

## AARP Blacksburg Chapter Minutes

October 5, 2021

Meeting held by Zoom Conference

### **Attendees:**

Don Creamer, Leslie Pendleton, Carolyn Rude, Todd Solberg, Chuck Burress, Kai Duncan, Ben Crawford, Jerry Niles, Doug Feuerbach, Terry Wildman, Carolyn Rude, Wendy Baldwin, Tom Hohenshil, Pat Ballard, John Burton, Joy Herbert, Judith Jones

President Leslie Pendleton called the meeting to order at 10:02am.

Minutes of the September board meeting were approved.

Members welcomed John Burton to the meeting and to the board as a new member. John, a retired faculty member at Virginia Tech, made a few introductory comments for members who did not already know him.

**Awards:** Chuck Burruss gave a brief report on the Chapter's awards process. Chuck noted that our nomination of Carolyn Rude for the State AARP's highest award, the Andrus Award, has been received in Richmond. Other state awards have not yet been announced.

Our two chapter awards (*Community Spirit and Chapter Service*) have a nomination deadline of October 15. Chuck reported that several nominations have already been received. Chuck will organize a Selection Committee to review these nominations which will be finalized at the November meeting.

**Leadership Committee:** Jerry Niles reported that work continues on the search for a *newsletter editor*. Jerry mentioned that Beth Grabau has been contacted and may be interested in the position, preferably in a co-editor role.

Jerry also reported that a search is on for someone to manage the *membership data base* (this job was most recently carried out by Coreen Mett who recently passed). Don Creamer said it might be reasonable for him to manage this in the interim. Leslie Pendleton mentioned that she met with Cindy Graham, who has experience with data bases and mail merges. Cindy agreed to be a candidate for the position. Leslie will arrange a meeting to talk with Cindy about details of the position.

Regarding the *Community Service Committee*, Leslie reported that Tom Hohenshil has agreed to fill this position.

Don Creamer reported that Fred Piercy, retired Virginia Tech faculty member, has agreed to joining the chapter and serving as a board member.

**Books for Vets:** Tom Hohenshil submitted his final report on the *AARP Blacksburg Book Project for Vets*. While the written report can stand for itself, Tom reported that this 4.5-month project went well with a total of 2,150 books collected. Tom attributed much of the success to his being able to connect the project to a dozen or so community organizations who were extremely helpful in book collection. For more details see the Chapter website where Tom's report is posted.

Leslie Pendleton mentioned that if the project is continued in the future it might be possible to connect book collection with Veteran's Day and Memorial Day, two prominent holidays connected to veterans. Doug Feuerbach suggested that connection with the new Blacksburg Community Bookstore might be helpful as well.

**Program Committee:** Judith Jones, citing a number of other responsibilities, reported that she will no longer be heading the Chapter Program Committee. She reiterated that programs were set for October and November. Regarding the December program, in normal years serving as our Chapter Holiday Luncheon, the chapter has yet to settle on a speaker. Don Creamer suggested that we try to find a person in an AARP leadership position, such as someone from the state office. Other ideas were mentioned, such as someone from the state health department, but Carolyn Rude reminded the group that since the December meeting has always been about the chapter itself, we should stick to an AARP focus. Judith Jones suggested that Genea Luck, Associate Director at the state office would be a good choice.

Linda Correll will be heading the program committee in the coming year and is already investigating programs of possible interest to chapter members.

**LLI Update:** Jerry Niles reported that membership for the current semester sits at 267, a bit below a hoped-for number of 300. Jerry also mentioned that the program may be facing a budget deficit, and that plans were underway to start an *annual fund*, and that sponsors were added for the current year.

Jerry reported that LLI is involved in a cooperative effort with the State AARP office and that three current programs are available for folks across the state to register and participate.

Jerry also mentioned that some programs may continue on the zoom platform even after returning mostly to a face-to-face format.

**Break-out sessions:** Todd Solberg, emphasizing lost opportunities during COVID for getting to know AARP Blacksburg members, returned to his earlier suggestion that the chapter consider using zoom "break-out" sessions to better facilitate conversation among members at our regular monthly meetings. Leslie mentioned that she had tried to organize a practice session

with Board members using the break-out format but did not have enough participants to conduct such a session.

**Standing Rules:** It was reported that Linda Correll is ready to send out requests to committee chairs and others for information needed to complete this project. Ben Crawford mentioned that some items related to chapter functioning have been moved from the chapter by-laws to standing rules. The idea is that standing rules are easier to update than are the by-laws.

**Legislative Report:** Doug Feuerbach reported that AARP is working with lawmakers on lowering prescription costs. Doug reported that 18 million Americans can't afford at least one prescription, and surveys show that 87% of citizens want Medicare to help with this. Currently AARP has a campaign going titled "show your receipts" in which people are encouraged to share photos of their own prescription receipts, with personal information not being shown in the photos. Apparently, there is concern that the program is overly complicated for the average person with one solution being to just send the relevant information to the State for further processing.

Ben Crawford mentioned that the above is a short-term effort aimed at pressuring congress to allow Medicare to negotiate prices with drug companies. Don Creamer asked if Doug could create a message for members so they can see how to participate in the program. Don will post the message via MailChimp.

**Historical Markers:** Ben Crawford alerted members to a program on October 17 that will unveil two state historical markers related to the Revolutionary War. The program will take place at the Rivermont Farms located near Shawsville Virginia at 847 Allegany Springs Road, beginning at 2pm. The markers will make note of a "Virginia Century Farm" and honor frontier soldiers, in particular three Crockett brothers, all colonels in the Continental Army. Ben noted that the "Fincastle Resolutions" written in our area led to the Declaration of Independence. Ben suggested that folks bring lawn chairs and to expect refreshments following a program of about one hour.

**Blacksburg Community Center Report:** Joy Herbert reported that the center is back in full operation following Covid restrictions, and that the Center is now ready to welcome AARP back for in-person meetings. (Note: A day or so following this meeting AARP chapters received word that AARP National has just authorized chapters to hold in-person meetings with 50 or less in attendance. This is likely to signal a return to in-person meetings for our chapter. Stay-tuned for more information on this.)

**Budget Report:** Pat Ballard reported that we have \$7,350 in checking, \$2,424 in savings, and are holding \$554 in LLI funds. Pat reminded the board that a reduction in budget related to the fact that we couldn't hold the biennial Health and Wellness Fair in either 2020 or 2021 due to COVID. Pat also reminded the board about the \$25 monthly bank fee and bulk mail costs sending out the newsletters.

Discussion turned to donations that the chapter might be making to non-profit community organizations, continuing our usual practice related to our December meeting. Should we cut donations in half this year? We typically donate to the Blacksburg and Christiansburg Recreation Centers and non-profits such as the Community Foundation of the NRV, the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, and the Agency on Aging. A motion was made and passed to form a small committee to recommend donations and amounts for this year. Pat Ballard, Judith Jones, and Tom Hohenshil will meet and form recommendations for the board.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:50am. Carolyn Rude quickly reminded the board that information was needed for "chapter highlights" that she will prepare for the December meeting.