

BrooklineCAN Retreat – Day 1

January 22, 2021

Themes: *Connection, advocacy, engagement, bridging, education, community*

Identify Accomplishments with Impact

Volunteer Engagement

Gives me a special thing to do

Gives us opportunity to use our skills in a way that makes a difference

Social/Friendships

Social aspect - important to me as a new person

Underscore comment about being a great way to gain entry into town in terms of involvement, meeting people and learning about the way the town works

Want to build on that too; helped me learn how Brookline works; entry point opening up new avenues for participation

Advocacy, livable community advocacy committee

Mobility, health for seniors (e.g. sidewalks, TRIPPS, benches, elevators, pedestrian

Senior Housing (e.g. Station Street affordable housing)

Seniors advocating for ourselves

We facilitate advocacy, getting out in the community

Subtle conscious effort to combat ageism

Communication

Newsletter connects us to each other and the community – 900 receive newsletter, many of whom aren't seniors; allows us to communicate with others, particularly those in town government

Note that all the communications committee is here at this meeting! – media, PR- profiles of age friendly businesses; website which has a tremendous amount of info on it; everything is catalogued “gigantic”

Vibrant network of communication; all fits together; interdependent

Education

Candidate forums

Matt and John's TV program – age-friendly city community

We educate seniors and town officials

Electron forums – create opportunity for input from seniors; we create questions

Bridge to Senior Center and Town Government

BCAN has helped acquaint people with Senior Center – a bridge to senior center

Always thought I was too young to go to senior center

Age Friendly was the way BCAN sucked in BrooklineCAN to town– big bridging factor

With Age Friendly we have a formal connection to town through select board member being a member of age friendly

Age Friendly Cities – we are working on the pillars

Bridges and connections; concrete things we do

Identify Challenges

Membership

Need more inclusion and diversity

Membership counts when you want to have clout; dues and membership are sometimes in conflict; don't like seeing membership and dues tied together; we've dropped down to 265 members. Brief discussion around what dues have paid for.

Finding younger members; need to tap into newly retired; would help with replenishing

Leadership, Volunteers

Filling committee chairs, etc.

Committees that have dried up – e.g. referrals; it was a hit at the beginning. It was noted that there are so many other resources now that do what the referral committee/list did. We should include these resources in the newsletter; i.e. share resources rather than develop them.

Leadership; how do we move forward; Frank gave us focus; would come up with ideas and then we would organize around them; e.g. housing

What is now missing is that Frank was a connection to town government – that's been key.

Moving on from an organization with a charismatic leader; he was the face and a key liaison to the town community; need to replace that leadership/structure; need to fill emptiness ; where does the engine, driving force come from now?

More active volunteers and people taking the lead

Need to look at committee structure

Confusion around who we are

Clarifying who we are and what our goals are; people don't understand who we are and how we relate to other villages, other organizations; what differentiates us?

Overlapping activities (mentioned as a positive to show we are involved in many arenas)

Good stuff not getting out there

Because of our impact many in town gov are aware of us – our name means something ; challenge is in sustaining that identity and the connections

Overlap is not a problem; gives us leverage – good integration with other activities

Our name? Does name BrooklineCAN capture what we do? CAN is a verb; connotes action, active; “sounds like we need a tagline”

Other

Need to strengthen our voice in town meeting. Seems to be an attitude that “members of town meeting are just too old”; this emphasis and feeling of invisibility is not a good one

Ageism within older population could be a reason we are not getting members

Items that speak to opportunities

Frank's selling point was the intergenerational value of our work; many things we for which we advocate benefit people of all ages

1200 + people that are tied to our social media (i.e. Matt ties us in to Facebook and Twitter) this is an accomplishment and one that we need to look at when we think about methods of outreach and communication