

## **Minutes for Northampton Residents' Association meeting February 15, 2023**

Staff In attendance along with residents: CEO Cindy Jerome, CFO Holly Smith-Bové, Director of Facilities Chris Hague, Director of Wellness Rob Olmsted, Executive Assistant Sarah Gauger, Meeting House Coordinator Donna King

**Call to order 10:00 with a Moment of Silence** Elly Rumelt

**Comings and Goings** Elly Rumelt

The association notes with sorrow the deaths of William (Bill) Wallace, Joan Cenedella, and Warren Hammack. We note with appreciation that these three neighbors died as they wished, without moving from the homes where they wanted to be.

**Gratitudes** Elly Rumelt

To Donna for always responding with cheerfulness and expertise to all our requests

To the Program Committee for bringing us together for the soup lunch and for Sarah and Donna for helping making possible this time when we could come together for a warm meal and conversation with each other, Cindy, Erin and Rob

To all those who filled out the questionnaires about Aging in Community, to those who volunteered to serve on the Aging in Community Advisory Committee, to the Easthampton Association Officers for their collaboration in drawing up the questionnaire, and to Sarah for putting it out on Survey Monkey

And to Chris Hjelt for organizing and leading the nightly meditation which brought together the community in support of our neighbor making her final journey and in support of those who loved her, to Audrey and Geoff for material support, and to all those in our community who answered the request for food.

**Treasurer's Report** Jean Shackelford (appended)

Jean added to her report that she is working with Holly on a proposal in regard to budgeting. She and Elly also explained that the new cash account is somewhat like petty cash for supporting future events and that if the balance of the cash account reaches a yet-to-be-determined upper limit, the funds will be moved into the Florence Bank account. Donna is keeping close accounts on the cash fund.

**Minutes of November 2022 Association Meeting** (appended) for approval

There were no corrections, and the minutes were accepted.

### **Old Business**

The new Wellness coordinator, Erin Curtin, has been with us for over a month. Rob will fill us in on what she has been doing as she starts out.

The Staff appeal ended strongly with a total of \$10,838 raised this year from Northampton campus residents, up from \$9,810 last year.

### **New Business**

## **Recent progress on the Strategic Plan** Elly Rumelt

We have experienced the beginning of a new process of developing a strategic plan: one with significant input from residents. The first step was the questionnaire on aging in community, which will now provide a basis for the work of the Aging in Community Residents' Advisory committee. All of the residents who requested paper copies of the survey returned their completed questionnaires, and the overall response rate was 70%. (There was further discussion of the survey during Cindy's CEO report; see pp. 6-7.)

Elly commented that there were twice as many volunteers to serve on the Aging in Community Advisory Committee as are needed to form a nimble working group. Cindy will select members with the goal of having the widest possible range of assets such as age and life experiences. There may also be a need for more volunteers to serve on subcommittees for specific projects.

The next step will be a call for volunteers for the Advisory Committee on Sustainability.

(This too was covered in Cindy's CEO report, pp. 6-7 of these minutes.)

## **Resident Website** Carol Neubert

Carol provided a tour of [lathropres.org](http://lathropres.org), our online campus center for information and other resources. All minutes, committee listings, and meeting calendars are posted on the website and updated regularly under the governance section. (The Land Conservation Committee, a joint East-North group, has its own website.) In addition, there are a wellness section and a map of the trails. The Lamp Post and the Nor'Easter are available. There is a link to submit maintenance work orders through WorxHub. The link for the website is given at the bottom of the list of residents. Elly asked how much time it takes Carol to keep the website updated. Carol said not a lot, except perhaps when the LCC makes changes. When Carol is away, Kathy O'Connell takes care of updates. Dale LaBonte spoke about possible privacy concerns, since [lathropres.org](http://lathropres.org) is open to anyone on the Web. There has been concern on the Easthampton campus about posting minutes using residents' full names. Carol said that 7-8 years ago, in early discussion of creating the website, the roster of residents was available, but then was removed due to privacy concerns. She thought it might be time for another discussion of protecting sensitive information. Elly mentioned that there had been a policy to refer to residents in the minutes by only first name and last name initial (or by lane + first name in the case of multiple residents with the same first name and last name initial) but full names were requested so now full names are used. Carol noted that the Lamp Post, including bios of new residents, is publicly available on the Lathrop website. She said there could be a bigger discussion about what personal information is publicly available, and Elly noted that internet safety in general is a topic of concern,

## **Committee Reports**

### **Program Committee** Chris Hjelt

Chris began by thanking all residents who participated in the Valentine's Day gathering. Next week, on February 20, there will be a folktale session with Peter and Mary Alice Amidon both live in our Gathering Room and on Zoom. On March 3, a 2014 documentary of famed choreographer Paul Taylor, our contemporary, creating a new dance piece will be shown in the Gathering Room, followed by a presentation from videographer Kate Geis, Arlene Jennings's daughter, about the making of the documentary. This cannot be on Zoom because it involves copyrighted material. Later in March there will be trips to Smith College, one to tour the newly rebuilt Neilson Library designed by Maya Lin and the other for the annual spring bulb show. Then on March 14, we will celebrate Pi Day with a potluck lunch of only pie—both savory and sweet—featuring Wellness Coordinator Erin Curtis's meatless chicken pie. On March 25 there will be a van to see the Martha Graham Dance Company at UMass Amherst. Chris noted that Bob Solosko is talking with Jeff Mitchell about the

possibility of having music events on Zoom, and Elly suggested that those touring the Neilson Library ask the guide to point out the ways in which the design of the library reflects the current concept of libraries.

### **Meeting House Planning Committee** Dave Morrissey

Dave reported that the committee's February 2 meeting included representatives from all lanes except Butternut as well as Holly Smith Bové and Donna King. The committee will be compiling ideas for Meeting House improvement projects to begin after the repair and painting of exterior trim and work on the roof have been completed in 2023. Dave said that the top priority coming out of the committee meeting was making both floors of the Meeting House accessible to all residents. The current exterior ramp is too steep for some residents who use walkers and the interior stairs are also problematic for some residents. In 2015, there was an estimate of \$250,000 to build an elevator, but there may be less expensive approaches and the committee recommends that we get professional advice on all the options. The committee will be asking lane meetings to comment on and provide suggestions for other future projects and priorities.

### **Land Conservation Committee** Dale LaBonte

Dale asked the Association to approve the LCC's proposal for guidelines for projects planned for the unlandscaped areas of the campuses. The proposal was presented at the January Council meeting and has been approved by the Easthampton Residents' Association. Now Northampton Residents' Association approval is needed to complete the project. There were no disapprovals or questions, so the following was accepted:

### **Guideline for Decision-Making and Communication about Resident Proposals that Affect Lathrop's Unlandscaped Land**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Residents' Councils and the Land Conservation Committee (LCC) are consulted when resident actions might affect the land, plants, or wildlife of the unlandscaped areas of either campus. The goal is to tap the expertise of the LCC, whose members know the unlandscaped land well and keep abreast of wetland protection laws, current interactions with the towns' Conservation Commissions, and best practices for protecting the natural world and the environment.

**Definition:** "unlandscaped" land is any land, (including wetland, meadow, forest, pond, or stream) that is allowed to grow wild, even though it may be occasionally mowed or brush hogged to keep it open, invasive plants may be removed, fallen trees cleared from a path, etc. It does NOT include residents' gardens; areas where Lathrop residents, resident groups, or lanes grow and tend trees, shrubs, flowers, or crops; or where lawn is tended and mowed frequently. When activities in these spaces may affect unlandscaped land, however, it is wise to consult the LCC, because wetland buffer zones may be affected, and these are subject to state regulation.

**Procedure:** Proposals should be submitted to a Residents' Council or to a working group of the LCC and at some point be brought to the full LCC for comments, suggestions, and recommendations. Care should be taken to keep other relevant bodies, as well as Management, also in the loop.

### **Trails Committee** Sally Ives

Sally reported that she has developed a relationship with the Broadbrook Coalition member who is responsible for accessibility. This contact has been useful for addressing issues such as fires, the encampment, and downed trees. In future, residents are encouraged to include photographs of the problematic area when raising concerns about trail accessibility.

### **Safety Committee** Virginia Irvine

Virginia noted that she has observed a great improvement in residents' using the path instead of walking in the road and encourages all to avoid walking in the road, especially as she had just observed a car "flying by" on

Shallowbrook Drive. Virginia also noted that Chris Hague assures us that after snow, there will be a path plowed to allow walking access to the dog park and the plowing behind the Blue House will keep that access clear. Elly Rumelt asked when the Safety Committee meets. The reply was monthly, probably next in the first week of March, to be called by Rob Olmsted.

#### **Fitness Committee Joe Kulin**

Joe reported that Jillian Hensley has joined the Fitness Committee. Joe was glad to hear about the discussion of an elevator or other solution to the problem of accessibility of the Fitness Center. There continues to be interest in constructing a labyrinth for meditation, but in a quieter location than the recently cleared lot on Bridge Road. Near the Meeting House adjacent to the new patio has been mentioned as a level and convenient location. Joe anticipates forming a committee to work on the labyrinth design with consideration of aesthetics and safety. Joe asked if there was interest in karaoke, which he described as contributing to spiritual fitness in response to a question from Elly Rumelt. Gary Fey commented that we should not be considering building an elevator as the only approach to improving access to the lower floor of the Meeting House when there might be a less costly solution, such as modifying the exterior ramp. Elly commented that the inaccessibility of the lower level of the Meeting House is a perpetual problem. The Meeting House Planning Committee has asked that it now be a priority for management, who will be looking at all the different options in a process that should include engineering and design professionals.

#### **Music Committee Jeff Mitchell**

Elly reported for Jeff on this coming Sunday's concert by Jiayan Sun and Elizabeth Chang and an upcoming concert by the Mt. Holyoke Klezmer Band led by Adrienne Greenbaum. Ten more concerts have been scheduled and the committee has been busy making use of the funds donated by our campus.

#### **Ad Hoc Nominating Committee Jack Hjelt**

Jack thanked his fellow committee members Joan Bernardini, Nancy Chamberlin, and Alaire Rieffel as well as all residents who considered serving as officers and gave thoughtful and considerate responses when approached. The committee proposes the following slate of Residents' Association Officers to serve from May of 2023 to May of 2024 if they are approved at the April meeting of the Residents' Association:

Alaire Rieffel, Secretary

Gary Fey, Treasurer

Nancy Chamberlin, Vice President

Chris Hjelt and Elly Rumelt, Co-presidents

Jack expressed his gratitude as well as his concern about continuing to live on the Power Lane.

Jack noted that fifteen people were involved in the process, and from discussions he compiled a list of takeaways that we should bear in mind:

--Can we work to reduce and simplify our governance process?

--Management is seen as more trustworthy, transparent, and competent than in the past.

--Not every issue requires a great deal of discussion in the Association

--The Residents' Council is here to represent residents and act on our behalf.

--We have created a culture that serves us well. We don't need more meetings.

--Clear messaging is important.

--There will always be residents who seem not to know what is going on.

Carol Neubert said that all who have agreed to be officers, especially Chris Hjelt and Elly Rumelt, who have already completed two-year terms, deserve acknowledgment and applause. Jack noted that we will need a new Program Committee head; Elly said that Chris is working on this.

### **Board Report Marlisa Parker**

Marlisa reported that the Board met at the beginning of February. Business completed included approving the appointment to the Board of Dr. Daniel Lesley, who brings his experience as a neurologist with much experience working with caregivers and aging people on how the brain changes with age as well as significant experience with construction and design projects involving changing physical environments to meet changing needs. The son-in-law of Audrey and Larry Bernstein, Dr. Lesley will have a buddy on the Board as he begins his term. Marlisa reinforced the importance of residents' thinking about friends or family members who could be encouraged to join the Board and speaking to Cindy, Carol, or Marlisa about any prospects. At the February meeting, the board approved the 2021 audit which had been done by a new audit firm in line with best practices with a new CEO. The audit process went well, and the same firm will be doing the 2022 audit. The Board took a first look at the Lathrop bylaws to anticipate changes that will need to happen in order to align with bylaw changes that Kendal is making. The Board's review of the Strategic Plan process concluded with setting a priority on refining the statement of Vision, Mission, and Values. Marlisa appreciated the opportunity for Board members to get to know each other during a vegetarian dinner prepared by Lathrop staff and said she feels lucky to have a thoughtful, committed Board working on our behalf.

### **Board Committees**

#### **DEIB John Schieffelin**

John reported that the committee has not met since his last report. The discussion of improving access to the lower floor of the Meeting House led to his observation that this question is related to diversity because we have diverse physical abilities in our community. He asked if there had been discussion of a stair chair. Elly said that this is one of the solutions that needs to be studied by professionals, especially as the turn in the stairs would make it challenging.

#### **Finance Gary Fey**

Gary expressed appreciation for the remarkable job that Holly, Cindy, and Chris Hague have done on getting our finances in order, mentioning in particular the improvement in cash on hand from a few days to 104 days. There is a loan of \$1.3 million that is scheduled to be paid off by 2028, eliminating long-term debt, and Gary is very encouraged by the positive asset situation of \$85,000.

#### **Philanthropy Peter Van Pelt**

Peter reported that the Philanthropy committee has been dormant for a number of years but is reviving. The committee anticipates the need for a capital campaign to fund specific projects coming out of the Strategic

Plan. In the short term, the committee will focus on soliciting donations for the capital reserves with a broad appeal to residents and other groups.

### **Lane Concerns** Lane representatives

Elly had received no concerns from lane reps before the meeting. Sally Ives said that there was something from Aspen that could be addressed during Chris Hague's report, which Elly confirmed was the best approach for a concern from Hawthorn as well.

### **Management**

#### **CEO** Cindy Jerome

Cindy began with remarks on topics discussed earlier in the meeting. With regard to the issue about accessibility in the Meeting House, she said that questions about the turn on the stairs and modifying the exterior ramp as well as the real cost of an elevator need to be addressed when accurate numbers are available. She noted that Daniel Lesley had originally written offering to serve on the Buildings and Grounds Committee in response to an appeal that went out from management to residents a few months ago, and said that with the Board turning over in May, there will be a need for a few new Board members. She encouraged residents to ask potential candidates to send her a cover letter and resumé.

In follow up to Marlisa's Board report, Cindy confirmed that the Senior Leadership Team plans to present the revised Vision, Mission, and Values statement to the Board for approval at its March meeting. After that, the next steps will be forming the Residents' Advisory Committee on Aging in Community, which will study the results of the recent survey of residents, and then the resident officers will work on forming the Residents' Advisory Committee on Sustainability with an effort to tap various kinds of expertise among residents and to ensure that all residents are polled for their ideas.

In response to a question about the rate of completion of the Aging in Community survey, Sarah Gauger noted that the survey is still available online and Elly encouraged anyone who has not completed the survey to do so online or to request a paper copy from her or Donna today.

Cindy asked if there were any questions or concerns in response to her memo about eliminating the position of accounting assistant in addition to a few she had already received. There were none.

#### **Finance** Holly Smith-Bové

Instead of presenting a spreadsheet report, Holly noted the current occupancy rates: 94.2% for the Inn, with only one apartment available; 95.1% for Easthampton townhomes with moves scheduled; and 98.7% for Northampton.

Elly mentioned the previous custom of including a report from the Director of Human Resources in Association meetings, and asked about progress on the huge project of bringing in new staff employees. Cindy said hiring has been successful and has established Lathrop's reputation as a good place to work. Cindy also summarized a recent report from Kathi Brown. Lathrop is now fully staffed except for one part-time bimonthly weekend aide position. Leadership training for LPN's is ongoing. Open enrollment for employee benefits has been completed, with little interest in a high-deductible health plan that Cindy finds out of line with the way we want to treat staff and may eliminate as an option for next year's open enrollment period. There was a very successful staff holiday potluck and there is enthusiasm for the upcoming Pi Day potluck. Using funds from a DEIB grant from the Kendal Foundation, all staff have viewed the film Gen Silent, which documents issues confronting LGBTQ seniors in retirement communities. With input from residents of the Inn, there is a plan to convert all single-user bathrooms in the Inn to gender-neutral. Elly mentioned the success Holly had in getting

a new chiller for the Inn at half the estimated cost and expressed the hope that Holly will be part of the process of finding a solution to the accessibility issues for the Meeting House. Holly pointed out that all credit for the chiller pricing coup goes to Chris Hague, but said she does have some relevant experience addressing accessibility issues, and is sure that there is a solution, but that we need to bring in the right people to complete the process.

## **Facilities** Chris Hague

Chris apologized for any hitches in removing and replacing crosswalk signs when there is snow. He plans to have a crosswalk at the end of Goldenchain painted in the spring once a practical design is set. Following up on a discussion of energy with George Kriebel and Gary Fey, Chris has done some research and mentioned hearing recently that there will be a 5% decrease in energy cost (following a 173% rise in recent months). Chris is hoping to put together documents about the most efficient use of mini-splits and gas heat boilers. Chris then asked for questions.

Marlisa reported on an issue with some homes having locks that do not match the current master key, which she has resolved in consultation with Mr. Curtis of the Fire Department. Chris Hague would like to know if other townhomes have the same issue and has a locksmith on call to rekey all the problematic locks efficiently when he has all the information.

Chris mentioned that installing a chair lift on the stairs to the Fitness Center raises questions about the fire door at the top of the stairs and egress at the bottom; Elly also wondered how a chair lift would work for someone using a walker or wheelchair.

Sally Ives then reported that an Aspen resident had asked about having the springs on the older van replaced, because especially now during pothole season the van provides a very bumpy ride, at some risk for people with back issues. Chris will have the mechanic look at it.

Gary Fey said that he would prefer a seminar rather than only handouts on energy management and the questions of solar energy and self-sufficiency. Shelley Schieffelin stated that both handouts and discussion are essential and should include a presentation with slides explaining how to use mini-split remote controls to which residents bring their remotes, with a document to follow up for future reference. In response to a question from Elly, Carol Neubert said that the documents could be made available on our residents' website. Chris Hjelt noted she often seeks and finds instructional videos on YouTube. John Schieffelin requested help on figuring out the interplay between gas heat and mini-splits and a review of how to use the gas thermostat. Miriam Moss agreed that it would be helpful to have clear guidelines on how to use the gas heat and mini-splits to best meet environmental concerns, not necessarily to reduce cost.

Elly asked if there had been any progress on the issue of improving lighting on Hawthorn so that it is safe for walkers but not annoyingly bright in some townhomes; Elly will check on this with Arlene Jennings. She also expressed thanks to Chris Hague for the crosswalk signs, to which Chris replied that it had been a team effort with help from Nina and Cindy.

Sarah Gauger mentioned that repair of siding where air conditioners were removed is almost complete on the East campus and will begin soon here. Chris Hague asked lane reps to compile a list of all townhomes that have mini-splits in order to plan future maintenance. He also needs an accurate list of siding and living room sheet wall repairs that need to be completed (the vinyl siding is on order).

## **Wellness** Rob Olmstead

Rob began with a report on our new Wellness Coordinator Erin Curtis's first weeks. Rob is trying to minimize the number of meetings that Erin is asked to attend so that she can meet with individual residents. Her ability to

do this reduces pressure on Rob to follow up and resolve concerns. Erin has met with 28 residents and attended three lane meetings as well as a meeting of the caregivers’ group. She is working to meet residents and understand the breadth of needs. Most meetings have happened on residents’ initiative or as mutually agreed-upon reconnaissance visits. One theme of the conversations is to determine what is the support network for each household or individual; there is a wide range. Erin has completed the project of updating File of Life information and “tying threads” to clear up a lot of small details. She is working on establishing contacts and obtaining accurate information about local care agencies. He mentioned that many requests are for private duty care and reiterated that he and Erin cannot make referrals for private duty care. Residents are encouraged to call Erin or send her an email. Rob reminded us of Mark Peterson’s Mortal Mondays series.

In response to questions from Elly about COVID-19, Rob reported that there is one current case, that most people are having symptoms of a mild to moderate cold and are not always clear about the source of their COVID infection. There is no official next booster recommendation, but individuals should feel free to get one. Medicare will continue to cover vaccines. Rob will investigate the situation for at-home tests. Rob anticipates that precautions will become an individual responsibility as the COVID public health emergency officially ends in May. There will continue to be protocols for guests and visitors, especially at the Inn.

The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Claire Frierson filling in for Judy Hyde

**Lathrop Northampton Residents Association**

**Treasurer’s Report February 2023**

**Jean Shackelford, Treasurer**

1. Lathrop attorneys have advised that as a newly formed 501c7 organization, the Northampton Residents Association does not have to register with the Secretary of State’s office in Massachusetts.
2. Budgeting for the Residents Association is currently on hold. Estimates are needed for items/events/services of each committee and sub-committee.
3. Bank account report for the account at Florence Bank

**Checking Account**

<b>Account Balance</b>			<b>\$6865.55</b>
<b>January 30, 2023</b>			
Checks	Outstanding	Program – Curt Martin “Whaler’s Art of Scrimshaw”	\$200



4. The cash account below is new. Residents attending the “Winter Warmer” paid \$5 for soup, bread, dessert and a drink. A number of residents donated soup and dessert. The remaining balance will support future events.

**Cash Account**

<b>EVENT</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Payment</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Winter Warmer 1/25/23 @ \$5			\$101.00
	Food cost	\$26.37	
		\$30.00	
			<b>\$ 44.63</b>

5. Balances in all of the special accounts held at Lathrop are unchanged from August, except for the continuing expenses of music committee supporting wonderful concerts.