

Harvard Council on Aging  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Tuesday, January 16, 2018

Present: Bruce Dolimount, Hank Fitek, Victoria Hayao, Fran  
Maiores, Carl Sciple, Deb Thomson, Carol Lee Tonge, Beth  
Williams

COA Director Debbie Thompson, recorder/alternate Connie  
Larrabee, Friends of the Council on Aging treasurer Sharon  
Briggs, Selectman Stu Sklar, Finance Committee associate  
member Jennifer Finch, prospective board member Cathy  
Walker

The meeting was convened at 4 p.m. at Hildreth House

The minutes of the December 19, 2017 board meeting were  
approved as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report - Bruce Dolimount**

The account balances are as follows:

Revolving Funds \$ 8,265.84

MART 20,676.40

Payroll 61,623.30

Gift account 40,366.35\*

Formula grant ----- Payment not yet received

\*Not including a \$20,000 gift in December

**Director's Report**

The outreach department has worked with 43 clients in  
December, some of whom required considerable follow-up.  
Four new outreach cases were added in December.  
A medication management program is scheduled for January.  
Another MART meeting has been scheduled to discuss COA  
contracts, which none of the towns have signed. The issue for

Harvard is that MART doesn't want to pay for the whole 14 hours required for the dispatcher to schedule the van and do the required paperwork and monthly report. Harvard's van is in use five days a week.

The new administrative assistant, Lisa Rosen, has jumped right in and taken on the MART reporting and her other duties.

The Senior Spotlight cable show is on local access cable every morning at 9 and some evenings at 7.

The COA received a donation of \$20,000 in December from a very generous Harvard senior. It can be used to support our programs or plans for building improvements.

The living room and dining room rugs have been sent out for cleaning, paid for with the small balance remaining from the Phase 1 building project.

### **Friends of the Council on Aging – Sharon Briggs**

The FCOA's initial First Night celebration was very successful, netting \$3,500 and providing a festive New Year's Eve venue for about a hundred celebrants.

The annual townwide appeal raised more than \$8,000 this year, indicating a lot of support for seniors in the community.

The Friends hope to strategize with the COA board about the tax impact of the proposed new elementary school. Board members agreed to plan a joint meeting in February, perhaps in conjunction with the February 20 COA board meeting.

### **Program Committee – Deb Thomson**

The January 15 panel discussion about skilled nursing facilities went well. Fifteen people attended and there was good participation. The three panelists were Carol Kapolka of Beaumont Skilled Nursing, Lanette Duggan of Right at Home,

and Arlene Germain of Mass Advocates for Nursing Home Reform. The program was taped and will appear on cable. Board members agreed there should be a follow-up program later in the year.

### **Buildings and Grounds – Bruce Dolimount**

Bruce said he had spoken to DPW Director Tim Kilhart again about sanding the driveway and parking lot in slippery weather.

### **Phase 2 Progress – Carl Sciple**

The COA Phase 2 subcommittee is preparing to meet with the Finance Committee to discuss this year's \$40,000 request for architectural services. The group plans to visit other senior centers in the area that have a large dining/multipurpose room, such as Pepperell and Townsend.

### **New Business**

Former administrative assistant/van dispatcher Cathy Walker has volunteered to serve on the Board of Directors. After 2 ½ years working at Hildreth House, she will be a great asset, board members agreed. The selectmen will vote on her appointment January 23.

### **Housing@Hildreth - Hank Fitek**

The housing committee plans to continue working on a plan to build senior housing on the Hildreth property, but will not bring a proposal to Annual Town Meeting in May. The committee is waiting for results of a traffic study, which will be part of a \$40,000 fire station study that has been requested by the Fire Department, pending approval at Town Meeting. The group has talked about touring other senior housing developments, and reviewing the COA's recent needs survey to get a better idea of what kind of housing seniors want.

### **School Project – Victoria Hayao**

School Superintendent Linda Dwight wants feedback about the design of the proposed new elementary school. The board watched a short video explaining the decision not to renovate the existing school, which is on the building committee website. The video showed several views of the exterior and interior plans.

The superintendent is putting together a list of possible tax work-off jobs at the schools, which could help seniors cope with the tax burden.

### **Senior Tax Relief - Stu Sklar**

Selectman Stu Sklar gave a brief presentation about a tax relief proposal he intends to bring to a vote at Annual Town Meeting in May. The proposal is based on one adopted by the town of Sudbury, and was developed with the help of Finance Committee associate member Jennifer Finch.

The basic idea is to cap property taxes at 10 percent of income for eligible residents; eligibility would be determined according to state circuit breaker guidelines. The lost income to the town would be made up by a small increase in the tax liability of other residents. Sklar envisions it as a three-year trial, and said the tax increase to other residents would be about \$50 on the average tax bill the first year, and \$100 in each of the following two years.

There are a number of details to be worked out, but Sklar hopes to get the selectmen's support for the proposal. If the selectmen don't agree to support it, he will submit a citizens petition to put it on the Town Meeting warrant.

Sklar and Finch asked for a sense of the board on whether the plan should focus on providing maximum support to a small number of residents who need it the most, or on helping more residents with a lower level of support. There was no clear

consensus, but several board members spoke in favor of concentrating on the neediest residents in the initial trial period.

The board meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.  
The next meeting of the COA Board of Directors is scheduled for Tuesday, February 20, 2018 at 4 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Connie Larrabee, recorder

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