

**AARP Blacksburg Chapter
Minutes**

May 5, 2020

Meeting held by Zoom Video Conference

Attendees: Don Creamer, Chuck Burress, Leslie Pendleton, Pat Ballard, Sally Anna Stapleton, Judith Jones, Ben Crawford, Pat Hyer, Jerry Niles, Doug Feuerbach, Terry Wildman, Isabel Berney, Carolyn Rude, Hugh VanLandingham, Wendy Baldwin, Joy Herbert, Jeananne Dixon-Bame

President Don Creamer opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.
Minutes of April 7, 2020 board meeting were approved.

Treasurer Report:

Check for LLI travel give-back has been received and deposited. No other activity.

Monthly Programs Options:

Judith Jones canceled speakers for March, April and May; the speakers are happy to reschedule. October and November speakers are currently scheduled. Members discussed the possibility of doing an experimental one-session meeting with chat among members and a speaker presentation. Judith also suggested a virtual June picnic with speaker. Don will host a Zoom meeting with Program Committee (Jones, Baldwin, Moose) to talk about options.

Veterans' Connection Initiative:

Leslie Pendleton submitted a chapter awareness grant proposal at the end of March, before the stay-at-home order changed everything. Several meetings were held this last week. Genea Luck participated; she is in charge of the Veterans Awareness Project for AARP Virginia. She noted that grant funding for in-person events did not make sense at this time. AARP Virginia is "pivoting from in-person events to virtual events," and she urged us to consider doing the same. Leslie and others are discussing options for how to address the veteran segment of our community. Jim Dubinski expressed interest in participating in the initiative as a consultant or other capacity.

Judith reported on the Veterans Cemetery project. She will talk with Mary Lou Summers who is in charge of cemetery volunteers. Genea is interested in featuring Easley Smith from Warm Hearth. A discussion followed considering whether our chapter wants to profile veterans ourselves or work with AARP Virginia. George Bloom is another possibility for a profile. Leslie will send out a link to Genea's posts with veteran profiles to keep our members connected.

Leslie reviewed a number of questions she has for state-level staff to determine how to proceed with the grant proposal or how to seek other funding for various ideas in support of veterans. Joy Herbert will ask a friend in California who works with veterans about grant possibilities.

Chuck Nelson's Veterans Fair is still scheduled for Nov. 7. He asked if we could be a sponsor. Don assured him AARP could be a sponsor, which Don understands would be the use of our logo and labels. Don has no idea if the fair will be held. It is too early to tell.

LLI Update:

Pat Hyer reported that LLI will present all courses and lectures online in the Fall. The team is working hard to help prepare instructors and members on how to use Zoom.

Newsletter:

Carolyn Rude reported that the newsletter is just about ready. She needs confirmation about plans for picnic replacement and fall programs. Don said she should say "subject to change" according to the pandemic. The President's column states that the board is considering alternative ideas for member programming. Carolyn will remove dates from the front page and just feature coming topics. Judith will get commitments from speakers to see if they can do their canceled programs by Zoom. Carolyn needs dates and information ASAP.

Pat Ballard suggests a tail gate party in a Tech parking lot instead of a picnic. Don and Terry will work on alternative picnic plans for August 4.

Sally Anna Stapleton asked to include the Vittles for Vets address in the newsletter: 7757 Walker Farms Drive, Radford, 24141.

State and Chapter Awards:

Chuck Burress still has not heard from the AARP Virginia about state-level awards. Instructions are usually provided in April and May and narrowed down at June meeting. He doesn't know if they will have the usual fall ceremony. Chapter award nominations usually start in September. Don can request input from members once we know the schedule.

Legislative Update:

Doug Feuerbach said the impact of Covid19 will affect elections. He submitted a report to Carolyn for the newsletter. The situation is very fluid – voting by mail, absentee ballots, tracking of virus, economic issues, job loss and financial issues are some of the things being studied.

Food Drives:

Sally Anna has the list of local food pantries' addresses and encourages people to send cash. This includes Fido's Pantry run by the Agency on Aging. This information will be in the newsletter.

Steppin' Out:

Wendy Baldwin suspects that Steppin' Out may be cancelled. Should we propose something for Downtown Blacksburg instead of a street fair? Think about something different? For next year? Seniors' day in downtown or ? We do get visibility and get our materials out there even through we don't get new members.

Leadership Development:

Jerry is looking for new board members. Since we are not meeting, it is difficult to identify folks who might be tapped. However, he is thinking about options for board members and officers.

AARP Liaison Report:

Ben Crawford will invite Mary Lou Summers to talk about the wreath laying program in December for the Veterans Cemetery. She might be a good board member possibility.

Ben, the director of AARP Virginia, and two staff members had a good meeting with Morgan Griffith this morning by Zoom. Griffith was asked to support AARP issues.

1. SNAP program – support temporary increase for recipients. Griffith replied he could support a temporary increase, but would not support a permanent increase.
2. Suspension of USDA rule making that would change SNAP benefits - he would support that.
3. Expand access to online grocery shopping and delivery for SNAP recipients

It is urgent for Congress to focus on nursing homes and to allow confirmed cases at nursing homes to be made public on a daily basis. Additional PPEs, virtual visitation, and protection for discharge and transfer are also necessary steps. Griffith agreed to support those items. Griffith also felt that Virginia should allow regional differences in reopening rather than insisting that all regions in the state act at the same time.

Meeting adjourned at 11:57.

Minutes prepared by Pat Hyer and Isabel Berney, May 6, 2020