

The Senior Center

Ashfield • Buckland • Shelburne

West County Senior Services District Board of Managers

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MINUTES

Thursday, May 16, 2024 — 11:00 a.m. — Senior Center in Shelburne Falls and Zoom

Board of Managers (BOM) members: Present – Sylvia Smith, Shelburne Council on Aging (COA) rep., chair; Amy Shapiro, Ashfield, vice-chair; Janice Fleuriel, Buckland COA rep., secretary; Todd Olanyk, Ashfield; Regina Purinton, Buckland; Christine Baronas, Shelburne

Senior Center Consortium (Consortium) members present: Juli Moreno, Senior Center Director; Penny Spearance, Shelburne COA

Community attendee(s): Bob Dean, FRCOG Director of Municipal Services

1. **Call to order:** Sylvia called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.
2. **Minutes of 4/11/24 meeting:** Todd moved to approve; Christine seconded; passed unanimously.

3. Transition Planning

a. Personnel policy update: our progress and Wyoming district example

Wyoming district: Juli spoke with a board member in the Platt Cy, Wyoming district. They didn't know they were the only senior district, and offered to share their by-laws and other info, and attend a Zoom. They have 10 board members from 6 towns. The district is very spread out, and its rural nature has many similarities to our District, including Meals on Wheels and elder challenges. The difference is income: all the money from all the county towns goes to them; they have their own vehicle fleet; there is no LifePath equivalent. They pay out for services like payroll. Towns can't opt out, though individuals can choose to take advantage of the services or not. When the state offered this option, their director at the time led the effort and the district had strong COAs everywhere; no other counties opted in.

Personnel policy updates: Juli distributed the draft-in-progress of the Employee Handbook (Table of Contents, Administration section, excerpt of Recruitment section). Group discussion:

- **Screening process:** Agreed this should be a stand-alone policy. The handbook can mention that employees can apply for open positions, and refer to the policy. Employees get a copy of the policies.
Action: Juli will write up the hiring process/procedure separately.
- **Interfacing handbook, by-laws, and policies development:** Agreed this will be useful so that only one document includes details and requires updates.
Action: Juli will bring draft handbook text and any questions to BOM meetings for group review.
- **HR issues such as sick time:** Agreed we should look at what the towns and school district do for these.

- **Intellectual property** (e.g. — if a staff member creates a program then takes it elsewhere, whether the District should put its name on programs, whether funders might claim ownership of grant-funded programs): Juli said nothing is really owned that way, and someone could go elsewhere and do the same program the Senior Center has.
Action: Juli will research this issue.
- **Content-check processes for social media:** Juli said this happens for the Senior Center’s Facebook page (the page is attached to her personal page — only she has Administrator access), and it would help to have parameters/legal guidance (e.g., not having a political candidate as a “friend”).
- **Issues covered by state law** (e.g., FMLA/COBRA): Agreed it makes sense to just refer to an issue as “per state law” and provide a reference to the law (e.g., a link, in an appendix).
Action: Juil will research which issues apply.

b. Insurance transition discussion to continue with Shelburne

Sylvia said the BOM will need to include this in discussing which fiscal model to use.

c. District fiscal agent discussion: continue with Shelburne vs other options

- Shelburne continues as fiscal agent through June 30 of this year; Juli said they charge 3% of the Senior Center budget, but generally haven’t charged the full amount.
- Janice reported on her meetings with the Treasurer/Tax Collectors in Buckland (Cara Leach and Linda Marcotte) and Shelburne (Angel Bragdon) about fire district fiscal models. The main takeaway was that the BOM might want to compile the info towns would need (e.g., budget, number of employees, and specific services to be provided) to review a request to act as fiscal agent.
- Bob said FRCOG is not interested in providing this service.
- Amy suggested considering accounting firms in Greenfield that have staff in various roles, to prevent service interruption if one person leaves. Bob said pursuing a contract with a private firm would require going out to bid, and that the District will need to conform to the state accounting manual.

Action: BOM members will meet with respective selectboards to provide a District status update.

Action: Juli will help Sylvia and Amy compile information towns would need to provide an estimate.

Action: Bob will reach out to private companies that towns around the state use.

d. Retirement transition update

Bob distributed a summary of the District Acceptance process from his contacts with Kristine Mathis, Franklin Regional Retirement Executive Director, and Patrick Charles, PERAC (Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission) Assistant Deputy Director, and highlighted the process: once the District is established, the BOM votes to accept Chapter 32 of the General Laws and notifies PERAC; PERAC reviews; there is a 3-month waiting period until a certificate is issued, and the District would become a member of the retirement system as of January 1 or July 1 — this means there will be a gap for employees, but there is a process for that time to be regained so employees don’t end up losing any time. Group discussion:

- If someone retires during the gap period, it’s unclear what will happen.
- If someone is hired during the gap period, there’s probably no problem there.

- Bob has seen no flags to indicate PERAC would refuse to admit the District; this process has been the understanding since the bill was created.
- The Act probably addresses at what point employees become District employees.
- BOM may want to coordinate the timing of the selectboards transition vote to minimize the gap.

Action: Bob will follow up with PERAC about the timeframe for this process.

**e. West County Senior Services District Board of Managers By-law discussion on Section B.
Memberships: review district agreement requirements**

Amy marked the group's agreed-on changes on-screen. Group discussion:

- Agreed to separate the sections for District Memberships (towns) and BOM Membership starting with B.4 (this is covered by the Act).
- Todd said that admission of new member towns was left to the BOM vs. including it in the Act because the BOM could also consider a formula to reimburse for initial outlays. Hypothetical example: a District with 3 towns builds a new senior center and each town chips in; then Town X wants to join and has to pay X amount to own part of that asset; the amount Town X pays gets refunded between the towns that were already invested. The group agreed that the formula and process to add new member towns needs to be equitable, and selectboards will need specifics to vote on the Transition.

Action: Amy will email the markup to the group and Janice will post it in the [Google docs folder](#)

Action: Todd will redline some thoughts about admitting new member towns, for review at the next meeting.

4. FY25 State Budget request update

Sylvia said the Senate is now debating and the District request was not included in the House budget; she suggested submitting this again next year. Group discussion of other possibilities:

- The deadline for filing amendments has passed, but perhaps Paul Mark could pull strings; they are deciding on the fate of amendments now.
- There is a line item of about \$3,000,000 for projects related to regionalization the District could possibly tap into. It comes through on a calendar year basis, available January 1. The BOM would need to reach out to the towns for a 3-town request supporting this project.
- Bob said there a state efficiency and regionalization grant program that he believes has about \$600,000 statewide. It's a long shot, but might be worth contacting Senator Mark about any ideas to include this in the FY25 budget.

Action: Sylvia will pursue options with Senator Mark.

5. Public Comment: None

6. Next meeting: June 13, 2024; 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Location TBD and Zoom.

7. Adjourn: Janice moved; Christine seconded. Passed unanimously. Adjourned at 12:37.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janice Fleuriel, Secretary

