomplishments of the Council on Aging during the past year.

The Director explained that the COA's long-requested full-time Social Worker not budgeted because of the failed override was in fact implemented by use of the Covid ARPA funds. The Social Worker position was filled as a contract position and unless funded by usual budget sources it will terminate on December 31, 2023. The presentation of the financial support for the Social Worker function of the COA is complicated by the foregoing temporary contract funding as well as the sharing of a part-time Social Worker with the Health Department. The Director and the Chairman will endeavor off-line to verify the financial support for the Social Worker services prior to the write-up in the Warrant Committee report.

The transportation function of the COA was discussed. It amounts to approximately 30 percent of the overall budget. It also is complicated with a new grant that provides for taxi services as well as the resumption of the volunteer driver program, and the Chairman and the Director will have further discussions off-line in the furtherance of an accurate write-up in the Warrant Committee report. The taxi program was discussed at more length. The Director assured the Subcommittee that it was means tested and included a provision for the taxi passenger where appropriate to make a donation to COA to support the program.

The recovery post-Covid was discussed, including the gradual reopening of the Beech Street Center, the slow return of usage in the several programs.

The lunch program was discussed which does not mirror the pre-Covid large Springwell funded lunches held in the Beech Street Center. Instead, it is still principally a grab-and-go and some door-to-door deliveries.

During the past year Belmont's designation as an age-friendly town has been implemented. A newly appointed committee has drafted the age-friendly plan which has prompted innovations such as a tutelage for seniors to assist them in maintaining a household with advice on repairs, energy conservation, possible tax exemptions, etc. The plan has also spawned a very popular senior parking permit that allows a senior for a \$5 annual fee to receive a sticker that allows them 2 hours of free parking at any municipal meter. This has been in response to seniors, particularly in bad weather, having difficulty using the payment receptacles for parking meters.

Other matters discussed included the continued use of Zoom either alone or as a hybrid method for delivering some of the programs. Zoom is here to stay.

Also discussed were the Beech Street Center rentals which were off last year because of the Covid shutdown but have started to resume once again.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, on motion by Member Lynn Read and seconded by the Chairman, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 a.m.

Robert E. McLaughlin,
Human Services Subcommittee Chair