

Minutes/Notes
September 5, 2023
Blacksburg Recreation Center

Attendees: Don Creamer, Terry Wildman, Leslie Pendleton, Jerry Niles, Pam Knox, Fred Piercy, John Burton, Pat Ballard, Ben Crawford, Wilma Dotson and Joy Herbert

President Leslie Pendleton called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

The minutes: The June 2023 board meeting minutes were considered and approved.

Treasurer's Report:

Pat Ballard reported that our finances are good. Pat also related that Warm Hearth has not cashed our check for the Cheeseburger in Parrot-dise event as of this meeting. She also shared that AARP National had sent her a new calculator for her timely reporting. Leslie also shared that she got a flashlight from AARP National for the timely submission of the chapter's annual report.

Reimbursements: Leslie proposed that Wilma Dotson be reimbursed from Chapter Awareness monies for her travel related to Membership. It was agreed.

Announcements:

Vaccines: Leslie announced that vaccines were out for flu and RSV. COVID boosters for the new strain are expected to be available in late September.

Advocacy report: Ben Crawford circulated AARP National membership forms and pictures of some of the local members. He reported that state advocacy efforts are focused on:

- creating a prescription drug affordability board.
- improving the quality of life and care in nursing homes, and
- supporting family caregivers.

The complete Advocacy report is appended.

Old Business:

Oktoberfest. Terry Wildman reported that the committee (Terry and Don Creamer) had eliminated a former, inactive venue, the White Barrel Winery, and that Eastern Divide would be too expensive. The Rising Silo can work on October 5th, 6th, 11th, or 12th but they have Blues Night every Wednesday, and it gets very crowded. He has not received a call back from the manager after several attempts. The menu is largely pizza and beer. The committee plans to go back and try to contact the manager (and drink beer and eat pizza).

Leadership Committee: Jerry Niles reported that his committee (Jerry and Don) compiled a list of people who have been attending membership meetings and might be interested in becoming more involved in Chapter business. They will send out letters (electronically) to these people and invite them to a luncheon at the Blacksburg Community Center on Monday the 11th. The letter will take into consideration Board members' suggested edits and focus on engagement rather than leadership. Jerry added 12 more names at the suggestion of the Board.

Pathways to Successful Aging Planning Committee: Leslie reported that members (Leslie, Wilma, Pam Knox, and Jamie McReynolds) will meet with most of the larger group of community representatives from the various organizations on Friday, September 29 from 7:30-9:00 a.m. Leslie also announced that Don will pull back on his involvement to focus on recuperation from health issues and a very active schedule.

Community Service: Leslie followed up on a volunteer opportunity at the Christmas Store where we volunteered last year. It was agreed to offer to help the Christmas Store again and Leslie will follow up to find dates suitable for all involved.

Warm Hearth Transportation: Leslie said that Warm Hearth is willing to provide transportation for residents to Chapter meetings and programs pending: a survey of their residents conducted by Warm Hearth to determine interest and a suitable plan from their transportation office.

New Business:

Holiday Social: Terry asked about the Holiday Social and was told that the current plan is for it to be held on 12 December. He will contact Lyn Epperly (Warm Hearth) to reserve space. Potential speakers were discussed but action was deferred until the October Board Meeting.

Virginia Tech Retiree's Association: Jerry met with some of their leadership. They are hosting a luncheon on 16 October at the Inn. (\$50 per person). Their membership is down by 50% and they are looking for opportunities to return to pre-COVID-19 levels. Their focus for this year will be helping retirees deal with Virginia Tech's transition from Google to Microsoft.

Current Membership Data: Leslie reported 30 new members. While several folks have been involved in recruiting efforts, all agree that Wilma is doing a hell of a job, leading the membership committee and meeting with potential new members. Our current membership numbers reflect 254 members (including paid and complimentary).

Moving forward: We are having trouble updating our current Google services such as Google Drive and Google Groups. We have been unable so far to get Hossack to help transition to a new person or help us through in the short term to update Board Members. Pat Ballard said she could set up a spreadsheet solution(s).

September Calendar Events:

- AARP Blacksburg/TCI-NRV Partnership food collection event during AARP VA Hunger Action Month on September 17th, 2023, 1:00-5:00 pm at Kroger on South Main. Leslie arranged the partnership and solicited TCI and AARP volunteers to help collect food specifically for the 152 Food Pantry at the Giles County Christian Service Mission which expressed a dire need for restocking their shelves (as reported in our August newsletter). AARP volunteers included Don, Pat, Deborah Martin, Wilma, Pam, Fred, and Leslie. TCI volunteers (all AARP Blacksburg members) included Anne Deaton, Grace Youhas, and Suzi Austin.
- TRIAD S.A.L.T. Senior Citizen Care Fair on Tuesday, September 19th, 8:30 am - 12:00 noon, Christiansburg Recreation Center. Deborah, John, Wilma, and Leslie will staff our table.
- Town of Christiansburg Employees Benefits & Wellness Fair on Thursday, September 28th, 8:30-11:30 am at Christiansburg Recreation Center. Wilma and Leslie will staff our table.

Committee/Liaison Reports:

Awards: John Burton reported that he was going to meet with Chuck Burress. Awards discussion deferred until the October Board Meeting.

Newsletter. Wilma suggested that loneliness has surfaced as an increasing problem for seniors, as evidenced by articles in various news media. She suggested that perhaps it might be a good topic for the next President's Column. As an alternative, Leslie suggested a guest column to address the topic from the perspective of those who are single, widowed, etc. Wilma agreed to take on the task and work with Pam and Fred.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Virginia AARP Advocacy Report

August 2023

Ben Crawford

AARP Advocacy Volunteers in VA have been busy this summer: 29 meetings have been held with VA congressional legislators and more are scheduled in the next few weeks. Focus of the meetings centered around:

- creating a prescription drug affordability board.
- improving the quality of life and care in nursing homes, and
- supporting family caregivers.

What is the ACT Caucus (Assisting Caregivers Today)? It is a bipartisan and bicameral caucus that aims to inform members of Congress about caregiving issues, elevate the conversation, reach bipartisan solutions, and help create a sense of urgency for congressional action. VA Member Jen Kiggans is the House Republican Leader of the caucus.

- Congresswoman Spanberger joined the Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus.
- Congressman Connolly is joining the Assisting Caregivers Today (ACT) Caucus, staff told us this during our volunteer meeting this month, but I have not confirmed it.
- We held a telephone town hall with Congressman Cline on 8/31 about fraud and scams. Joyce Williams was the moderator. You can watch the recording on Facebook.
- Congresswoman McClellan will be providing opening remarks to our Caregivers Workshop in Richmond on September 7th.
- Volunteers met with Congressman Bobby Scott and his staff earlier this month and volunteers met with Congressman Beyer's staff, all with the request that they join the ACT Caucus.

Veterans: AARP endorsed H. R. 542, the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act. The bill would expand access to the current Veteran Affairs (VA) programs that provide care at home and improve coordination among VA's home and community-based services. The bill also increases respite care for veterans and military caregivers.

A budget deal has been reached within the state, and the VA General Assembly will finalize it starting tomorrow. Stay tuned. The entire state legislature is on the ballot on Nov. 7 so election season is upon us. Early voting begins Sep.

22.

RBC