

Council on Aging (COA) Advisory Board

Minutes from Meeting Monday March 9, 2026 at 9:00 AM

At Lowell Senior Center

I Roll Call/Sign In: In attendance: Richard Demers, Frank Baskin, Maxine Farkas, Gilda James, Beverly Gonsalves (Recorder) Andy Hostetler, Molyka Tieng, Erin Gendron & Judy Huber.

Director: Kim Gagnon. Councilor Belinda Juran was in attendance. Also, several members of the Senior Center who attended the meeting. These members attended to get an update as to what is happening with the Senior Center ownership and vacant Walgreen building.

II Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of the February 9, 2026 minutes: First by Andy second by Erin, all others were in favor.

IV. Director's Report: The first printing of the Heritage will be May. It will be in better form going forward. The Heritage will still be on the City of Lowell Web Site. The biggest discussion at this point was the Lease Agreement signed by the City Manager Thomas Golden and addressed to Mayor Gitschier and the Members of the Lowell City Council. All members were given a copy of this agreement.

V. Chairperson's Report

Maxine said that the original 20 year lease is confusing and messy. The original lease has expired and over a million dollars is owed. To bring in an attorney the cost would take more than four years to cover. Frank asked if Nick Sarris still owns the building, which he does and where are we now with the lease. Maxine said that we are in limbo. Trisha Colelta, one of the Senior Center attendees spoke and said that we should go forward on this. The city should stand up for the Senior Center. Maxine spoke about the issues, there is no attention given to the Senior Center. There are 26,000 seniors in Lowell.

Councilor Juran spoke about the vote on the lease. It was a tie vote. Every one has an opinion and not facts. The section of the building is a condo.

VI Committee & Liaison Reports:

- a. Grant updates: The proposed lease grant (CDBG) is funded for fifteen years.
- b. Outreach Committee: The Age Action committee will be given gift cards for attending the meetings. Andy also spoke about the "Happy to Chat Bench." Also, The Age Action meeting is held on the fourth Monday of each month at 10:00 am.
- c. Richard spoke to Aurora about Open Doors. Maxine said that the walls are a mess for the Art Shows, need fixing and cleaning. DPW has said they will be patching the walls around the end of April, but we don't know when and we want to be sure the walls are done before we

have people in. The Open Doors will be put off until next year. It is not in our best interest to hold it this year. Dick said that we need to bring people in to show them around. Kim said that the Art shows here are successful and people are open to it. Kim also mentioned that \$4,000. a week is spent on food. The only program that makes any money is the exercise program "On The Move."

d.. Healthy Aging Committee:

VII Items for Discussion:

- a. Old Business: State Budget: BHOAP, GLHA and COA
- b. Now BHOAP Behavioral Health Outreach for Aging Population.
- c. Changes to Mass Health.
- d. Senior Center Working Group.
- e. Discussion on Open Doors May 9, 2026 will be held next year.
- f.

New Business:

Friends purpose is to support the Senior Center, Friends does not support programs. Friends should support programming. Aurora does not get any funds for programming. Aurora wrote for a grant but she did not get it. Some Friends Board members say Senior Center programming should be on the city budget and the Senior Center should be on the city budget.

VIII OTHER:

IX Adjournment

First by Maxine, second by Erin, all others were in favor.

Next meeting: Monday April 13, 2026 @ 9:00 AM