

THE BENZIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 23, 2010

The Benzie County Board of Commissioners met in a special joint session with the Council on Aging on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 at 3:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Room, Government Center, Beulah, Michigan.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Donald R. Tanner

Members Present: Commissioners Damm, Hollenbeck, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Tanner and
Walterhouse

Absent: None

Invocation by Commissioner Kelley and the pledge of allegiance was given.

Agenda: Motion by Roper, seconded by Pitcher, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Hollenbeck, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Tanner and Walterhouse Nays: None

Bonnie Inman, Vice Chair, calls the special meeting of the Council on Aging to order at 3:00 p.m. March 23, 2010. Motion by Kerry, seconded by Hynes, to call the meeting to order. Motion carried. Ayes: All Nays: None

Council on Aging Roll Call:

Present: Bonnie Inman, Vice Chair; Theresa Kerry; Carol Hynes, Bruce Andersen and
Denise Strom.

Absent: Robert McQuilken, Chair; Carl Greene and Gordon Kells

3:05 p.m. Public Input

Dyane Chupp, 14984 Cinder Road, Beulah, reads a letter from Harry and Rosemary Friend together with several petition signatures showing support for the Council on Aging.

Linda Saffron, 10911 Platte Street, Honor, don't deny that the Gathering Place is a wonderful but it is not used enough and should have more even times; staff is not congenial; could be better ran.

Cynthia Schnarr, Platte River Trail, the Gathering Place has a wonderful opportunities for the seniors; it is important for seniors to remain in their own homes Cindy Dutton does a wonderful job, the calendar is full for days but not nights; would be sad if anything happened to the Gathering Place.

Dennis Chupp, asks the acquisitions against the people there, is it hearsay or did they do something wrong; seems it is revenge for somebody that lost their job.

Eric VanDussen, not an issue of a disgruntled employee bringing allegations; issue is whether or not our public tax dollars to COA should be discussed on how they use those moneys and they should do it publicly in a transparent manner and comply with OMA and FOIA; people should be allowed to attend meetings and not be threatened with arrest; they still need to comply with OMA; our public dollars have been going out the door in the removing of food.

Emil Strauble, 3900 Blueberry Lane, Honor, retired military in 1974; at 42 years old they national, state and county were preparing to use funds for the aging people in our country; discontinuing this service is not in the interest of the county, state or nation – found that when he

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retired; presented volunteer at the Gathering Place – clean up and deliver meals on wheel – and there are people that definitely need those meals.

Dennis Chupp asks about the tax dollars and does this place have an annual audit.

Wilma Kuerth, Goose Road, Honor, 88 years old, comments on the statement of no activity going on – there is all types of activities going on all day long, exercise, dancing, card games, Wi, food is very nutritious.

Dyane Chupp, the head chef was accused of stealing food – her understanding that there were no charges filed.

3:20 p.m. Public Input Closed

Introductions:

Board of Commissioners, Council on Aging Members (5 present).

3:25 p.m. Break – to allow members to read letter by Mr. Figura and Ms. Wolfe

3:37 p.m. Reconvene

Chairman Tanner states that the board would like the COA to operate transparently; it is not our intent to shut the facilities down or stop services, we understand that much of what they do is good; we have some problems; initially made some requests to the COA with concerns that the board and the citizens had; we have a response from the response; feel there are still some holes in the response of the COA; it is OK to say we don't have something requested; some of the items we asked for he thought were not going to be able to be produced; the detail of inventory and bookkeeping should be in place at the Council; the board feels there has been a breach in the contract due to not operating under OMA and responding to FOIA; have discussed seeking an attorney general opinion; we want to have a discussion as to how we can get this back on track.

Bonnie Inman, Vice Chair of the Council on Aging: It has been her and her fellow council members that the seniors get the best services they can; there have been some arguments in the ranks as to how to do that; OMA and FOIA are issues; not the intent of any member to avoid that in any way and in most respects, we feel we have open meetings; that have been some issues; we will correct that; we have gone from a board-run organization to a director-run organization which as been a mistake and we need to return those reigns back to the council in open session; it will require that we go into some lengthy and heated discussions as to how we want this to happen and reply to your request; we are asking for the 10 days required; we need some legal council; unbiased opinion as to what direction and how to correct these items; don't know many of the council members present that voted for any of this – we need to regain our authority; not sure what that will mean in the future; would prefer that we be allowed to have the 10 days and straighten out our act and come back so you can have it in black in white with our intentions; would appreciate it if you would take back you anger toward us for letters we did not write; thank you for not interrupting the serves to the seniors.

Comm Pitcher asks if she is talking on behalf of the board; Bonnie feels she is; another board member says yes, she is.

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Chairman Tanner says we are not angered, but astonished; regarding the letter from Deb Sever regarding the Sears Estate – there is no intent of the Board of Commissioners to do anything

other than what the estate said; there were investments that weren't wise; concern is the elders; Deb has made a commitment to work with us and try and regain the standing in the community that the facility had and enjoyed; we need to get this ugliness behind us.

Comm Roper your board needs to take a good look at is the communications between the attorney and who Deb has and what you want to do – there is definitely a difference in opinion; you need to take control of these issues that you have; unless your director can be of understanding that she will take direction from you board, that is how you need to move forward – restructuring some things and to start with OMA and FOIA would be good; we need a few constant meetings with the Board of Commissioners and Council on Aging would be good too; he is not in agreement with doing away with any services to the seniors.

Comm Pitcher agrees with what has been said.

Comm Kelley agrees too; working together these items can be resolved.

Comm Damm has nothing to add.

Comm Walterhouse asks if we give you 10 days – to April 2 – are your five board members committed to work out the details and change? Bonnie says 10 days should be sufficient.

Comm Hollenbeck knows that you have been working hard to serve the elders and you have a director that is strong and it will take a lot of spine to keep everyone informed.

Denise Strom we do have a suggestion box at the Gathering Place and welcome comments – no one does make any.

Carol Hynes not been able to conduct one decent meeting due to the disruption; how can we help the seniors if we can't have a meeting; don't make committees like needed to help the seniors; going to a class in April on how to be a board member, we need productivity for the seniors; our contract says OMA and FOIA – we should do it.

Denise Strom, Secretary for Council on Aging, her main concern is to provide for the seniors; she will do what she can for the seniors and will improve the relationship with the Board of Commissioners.

Bruce Andersen is sorry we have had infighting and can work it out; you have allowed us 10 days; was at the AAA advisory meeting the other day and it was brought up about Benzie County having problems regarding OMA; council has been working hard for the seniors, think we can do more for them as time goes on; feels Cindy will get working on evenings; lawyers seem to say different things; feels we can work this out; Sears estate money – was donated to

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senior citizens and we had problem when the stock market went to pot, but it is coming back now – broker in Traverse City is handling it.

Theresa Kerry it was always our intention to volunteer your time – that is what you expect, we are learning and have made mistakes but are now on the right track.

Bonnie Inman, appreciate the Board of Commissioners having patience with us and guiding us through these troubled waters we are going through; the more open we can be the better stance we can take. Looking forward to work with you.

Comm Pitcher says thank you for your service; it is obvious that we all want what is in the best interest of the seniors; we will get through it.

Greg Piaskowski, AAA in Traverse City, can say without hesitation that Bob will agree with you and he is new but the OMA is a no brainer; training and information that the board needs to know; glad you are giving them the 10 days and you are having this meeting; we are available to help on these issues any way we can; someone should be every Board of Commissioner meeting.

Comm Kelley says Carol made a good point – is there training? He thought that COA and Board of Commissioners were synonymous didn't realize the difference; we are the Commission on Aging and we contract with the Council on Aging; we have to make sure the services are provided in the most efficient way – the buck stops with us.

Bonnie states that they will write a response and state where we are going so that you know as a board.

Comm Walterhouse says if we do the 10 days like our attorney says -- should we hold the money until April 2?

Chairman Tanner says that would be a breach of the contract.

To all Council on Aging members present – you are to be commended to address these issues and respond to the Board of Commissioners.

Motion by Roper, seconded by Walterhouse, to have the Council on Aging Board will respond by April 20, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. to bring back information and show this board how they will proceed. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Hollenbeck, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Tanner and Walterhouse Nays: None

4:27 p.m. Public Input

Barbara Blood says she has been playing in the band for 13 years and questions why everyone pay \$4.00 on Tuesday's when they plan – the band has to pay too, thought those were all donations to the board; why \$4.00 only on Tuesdays..

Susan Miller, Executive Director of the Benzie Bus, as a director, I answer to the board and the taxpayers; they dictate to me on what to do.

Linda Saffron suggests that you put cameras in the back of the kitchen area if there is food going out; since Joan was hired all of this came out; the food issue needs to be dealt with.

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Eric VanDussen, quite apparent that the Board of Commissioners have bent over backwards not to terminate the contract with COA; BOC needs to be commended for some restraint in this; consider authorizing Bonnie Inman the authority to retain another attorney; one that will look out for you for your best interests; you should look at the bills of Ms. Wolfe – you never see them, they get approved by Ms. Sever – she hasn't got the message.

Betty Cramer says when this amount of money is passed to the Council on Aging and because the way they are placed in their possession, I don't have access to them if I don't think the money is spent wisely; I can come here if I have questions with my tax money; if I am not happy, I just won't vote for you; I don't have that option with the Council on Aging, once they are a member, they don't respond to any one else for recourse; since the end of August, she has attended their meetings and never hear a treasurer's report; the treasurer never brings forward a bill to be approved either; you have bent over backwards to allow this organization time to response to your requests – they have many, many problems; she is not convinced they can step up to the line and make corrections.

Emil Straubel a lot of little squabbles; suggests would be BOC take a hold of it assign one of their reps to the COA to get this straightened out; two months is too long to wait for their members to attend; if you can correct this problem in stead of listening to these squabbles.

Judy Ache, Dow Lane, Beulah, says this is all a great idea, everyone seems to be against the seniors; if you can pull this all off it would be a miracle; there are still a couple of people on the council – if you can get this straightened out; what about Debbie – we don't want her there.

4:42 p.m. Public Input Closed

Motion by Pitcher, seconded by Roper, to adjourn at 4:45 p.m. Motion carried. Ayes: Damm, Hollenbeck, Kelley, Pitcher, Roper, Tanner and Walterhouse Nays: None

Donald R. Tanner – Chairman

Dawn Olney – County Clerk

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1. To have the Council on Aging Board will respond by April 20, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. to bring back information and show this board how they will proceed.