

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

February 4, 2019

Attendance: Frank Caro, Susan Cohen, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Vera Sharma, Ann Stitt, David Trevvett, Melissa Trevvett, Asaya Zimbov, and Karen Strom (guest)

1. **“Aging in place” and “aging in community.”** Frank led a general discussion stimulated by an article by Amy Schectman that appeared recently in *Commonwealth Magazine*. “Aging at home” and “aging in community” are central to the BrooklineCAN mission. Much of what BrooklineCAN does is related to these concepts. “Aging at home” implies remaining in an existing residence; “aging in community” includes the possibility of relocating within a community or even relocating to another location that offers “community” features. Relocation options are numerous. They include single family homes, multi-family residential buildings that are either age-integrated or age-segregated, and residential developments that include services of various levels of intensity.
Older people vary in what they want from their lives at various times. For some older people, safety, security, and stability are dominant motives. For a minority, adventure is a high priority.
Various special circumstances invite reconsideration of housing arrangements. These circumstances include onset of disability, change in marital status, intergenerational family developments, changes in neighborhoods, and eviction (among renters).
In assessing a current housing situation older people have reason to consider both attractive and unattractive features. We identified examples of both.
In assessing various alternative housing arrangements, older people can also look at both attractive and unattractive features. We identified examples of both. Potential attractions in relocation include reduced maintenance effort and cost, reduced housing expenditures, improved access to community resources, one-floor living, and reduced transportation costs.
Older people vary greatly in their financial resources. Those with more money have much more attractive residential options than those who are poor.
We discussed relocation as a major source of stress. Some older people remain in place largely because of aversion to the moving process. The need to downsize adds substantially to relocation stress.
We discussed strategies to support those who remain “at home.” These include home

modifications, in-home services, property tax relief, home sharing, and transportation services.

We discussed some BrooklineCAN supports to those considering relocation notably the guide to residential buildings with elevators. We also briefly discussed the possibility that BrooklineCAN might develop educational materials designed to help members who were considering relocating within Brookline. We listed BrooklineCAN advocacy for an expanded supply of affordable senior housing as another contribution.

A topic that came up that has never been addressed by BrooklineCAN is pets as a consideration in relocation. Some people are willing to move only if they can provide good arrangements for their pets.

We will continue discussion of this topic at a future meeting. In our next discussion, we will place more emphasis on what we can do to be helpful in this arena.

2. Update on benches. DPW has agreed to several bench locations suggested by Frank on Beacon Street both within Coolidge Corner and between Coolidge Corner and St. Mary's. DPW has also asked Frank to suggest other locations for benches on Beacon Street west of Coolidge Corner. The Parks and Open Space Division has also drawn up plans for a bench on Harvard Street near the Stearns Road intersection. The proposal is for a privately-financed bench.
3. We briefly discussed the mid-January storm as a "natural disaster" for pedestrians. The combination of ice and sleet was very difficult to shovel and then froze. Conditions the following day were too dangerous for our monitors. Fortunately, the severe cold was followed by some milder temperatures.
4. Long-term elevator failure in residential buildings has emerged as a new issue. We were asked to help a resident of a building whose lone elevator will be out for an extended period. A similar case was reported recently on Winchester Street. Residents of condo buildings are most at risk because ownership responsibility is shared. Sarah Kaplan of the Commission of the Disabled is researching what can be done to support residents who find themselves with this problem. We should find out how many residential buildings in Brookline have a single elevator.

Next meeting: Monday March 4, Guest Deidre Waxman, REAP program

Notes by Frank Caro