

# Brookline Community Aging Network

## *Livable Community Advocacy Committee*

December 2, 2019

### **Notes**

**Attendance:** Pat Ahlin, Lou Crimmins, John Harris, Hugh Mattison, Yolanda Rodriguez, Carol Seibert, David Trevvett, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, Nancy White, one unidentified visitor, & Frank Caro

1. Legislative proposals to regulate electric scooters. Carol Seibert and Lou Crimmins reported on research that they conducted with the assistance of Melissa Trevvett. Carol began by listing some LCAC concerns: operation of electric scooters on sidewalks, obstruction of sidewalks, under-age use, and operation without helmets.

Massachusetts law includes regulations for scooters with internal combustion engines. Carol outlined the main features of those regulations: stop and turn signals are required; operation is allowed only between dawn and dusk; and no passengers are allowed. Because electric scooters are very different from scooters with internal combustion engines, there is a consensus that the state should have different regulations for electric scooters. Some believe that electric scooters are more like bicycles and should be regulated in the way that bicycles are regulated. Carol reported that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council is coordinating a regional effort to achieve some uniformity in electric scooter regulation for the region. MAPC is working with both municipalities and the Legislature's joint committee on Transportation.

Carol reported that at least 15 bills have been filed that include attention to electric scooters. All of the bills have been referred to the Joint Committee on Transportation. The committee is co-chaired by Joseph Boncore and William Straus. Among the bills is one filed by Governor Baker on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The Governor's bill calls for establishment of an advisory committee that would recommend regulations for electric scooters.

The various bills address many dimensions of electric scooter operation. Among these are the age of the operator, whether a driver's license or learner's permit should be required, speed limits, operation on sidewalks and in parks, whether lights are required, whether turn signals are required, whether audible signals are required, and hours of operation.

The Joint Committee held hearings last March. The Committee has not yet issued any recommendations on electric scooter regulation. Further, there has been no action on the recommendation of Governor Baker that an advisory committee be formed to propose regulations.

Carol has spoken to staff of the committee. The Committee welcomes citizen comments. The Committee particularly appreciates written statements based on the personal experiences of citizens.

Carol and other committee members reported that the Legislature appears to be in no hurry to address electric scooter regulation. The Legislature is said to have many other more pressing concerns. It may be years before the Legislature acts on electric scooter regulations.

2. Article 16 amendment (Electric Scooter regulation). Hugh Mattison explained his proposed amendment for Article 16 on electric scooters currently under consideration by Brookline Town Meeting. Hugh's amendment would eliminate the proposed suspension of scooter rental activities until the Legislature regulates the electric scooters. The implication of Hugh's amendment is that the Brookline Transportation Board might develop regulations for Brookline without waiting for the Legislature to act. Hugh reported that the co-sponsors of Article 16, Heather Hamilton and Paul Warren have embraced his amendment. We had an extensive discussion of Hugh's amendment. If the Transportation Board were to move quickly in developing regulations for Brookline, electric scooter rentals could be resumed next spring. Hugh believes that it is desirable to build on the interest in electric scooters that was demonstrated this summer. John Harris also favors resumption of rental scooter operations next spring. Others would prefer that the electric scooter regulation languish in the Legislature for many years so that electric scooter rentals would be suspended indefinitely.

Nancy White pointed out that if municipalities develop regulations independently, electric scooter operators may find it difficult to learn about local regulations as they travel from one municipality to another. Frank pointed out that the Transportation Board has had the opportunity to develop electric scooter regulations since the scooters have been introduced. The Board did not take up some regulations proposed by the Pedestrian Advisory Committee before the electric scooter trial began.

Hugh presented his ideas about the content of the Brookline electric scooter regulations. Hugh's substantive ideas about electric scooter regulation will NOT be

considered by Town Meeting. When the Transportation Board takes up electric scooter regulation, Hugh will introduce his ideas.

Frank believes that when the Transportation Board takes up electric scooter regulation, there will be extensive citizen participation in the process. Citizens are likely to offer the Transportation Board conflicting advice. There is a possibility that regulations adopted by the Transportation Board will be appealed to the Select Board.

3. Article 19 on Accessory Dwelling units has not yet been taken up by Town Meeting. The proposal is being supported by a new coalition that is advocating for an increased supply of affordable housing in Brookline.
4. Town Meeting has approved the allocation of \$77,000 from transportation networking company revenue (Uber and Lyft) to the Council on Aging to support senior transportation.
5. A special election will be held on December 10 to consider borrowing for replacement of Driscoll School with a larger school. Because of the quick scheduling of the election scheduling, BrooklineCAN will not be co-sponsoring a forum for this election. LCAC was asked by the “no” campaign to organize a forum at the last minute. Because of time constraints we are unable to do so. In the future if special elections are called, we need to be more proactive in organizing election forums.
6. Frank reported that the Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Human Relations intends to organize a major initiative to expand the supply of affordable housing in Brookline. The Committee is convening an organizing meeting on December 18. Matt Weiss will represent LCAC at the meeting.
7. The likely topic for our next meeting is the outcome of Town Meetings action on issues of major interest to seniors.
8. Next meeting: Monday, January 6.

Notes by Frank Caro