

Minutes  
Blacksburg Chapter - AARP  
January 2, 2018

Present: Terry Wildman, Don Creamer, Wendy Baldwin, Peter Magolda, Val Coluni, Ben Crawford, Thais Beams, Sandy Birch, June Schmidt, Hugh Vanlandingham, Sally Anna Stapleton, Isabel Berney.

Approval of the minutes: a **motion** to approve the December 2017 minutes passed.

Officer reports and announcements:

Welcome to two new Board members: Hugh Vanlandingham and Isabel Berney

AARP sent a form for us to document the number of members involved in different activities and the hours devoted to them. The president will share that request with those responsible for such activities and compile the data. The material is to be sent in by the end of January.

AARP National shared information about a new award for outstanding service to the community through AARP/NRTA. This is also due at the end of January and the form will be shared with anyone who is contemplating making a nomination.

Ben Crawford reported on an AARP activity to recognize veterans. There are already plans for a pinning ceremony as part of the Health Fair. Other activities may be developed over the year.

Old/New Business

**Caregiver Act:** Ben Crawford followed up on reports at previous board meetings that the bill has passed the House and the Senate with only minor differences. It is likely that it will become part of the Unanimous Consent process in the U.S. Congress.

**Senior Housing:** Blacksburg frequently is cited as a great retirement location. That presumes seniors can move here and find appropriate housing. This can be a challenge. Terry, Pat Hyer, Jerry Niles and others are engaging the town and developers about increasing the availability of senior-appropriate housing. This is an ideal activity for the chapter and we can work to educate and advocate for these issues. Isabel is on the Housing and Community Development Advisory Board and pointed out that the new housing going up on Givens Lane has set aside a portion of the rental housing for over-55 low income residents. Don reported there is information about this project on the website if someone wants to make an inquiry. There is proposed senior housing project around Margaret Beeks (Huckleberry Vistas); these single family homes, duplexes, and multi-unit buildings will be in the \$450,000+ range. This is a small 9-building development. Val reported that Warm Hearth plans to build an apartment building (30+ units), but Warm Hearth is not actually in Blacksburg. The high price and scarcity of large tracts of land in Blacksburg push developers to build upward, to make more money per acre to cover their costs. Another option

is the low cost housing in Prices Fork elementary school site. Several people have moved in, other units are being finished. Eventually, there will be 36 units. Some are subsidized. The restaurant and brewery haven't opened yet. Suffice to say we need an array of options if Blacksburg is to be truly senior friendly community.

The Aging in Place (AIP) initiative coordinated by the Community Foundation and overseen by a strong team of leaders addresses some housing needs for seniors. Don reported on the workshop that the AIP team conducted for LLI in December. They developed a good workbook and will be repeating the workshop in the spring. We could purchase some of the workbooks and make them available. We might have one at the monthly meeting and see if people wanted to purchase them or sign up to borrow one.

**Technology** is key to many of the tools that could help seniors. Terry raised a question about how we could take a longer time frame in thinking about how people might live. For example, autonomous vehicles could change the relationship of housing and transportation. Don noted that there is a need for skill-building for seniors regarding technology. When LLI offers classes on technology they fill up immediately. Discussion raised the question of whether there is a preference for general courses or specific ones, such as ordering an Uber car or using the Kroger online grocery tool. It is likely that both would be of interest. Perhaps after a monthly meeting, we could have tables dedicated to different skill-building tutorials. A working group of Terry, Val, Isabel, and Peter will work on this, and Terry will report back at the February board meeting about steps we might take. This might be a good project to work with the Time Bank.

**Partner Meeting:** January 16 there will be a partners' meeting after the monthly meeting (In the senior social room of the BBRC) at 1 p.m. The questions that have been posed to our partners are how can we help them achieve their mission? How can they help us, and are there other partners that we should be looking at that help knit our missions together? There is considerable interest and enthusiasm for the upcoming meeting.

**Arts Across the Generations:** Peter reported on the progress of the "arts across the generations" initiation. This would support a competition for intergenerational artwork and reflects the celebratory aspect of AARP. Retirement can be a time to spend more time on things you have enjoyed all your life, or a time when you adopt something new, possibly in the arts. Peter has already met with BHS They are most interested and he will stay in touch with them as they advance the idea through their class. He is finalizing the flyer that describes the competition and notes that there is prize money. The submissions will be juried and displayed during Art Walk, June 1. Wendy has met with others in the art scene and we got other good suggestions today. The only issue that isn't nailed down is the theme: "growth" seems pretty blah. After some discussion other ideas for themes emerged. While this was originally thought of as "flat art" we are leaving it open.

In the discussion it was clarified that while the Art Walk may award prizes, the AARP prize would emphasize the intergenerational aspect and the benefit arts can bring to AARP members. Ours will be distinctive and make clear why AARP is doing this.

Peter could call a meeting of interested parties, both reflecting AARP members and community members who are interested in arts in the community. We will also reach out to more venues than currently support Art Walk submissions. This could help clarify how the jury process would work, display, etc.

This prompted a discussion of possible themes. For example, well-being, living well, disrupting aging, joy of life, Colors of life! If we had a big theme then each year could reflect some aspect of it. Some year we might have a mural if we had mural space which could be permanent or temporary walls. We could mix the generations and paint the panels. This could keep the intergenerational theme as well as celebrating what you can do and enjoy in senior years.

**Motion:** A motion was made and carried to allow up to \$500 for prize money.

**Online Membership Systems:** the board discussed the potential value of allowing members to make online payments. Members offered cautions (be sure whoever sets up the system is around to manage it, not the place for temporary help!). Starting up a system is one thing; keeping it running is another. We would need a secure system and could possibly just use PayPal. There is a cost, but the system and security are expenses that have to be met somehow. Since it is likely that VCOM will not be able to support the credit card process for the Health Fair, we need to be sure that whatever is considered for the chapter as a whole harmonizes with what the Health Fair is doing. There are costs which may be a yearly fee and/or per transaction fee. There is a business that supports online payments for small businesses and Jennie is looking at that for the HF. Jennie could include a discussion of the online payment options at the next board meeting, along with an update on the Health Fair in general. Pat Ballard needs to be integral to this discussion since it affects how payments are made to the chapter and recorded by the treasurer. Jennie, Pat B, and Isabel will meet to evaluate the options.

**State Budget Hearing:** There is a budget hearing tomorrow in Radford and several board members are queued up to go to represent AARP-Blacksburg.

**Memorial Service:** There were 9 deaths in 2017 and Sandy would typically do the memorial report at the January meeting. She has a scheduling conflict and so the memorial will be moved to the February meeting.

**Reports:**

**Hospitality:** There was a round of applause for Thais to recognize the outstanding job she did in arranging the holiday luncheon. It was well attended and there were very positive remarks about the food.

**Health Fair:** There will be a report at the February board meeting about progress of the Health Fair planning, by either Jennie or Wendy.

**Finance Committee:** June will present our budget and the results of the audit at the February board meeting.

**Community Service:** SallyAnna proposed that we do more than a food drive. The Salvation Army is one option.

**Legislative:** Val reported on the change that bars class action suits against financial providers. He also raised the alert that there could be erosion of the safety net re: social security and medicare because of the debt associated with the tax cut. Also, changes regarding the deductibility of property taxes may not be legal, says the IRS.

**Website:** The AARP Blacksburg website includes AARP reports and chapter minutes. It serves to alert people to current events and also serves as an archive.

Minutes prepared by Wendy Baldwin, Jan 10, 2018