

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

April 3, 2017

Attendance: Irving Kirki, John Harris, Ann Stitt, Ann Stitt, Susan Granoff, Henry Winkelman, Roberta Winitzer, Carol Seibert, Asaya Zimboff, Melissa Trevvett, Shirley Selhub, Elaine Mountleigh, Alex Beck, Frank Caro, Guests: Saralynn Allaire, Caitlin Haynes, Myra Berloff, and Robert Heist from the Commission on Disabilities and Library Director, Sara Slymon

1. Coolidge Corner Library renovation. Sara Slymon, Town Librarian, reported on plans for improvements to the Coolidge Corner Library. The plans include replacement of carpets, some windows, the roof, and installation of a “lift” that will serve the meeting room in the lower level. Funding will be voted on by Town Meeting in May. The improvements will cost close to \$700,000. If funded, the project will begin in January 2018. The building will be closed for up to 6 months. Limited library services (pick-up, drop-off, best sellers, and periodicals) will be offered at Sussman House (across the street from the library).

In recent weeks, the proposed improvements have been considered by the Town’s Advisory Committee. The proposals for window replacement and the “lift” were controversial. The lift is important for handicapped access. In the absence of an elevator, patrons with mobility limitations had to walk almost entirely around the outside of the building to reach the outside door of the meeting room. The “lift” will make it possible for those with mobility limitations to reach the meeting room from the main floor of the building. Voting in the Advisory Committee for the windows was particularly close. Sara suggested that members contact Advisory Committee members to show support for window replacement.

Other improvements to the building are being planned. The collections will be updated. Seating will be improved. Computers will be more readily available.

Sara is seeking private funds for a second “lift” to the mezzanine which is currently used only for storage. Sara would like to move some staff activities to the mezzanine to free up first-floor space for patrons.

Coolidge Corner staff will be redeployed while the library is closed.

Sara explained that the Library Board has put on hold its proposal to replace the current building. Because of other building needs, the Town is not able to contribute to financing of a new library building in the near future. A new building would cost at least \$20 million. The proposed repairs and improvements will extend the life of the current building for a decade or more.

2. **Climate change.** Irving Kurki distributed new informational materials to help the public deal with climate change. He distributed separate pamphlets addressed to home owners and renters.
3. **Election Forum on April 24.** BrooklineCAN and the Senior Center are co-sponsoring an election forum on April 24 at the Senior Center from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. Roberta Winitzer will be the moderator. Frank and Carol Seibert are also involved in planning the forum. Frank asked for volunteers to help at the forum itself. Melissa and Susan volunteered. (Other volunteers will be welcome.)
4. **Warrant articles of interest to seniors in annual May Town Meeting.** We identified 5 articles on the warrant for the annual Town Meeting in May that are of potential interest. They are:

Article 12 Create an article in the Town's by-laws concerning the Commission on Disability. Disability concerns and senior concerns are closely linked. The proposal seeks to formalize the responsibilities of the Town's Commission on Disability. We are likely to want to support this effort.

Article 18 speed limits in "thickly settled or business districts." The article would authorize the Transportation Board to set speed limits in Brookline at 25 miles per hour. A reduction of speed limits from 30 to 25 miles per hour would make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

Article 19. Speed limits "Safety zones." The article would authorize the Transportation Board to set speed limits in Safety zones at 20 miles per hour. A reduction of speed limits near schools, libraries, and the Senior Center would make streets safer for pedestrians.

Article 20. Climate change. The resolution would commit the Town to "upholding and adhering to the Paris Agreement of 2015."

Article 23 Gas Tax Resolution. Seeks support from Brookline for a proposal being

considered by the Legislature that would allow municipalities to implement a very modest gas tax to support local pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transportation infrastructure. Seniors would benefit particularly from pedestrian and mass transportation infrastructure improvements.

We will decide at our next meeting whether or not to take a position on these articles. We will inform petitioners of our intention to consider the articles and invite the petitioners to come to our meeting. In the case of Article 20, we have asked the petitioner, John Harris, to present a reason why it is particularly important for seniors to take a position on the climate change agreement.

5. Brookline CAN will offer an educational program on creative use of extra space in housing on June 1 at the Senior Center from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. The program is an outgrowth of LCAC concerns about housing. Len Fishman will speak. Several resource people will contribute. Publicity about the program will be appearing over the next few weeks.
6. The Senior Property Tax Relief committee will meet on April 4. The agenda will include consideration of the Sudbury circuit breaker program.
7. The Kent-Station Street affordable senior housing committee held 3 meetings in March.
8. We discussed briefly 2 transportation funding issues:
 - a. MBTA proposal to reduce subsidies for "The Ride"
 - b. Federal budget proposal to eliminate Community Development Block grant would affect BETSLow-income seniors who do not drive often depend on both of these programs. Advocacy is needed to resist cuts in funding. Particularly helpful are letters from consumers who themselves would be adversely affected.
9. Status of proposal for extended day-time, on-street parking for guests. The proposal is on a back-burner. Frank continues to recommend a program that would allow extended on-street parking at least for visitors in areas where demand for on-street parking is light. He has identified technology that the Town could use to monitor extent of parking on various streets. The technology would enable the Town to monitor parking demand and establish areas where extended parking would be permitted. Frank is working on this with Pam Zelnick, a Transportation Board member. Frank and Pam are awaiting feedback from the Town Transportation Department.
10. Date for next meeting: Monday, May 1 at 3:00 PM
Notes by Frank Caro

