MEETING MINUTES
March 29, 2023

WELCOME: The meeting of the Great Barrington Council on Aging held at the Claire Teague Senior Center, 917 Main Street, Great Barrington, Massachusetts is called to order at 1:15 pm by Chair David Rutstein.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chair David Rutstein, Treasurer Maureen Avery, Secretary Susan Hipwell-Morris, and Members Barbara Bailly (via phone), Jeanne Holcomb, Sandra Larkin, Amy Rutstein and Doug Wilbur are present.

MINUTES: Chair Rutstein asks Secretary Hipwell-Morris to amend the minutes to include a dollar sign and then asks for a motion to approve the minutes of February 22, 2023. Member Holcomb makes the motion to approve, and Member Rutstein seconds the motion.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Treasurer Avery reports a balance of $39,421.18.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:
Updates:

Announcement
- Polly announces her retirement and reflects on her 11 years of service as a time of privilege, with its many events, its ups and downs, fun and laughter. Polly remarks on the naturally occurring changes to come, with new staff and new ideas. It is Polly’s wish that the center will always remain a “seniors’ place.”

Spring Luncheon
- Chef Bob Avery will be preparing a scalloped potatoes and ham lunch on Wednesday, April 5th at 11:30 am.

Tenants’ Rights Presentation
- Presented by Kristen L. Curtin, Director of Housing, Legal, and Consumer Service for Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority
- The date is Thursday, April 13th at 1:00 pm.
- This presentation is for all renters who have questions about their rights as tenants.
Birches Roy Funeral Home Introduction
- Presented by Joe Roy at the senior center on Wednesday, April 12th at 1:00 pm.
- Mr. Roy will discuss all you will need to know about funeral costs and choices.

Overdose Awareness and Naxolene Presentation
- Presented by Bob Dean of the Berkshire Regional Community Action Council on Tuesday, April 18th at 10:45 am.

Microtransit program
- Polly introduces Chris Rembolt the Town Planner and Assistant Town Manager, and David Torres the new Transit Operations Manager to explain to the COA members the “whys and wherefores” of the new micro transit pilot program.
  - Whys and wherefores
    - To enhance/augment the existing senior transportation program by adding more hours and opening the program to include the public.
    - The goal is to expand the hours directed toward 7:00 am to 9:00 pm Monday through Friday, and 8:00 am to 8:00 pm on weekends.
  - Implementing the program
    - New drivers to be hired and certified.
      - The goal is to retain 15 drivers overall.
    - To be rendered in phases.
  - Funding
    - The program is funded by several different state and town grants.
  - Towns to be served.
    - Egremont, Great Barrington, and Stockbridge
  - Priorities
    - Seniors are given priority over the public at large.
    - Medical appointments take precedence above all.

BOARD SPEAKS:

The primary concern of COA board members and the purpose of our council is to advocate for seniors.

Member Bailly wants to ensure that the newly hired drivers are trained to treat our seniors fairly and with the utmost care as seniors are a very delicate group of people.

Member Avery comments that our present drivers walk seniors door to door and carry their packages for them. Member Avery is concerned that the same, careful, conscientious service that the seniors experience now will be maintained. Member Avery would like a guarantee that seniors will always come first.
Polly brings to light that the The Ford Edge was donated strictly for the use of the senior center and is not to be included in the micro transit program. The director is solely responsible for the vehicle.

CITIZENS SPEAK: None

ADJOURNMENT: Chair Rutstein calls for a motion to adjourn. Member Rutstein makes the motion to adjourn, and Member Holcomb seconds the motion. It is unanimously agreed to adjourn at 2:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Hipwell-Morris
Secretary

Approved May 31, 2023