

Harvard Council on Aging
Board of Directors Meeting
March 26, 2012

Present: Lucy Wallace, Fran Nickerson, Pam Frederick, Connie Larrabee, Sharon Briggs, Katie Petrossi, Bonnie Sweeny, Debbie Thompson
Absent: Carlene Phillips, Mike Peters
Guests: Bruce Nickerson

Call to order: 4 p.m. at Hildreth House.

The minutes of the February 21, 2012 Board of Directors meeting were approved as submitted.

The treasurer's report was approved as submitted. Sharon said that most of the previously unresolved accounting issues have been settled, and that she and Debbie are checking to make sure things stay on track.

Informed that the salary account will have excess funds due to the period without a director, the Board unanimously approved a motion stipulating that Maria's salary be fully covered by that account for the remainder the fiscal year, and Bill's salary, too, until the excess is depleted. That way, the state Formula Grant funds that are normally committed to those salaries can be used for other things.

Old Business

Tax Relief: Bruce Nickerson presented a detailed analysis of the senior property tax exemption Home Rule Petition that will appear on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Bruce outlined a 2-page list of questions, inaccuracies, and items that need clarification in the document, and concluded that the petition is not ready for passage in its present form and should be rewritten.

After a brief discussion the Board voted unanimously to support the following position at Town Meeting: that the COA supports the concept of the Home Rule Petition, but does not recommend passage at this time because of multiple questions about the document as written.

Bruce volunteered to help draft a better statute when all the questions are answered.

Lucy noted with disappointment that an alternative - and much simpler - proposal to extend the state circuit breaker to property taxes would not be on the Warrant, apparently because neither the Finance Committee nor the selectmen support it. A third tax relief option that will be on the Warrant is an article that would allow a proxy to do a tax work-off job in place of someone who is physically unable to do the work. Board members agreed with Debbie that the program could present administrative and other problems but voted to support it anyway, reasoning that we can make our own regulations to address those concerns.

New Business

Three board members' terms are up in June: Connie Larrabee, Mike Peters, and Carlene Phillips. Connie said she would continue, Mike is still undecided, and Carlene has expressed interest in withdrawing. Also, Lucy will step down if she is elected to the Board of Selectmen. In the interest of finding new candidates, Debbie will invite new COA volunteer Marna Sorensen to our April meeting, and will ask Susan Roberts if she might be interested as well. Susan recently moved to Harvard, works for Cooperative Elder Services, and has expressed interest in the Friends of the COA.

The Friends of the Council on Aging will sponsor a "porch sale" at HH on Saturday, May 12, the same day as the Apple Blossom Festival. Leftover items from the Unitarian Church flea market will be up for grabs, and hopefully other items as well. Debbie's band will perform for a couple of hours, luring hordes of customers up the hill from the Common.

Lucy said that Ann Taylor has agreed to co-chair the fundraising effort for Hildreth House renovations and construction.

Director's Report

Debbie thanked the board members who have "spring-cleaned" various rooms at Hildreth House in the past month. She will monitor the situation and let us know when another cleaning is necessary.

Tax work-off program: Twenty-one people have signed up, but not everyone has a job yet. If a job can be found for all of them, they could each do about 59 hours, which would exhaust the \$10,000 allotted for the program.

The United Way has asked us to participate in a fundraising event by allowing teams of volunteers to bake cookies at Hildreth House, which would then be distributed to first responders in surrounding towns. The event would require someone to cover HH from 9am to 3pm on Saturday, April 14. After a brief discussion, board members decided that they have sufficient concerns about the suitability of the HH kitchen to reject the idea. Debbie will inform United Way.

Newsletter: This month's newsletter will be mailed to just 22 people, who have indicated that they want it that way. Otherwise, the newsletter will be sent via email, or is available in printed form at the General Store, Hannaford's in Ayer, Town Hall, the Harvard Public Library, and the old library. This is a cost-cutting measure, which will save not only mailing costs, but will eventually reduce printing costs as well.

Cultural Council Reception: The Harvard Cultural Council has asked grant recipients to attend a reception on Thursday, April 5 and speak briefly about the project being funded. Debbie will attend.

The Woman's Club Bridge Group has begun playing at Hildreth House on Wednesdays at 1 pm.

The next COA board meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 23, 2012 at 4 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Connie Larrabee

