

Harvard Council on Aging  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Tuesday, May 19, 2020  
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Present: Beth Williams, Bruce Dolimount, Chet Hooper, Fran Maiore, Guy Oliva, Lynne Musto-Pesa, Cathy Walker, COA Director Debbie Thompson, recorder/alternate Connie Larrabee, Select Board liaison Lucy Wallace, FCOA members Sharon Briggs and Barbara Cerva, prospective board member Kim Schwarz  
Harvard Press reporter Joan Eliyesil  
Absent: Carol Lee Tonge, Carl Sciple

The meeting was convened at 4:01 p.m.

The minutes of the April 21, 2020 board meeting were approved as written.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The account balances are as follows:

Revolving Funds	\$ 7,054.67
MART	\$14,271.21
Payroll	\$ 33,803.90
Gift account	\$ 86,142.65 (\$7,000 reserved for kitchen)
Formula grant	\$ 7,206.05
New van costs	\$15,310.16

Debbie explained that the account balances continue to be affected by the COVID-19 shutdown of Hildreth House and other town buildings. The staff has been working from home on a rotating schedule, which affects the payroll account. The MART van is used less often, as is the COA van, both of which are used only for medical appointments and food deliveries. There will be money left over in the state Formula Grant, which can be carried over to next year.

### **Director's Report – Debbie Thompson**

The outreach coordinators continue to follow up with seniors, offering help with meals, masks, shopping, and referrals to other services as needed.

COA programs and services have transitioned to “virtual” delivery, including exercise classes, the men’s and women’s coffees, and the story slam programs.

Unfortunately, COA internet service has been interrupted again, apparently by squirrels chewing the connecting wire between Hildreth House and Town Hall. Debbie has been told there is no money in the town budget for anything but emergency repairs so she is operating with a hotspot. This allows her to access email but not to use the printers.

This has happened twice before but the town has been unwilling to spend the money for a permanent fix.

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro is getting quotes to repair the wire and funding could come from several sources.

Lucy said she would ask at the Select Board meeting what could be done to fix the problem permanently without tapping funds meant for COA programs.

Debbie doesn’t expect congregate meals to resume at Hildreth House anytime soon, even if the building is open to the public. Minuteman has said it will not provide congregate meals before October. Exercise classes will not resume for a while either.

## **Phase 2**

The board had a brief discussion about whether to postpone its Phase 2 funding request until next year, given the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who favored withdrawing the article said they didn’t think voters would approve it this year and that a defeat would likely diminish its chances of approval in the near future. Those who supported

moving forward with the request cited the critical need for the project and the importance of remaining committed to getting it done without further delay. They expressed confidence that there is nothing to lose by going forward and if it fails this year, submitting the request again next year. Guy was concerned about the need for a new cost estimate if the request is delayed, and where the funding for that estimate would come from.

When it came to a vote, members voted 5-2 to move forward with the Phase 2 request this year.

COMING EVENTS (all events held via Zoom)

Tuesday, June 9 Story Slam 1 p.m.

Wednesday, June 17 Downsizing with Marie LeBlanc 4 p.m.

Saturday, June 20 Spring Town Meeting 1 p.m.

Tuesday, June 23 Town Election

Although Hildreth House is closed to the public for now, at least one staff member is there every day. Debbie comes in Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays; Charlotte is in Wednesdays and Thursdays, and Lisa is in every day, but works part-time from home on Fridays. Maria and Jennifer work mostly from home.

**Public Comment:**

There were no comments from the public, but Bruce said he's been very impressed with how the town has pulled together during the pandemic state of emergency. Debbie agreed.

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

Sharon said the balance in the FCOA account is \$144,000, which could be used to help with the Phase 2 project or other COA needs, including fixing the internet problem if necessary.

Carol Lee and Bruce will both be leaving the COA board this year and both intend to join the Friends.

**Buildings and Grounds – Bruce Dolimount**

There was no buildings and grounds report.

**New Board member**

With the departure of Carol Lee and Bruce, the board will have two vacancies to fill. Kim Schwarz has applied for membership and attended the meeting to introduce herself. Kim has lived in Harvard since 1989, raised three sons here, and has been involved in a number of town activities. She is a retired teacher and a member of the Lions Club.

**Spring Town Meeting - Lucy Wallace**

Lucy reported that a location for Town Meeting is still undecided. Town officials are considering several possibilities, including the Bromfield gym, with overflow seating in classrooms or the school library. It might also be possible to hold the meeting outside or out of town. Debbie pointed out that it will be a particular challenge getting seniors to attend town meeting this year, given concerns about social distancing.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

The next meeting of the COA Board of Directors is scheduled for Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at a time to be determined.

Respectfully submitted, Connie Larrabee, recorder

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