

## Brookline Community Aging Network

### *Livable Community Advocacy Committee*

#### **Notes**

June 3, 2019

Attendance:, Pat Ahlen, John Harris, Susan Cohen, Susan Granoff, Carol Seibert, Roger Blood, Frank Caro. Guests: Heather Hamilton, Officer Michael Disario, Officer Kevin Sullivan, Ruthann Dobek, Maria Foster, Yolanda Rodriguez, Jessica Milley-Gee, Jean Doherty, Nancy White, Barbara Kean, Ruth Glaser, Barbara Wilhelm, and Elaine Bakal

**Pedestrian safety: Bicycles and electric scooters on sidewalks, police role in public education and enforcement.** Our guests were Officers Kevin Sullivan & Michael Disario from the Police Department. Select Board Member Heather Hamilton also participated in the meeting. Officer Sullivan is from the Traffic Division. Officer Disario is the elder affairs specialist. The officers reported that the Police Department was minimally consulted in the planning of the scooter trial. Officer Sullivan distributed a Training Bulletin issued to police officers concerning the scooter trial. The training bulletin covers the law and town rules and regulations concerning the operation of motorized scooters. The bulletin includes the statement that according to Town rules and regulations, [e-scooters are} prohibited from being operated on the sidewalk.” It also states that “E-scooters are **exempt** from stop and turn signals as well as lights.” (After the meeting I learned from Sergeant John Canney of the Traffic Division that the exemption statement is concerned only with equipment on the scooters. E-scooters are not required to have the stop and turn signals required for automobiles. Operators of e-scooters are expected to comply with traffic rules.) Officer Sullivan said that enforcement of operation of e-scooters was being treated in the same manner in which operation of bicycles on sidewalks is being treated in Brookline. The implication is that operation of e-scooters on sidewalks is being permitted outside of commercial area. Select Board Member Hamilton reported that state law regarding operation of e-scooters is under development. When the legislation passes, Brookline will be expected to comply with state law.

Officer Sullivan also distributed two tables prepared by the Crime Analysis Unit. One shows the distribution of complaints received by the department about e-scooters. Through mid-May, the department received 15 complaints about “riding on sidewalks” and 4 “parking complaints.” During that period, the Department issued 69 Verbal Warnings or Citations for “Riding on the sidewalk.” The Department issued 213 warnings about riding without helmets.

The officers provided some information about how complaints about e-scooters can be reported. Residents may call the Police Department non-emergency number 617 730 2222. In

preparing these notes I also learned that there is an on-line complaint option for the Police Department <http://www.brooklinepolice.com/FormCenter/Comments-Commendations-Complaints-6>

Residents may also call the Bird and Lime customer service telephone numbers.

Bird 1 866-205 2442

Lyft 1 888 546 3345

Concerns may also be reported to the Transportation Department. 617 730 2177.

The officers stated that the Department does not have sufficient staffing for adequate enforcement. Susan Granoff proposed that the scooter rental companies should pay for the extra police department costs necessary for adequate enforcement.

In response to questions about how the trial came about, Heather Hamilton reviewed the sequence of events that lead to the Select Board agreeing to the current trial.

Pat Ahlin asked what would happen at the end of the pilot. She wants to know how “success” will be determined, and who will have input in determining the criteria? Will input come from the broad town population, or will it be limited to those who participated in the trial? If the purpose of the Scooters is to lower the Town’s carbon footprint, that should be one of the criteria for measuring success. Can it be quantified? Heather Hamilton spoke about the interest in use of e-scooters as a substitute for trips taken with Uber and Lyft. Pat believes that increased scooter use does not necessarily mean a decrease in car ridership.

Heather Hamilton stated that there would be a survey at the end of the pilot program, but that only the scooter renters would be invited to participate in the survey. Members of the audience asked that the survey also be given to other town groups, such as seniors. If survey is given only to scooter drivers, most likely the feedback will be highly positive. Other groups in Town who would be affected by scooter usage may provide a different, but equally important feedback.

Heather indicated that the criteria for judging the trial have yet to be developed. A number of participants asked about how adverse implications for pedestrians will be taken into consideration. Susan Granoff spoke about older people who might travel by car rather than walk because they were frightened to walk because of fear that they might be hit by an e-scooter. She expressed concern about how the adverse impact on pedestrians might not be measured. It is more likely that attention will be given to satisfaction of e-scooter users. There is already evidence that the rental scooters are being used extensively. Heather Hamilton reported that during the first eight weeks of the trial, the two companies recorded 40,000 rentals.

Roger Blood raised a concern that the criteria for evaluating the trial had not been established before the trial was approved. He spoke about the importance of establishing the criteria as soon as possible.

To address concerns about the parking of e-scooters in locations that interfere with pedestrian traffic, Heather Hamilton spoke about “geo-fencing,” that is designation of some spaces reserved for parking of e-scooters. (Scooter riders would be given incentives to park within geo-fenced areas.) In a permanent e-scooter rental program, renters might be required to park within designated “geo-fencing.”

The police officers reported asking e-scooter riders why they operated the scooters on the sidewalk. The consistent response was that these scooter riders did not feel safe in the street.

John Harris participated extensively in the discussion emphasizing the value of e-scooters as a fossil-fuel-free form of transportation. John believes that use of e-scooters will become widespread. John received some push back from others. One comment was that the trucks that service the scooters use fossil fuels. Another comment is that walking is a form of transportation that does not depend on fossil fuel. To the extent that e-scooters discourage walking and lead to more use of automobiles with internal combustion engines, they will have an adverse effect on emission goals.

We discussed interest in electronic scooters with seats. The stand-up scooters are used almost entirely by younger adults. Hugh Mattison reported on his positive experience with the electronic scooter with a seat that he has purchased. Older adults will be more likely to use scooters with seats. The scooter rental companies are encouraged to offer some scooters that have seats.

So far there have been few reports of accidents with e-scooters in Brookline. A question was raised about the extent to which minor accidents have been reported. An argument was made that attention should be paid to fear among pedestrians about the possibility of an accident involving an electronic scooter. Currently, there is no way to measure the extent of that fear.

Heather Hamilton reported that some e-scooter riders have complained about motor vehicles parking in bike lanes. For both cyclists and e-scooter operators, blocked bike lanes pose a safety risk. It is important that the bike lanes be kept clear of parked vehicles.

All concerned residents are encouraged to attend the public forum on electronic scooters at Town Hall (6<sup>th</sup> floor) on June 12 at 6:30 PM. The meeting will be convened by Heather Hamilton and Chris Dempsey, chair of the Transportation Board.

**Pedestrian-friendly street lighting.** Town meeting unanimously approved our proposal for a committee to develop a plan to extend pedestrian-friendly street lighting more widely in densely-developed portions of Brookline. The next step is for the Select Board to appoint a study committee.

Committee members are encouraged to participate in the “sustainability summit” June 5 at the Coolidge Corner School.

Frank is considering our offering an educational program on financial security in the fall. The program would be held in the evening. The aim would be to attract some people who are not retired. He will seek collaboration with the Education committee.

**New business.** Susan Cohen expressed concern about a friend who is losing her rental apartment because of a \$400 per month rent increase. The apartment complex is owned by a very large real estate company. The owner is renovating apartments in the building. The renovation and the increase in monthly rentals are linked. Susan’s friend may have to leave Brookline. Susan’s friend is encouraged to contact professional staff at the Senior Center for assistance and/or to contact Virginia Bullock in the Planning Department. We discussed making rental housing affordability a topic for a future meeting.

**Next meeting.** Frank will find a date for a next meeting in late July or early August.

Notes prepared by Frank Caro