

BERKLEY COUNCIL ON AGING
Minutes of Meeting
April 13, 2022

A regular meeting of the Council on Aging was held in the Activity Room on Thursday, April 13, 2022 at 5:30pm. The meeting was duly posted.

Board members present: Chairwoman Margaret Moroff, Arlene Medeiros, and Wendy Cochrane.

Public present: Carolyn Peloquin, Elisabeth Monkowski, Nancy Townley

1. Call to Order

Margaret Moroff called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

2. Director's Position

Taken out of order. Margaret Moroff stated that still no one has applied. The board discussed what is currently in the job description. The job is posted for 25 hours a week with a \$26,000 salary. The position has been posted in multiple places. Wendy Cochrane stated that a town hall employee has been helping out with the newsletter, minutes, and the calendar but is not interested in the position. She is paid 4 hours a month for the newsletter. She averages about 20 hours a month in the center. Wendy Cochrane stated that the budget submission has been done, bills are paid up to date, and the formula grant paperwork is done. The Board stated that some programs had to be cut to once a week instead of twice a week due to costs. Elisabeth Monkowski, Friends of Council on Aging member, stated that they have told the COA they can go to them for money but they will not pay for programs for the year. Margaret Moroff stated that the grants they had from the previous director have run out and noted that they are usually one-time payments, not on going to pay for programs. Wendy Cochrane stated that at the last meeting it was suggested to ask the Friends to supplement the programs. Margaret Moroff stated that most other COAs do not offer exercise classes more than once a week and they charge a lot more. Wendy Cochrane stated that she believes they should offer more variety programs. It was stated that whatever is left in the Director's salary budget, it will get turned over into free cash. Discussion continues regarding a complaint made by Nancy Thompson. The Board said they did not foresee the center opening back up on Friday's until they have a director. Carolyn Peloquin stated that the center should be open for seniors to come in not just for programs. The Board agreed and stated they are trying to incorporate new programs that are free like a walking club or board games for socialization. Discussion continued. Participation has gone down to 55 years old and up and program participation has increased. A resident wrote a letter asking to go in the newsletter. Arlene Medeiros stated that she believes it shouldn't go in the newsletter as it would set a precedent. Discussion continued. Carolyn Peloquin stated that the animosity needs to stop. The Board agreed. It was noted that there are only 3 members on the Board, if one were to quit, the COA would then fall under the

Board of Selectmen's jurisdiction and the center may possibly close. The next meeting was scheduled for May 5th at 9:00am.

3. Adjourn

Arlene Medeiros motioned to adjourn at 6:20pm. Wendy Cochrane seconded the motion, all voted in favor. The Board will meet with the Board of Selectmen at 6:30pm.

4. Board to Attend Selectmen's Meeting Regarding Email Sent to Board of Selectmen

Margaret Moroff called the meeting to order at 6:36pm. Nancy Thompson stated she had some concerns on what she has been hearing about the Board of Selectmen potentially closing the COA building on Fridays. Ms. Martin-Sterling stated if there is no council member there to open the building than it has to remain closed, however there was nothing stating the building was permanently closed on Fridays. Ms. Thompson noted that in 2018, the Board allowed certain volunteers to open the COA building, and asked when that changed. Ms. Martin-Sterling answered that only the Chair and members of the COA Board can open the center, and that access is not granted to volunteers to open the building at this time. Ms. Moroff mentioned there is no money in the COA to run activities on Fridays. Ms. Thompson asked if there was a liability issue to not open on Fridays. Mr. Miller answered he has no legal opinion on it, however this question was addressed with Town Counsel and the liability was associated with workmen's comp with the volunteers. It was then deferred to the COA on these issues, as it is situational. Mr. Miller asked Ms. Martin-Sterling to reach out to Town Counsel again on this issue.

Ms. Thompson, who is also part of the Friends of Berkley COA, questioned why the COA can't approach the Friends for help in raising money for programs. Elisabeth Monkowski, Treasurer and member of the Friends of Berkley COA, was present. She stated that when the COA presents something to the Friends for funding, they have to vote on it. Ms. Moroff stated the Friends policy is not to fund the COA for ongoing programs. Mr. Miller asked if the Friends were allowed to fund ongoing activities, would the COA be satisfied. Ms. Moroff answered they would like to have money for all the seniors.

Joan Blake, former member of the COA, was present. She recalled in February of 2018, the Board of Selectmen voted to have a key with a dispatcher for the center. She alleged that the former Town Administrator told her the center was given to the COA, and not the Town, and that they could keep it open as long as they wanted. Mr. Miller stated that was incorrect, and that the COA center is part of the Town Hall building. Mr. Miller stated the Board would have authorization to leave it open, but defer it to the COA. Ms. Medeiros explained if the COA were to continue the old programs, they would run out of money. The COA Board had discarded opening on Fridays due to the Town Hall not being open as well on that day. Mr. Miller suggested to the COA Board to have a meeting, and the Board of Selectmen can make another inquiry to Town Counsel on the situation. The discussion concluded shortly after.

Wendy Cochrane motioned to adjourn the COA meeting, Arlene Medeiros 2nd the motion, and the COA Board voted in favor.