

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee (LCAC)
September 12, 2022

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair), Sigalle Reiss (Guest Speaker), Carol Seibert (Notetaker), Melissa Trevvett, David Trevvett, Janet Gelbart, John Seay, Lou Crimmins, Lydia Kaufman, Henry Winkelman, Yolanda Rodriguez, Susan Cohen, Maureen Mayotte, Carol Caro, Diana Spiegel, John Harris, Matt Weiss

1. **Update on Recent Changes in Key Town Government Personnel**

Presenter: Susan Granoff (Advisory Committee and Town Meeting Member)

New Town Administrator: Charles Carey began September 1, 2022, replacing Mel Kleckner whose retirement after more than a decade had been expected. He is a key figure since all town department heads report to him and because he is responsible for preparing the town budget for the Select Board and the Advisory Committee. A Select Board committee working with Community Paradigm Associates performed a nation-wide search which yielded an initial list of 13 candidates. Three final candidates were selected, all attorneys, none of whom had direct town administration experience. In addition to Mr. Carey, Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, and George Ramirez were interviewed for the final selection.

Charles Carey led the New York City Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations until earlier this year, running programs that helped vulnerable communities recover after hurricanes and during the COVID-19 pandemic. He concurrently served as special counsel to NYC Health and Hospitals, the nation's largest public health provider, providing pandemic-related support to its legal team. He also held positions in private law firms in NY and was a law clerk in Federal District Court.

He holds a JD degree from Georgetown University, a Master of Fine Arts degree from Warren Wilson College, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University. Mr. Carey grew up in Concord and recently moved to Cambridge, where he lives with his wife and their two young children.

Brookline's New Library Director: Amanda Hirst

Ms. Hirst began work on August 22, 2022. For the past 16 years she has held positions of increasing responsibility, most recently in the State of Washington's King County Library System, and before that in Phoenix and Maricopa, AZ. She has a BA from the University of Cincinnati, a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Washington, and a post-Master's certification in Library and Information Science Leadership and Management from San Jose State University.

Recently appointed Chief of Police: Ashley Gonzalez, who was appointed Chief of Police on June 1, 2022, is currently on paid leave pending the outcome of a review after allegations that he violated the town's policy against discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation.

Jennifer Paster, most recently Deputy Superintendent and a member of the Police Department since 2000, was named Acting Chief of the Brookline Police Department on September 1.

Discussion on a) Creating a LCAC Deputy, Vice- or Co-Chair Position and b) Reviving the LCAC Executive Committee

A brief discussion included some history of the way LCAC has functioned in the past and a general agreement that the work of the Chair should be shared more broadly. Ideally we would name a Co-Chair who, in addition to assisting with the current Chair's responsibilities, would begin to answer our need for succession planning. Anyone interested in taking on such a role should contact Susan Granoff.

Discussion: Which Fall 2022 Warrant Articles (WA's) Are of Special Interest to LCAC?

We expect the official list of WA's and explanations to be available on September 15. Since we will need to line up speakers, choices should be made soon after that. Please submit suggestions directly to Susan Granoff ahead of our next meeting on October 3. Article 9, on enhanced snow removal requirements may be of special interest to many older Brookline residents. (Note that a public hearing on this article is scheduled for October 12, at 5 pm, via Zoom.)

Discussion: Suggested Topics for Future LCAC Meetings

A number of great ideas for future topics have been made recently. If you have items to propose, please contact Susan Granoff. She will be working on the agenda for upcoming meetings and needs considerable lead-time to identify speakers and set up the schedule.

What Brookline's Older Residents Need to Know About Dealing with COVID and an Overview of Brookline's Public Health Department

Guest Presenter: Sigalle Reiss, Director, Brookline Public Health and Human Services

Sigalle Reiss became the Director of Public Health and Human Services six months ago on February 28, 2022. Prior to that, she was the Director of Norwood's Public Health Department from 2006-2022. She has served over 12 years on the executive committee of the Massachusetts Health Officers Association and was recently president of that organization from 2020-2021. Her PowerPoint slides are included in an attachment below.

What is Public Health?

"The science of protecting and promoting the health of people and their communities where they live, learn, work, and play." Local health departments affect our lives every day. Some of the responsibilities of the Department include tobacco control, immunization, food safety, infectious disease prevention and control, chronic disease management, injury and violence prevention, environmental health, maternal and child health, and emergency preparedness.

In Brookline, there are 6 Divisions:

1. Environmental Health (food, housing, rodent control, pool inspection, tobacco control)
2. Community Health (forums, farmer's market coupon program)
3. Public Health Nursing (infectious disease monitoring, control and prevention; immunization)
4. Emergency Preparedness (communications, plans for mass dispensing of prophylaxis, the Medical Reserve Corps volunteer management)

5. Substance Use Prevention (strong school partnership, mental health services, community coalition)
6. Public Health Policy (Town Meeting Warrant Articles, promoting community health with policy change, short term as with masks and long-term aiming for a smoke-free generation)

Updates and Hot Topics

COVID-19 Booster: Who should get the new booster? Anyone age 12 or older who completed a primary COVID-19 vaccination series or received a booster dose at least two months ago should get the updated booster as soon as possible.

Why do I need a booster? Staying up-to-date on vaccines, including boosters is the most effective way to prevent serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. While vaccine protection decreases over time, boosters restimulate the immune system and increase vaccine efficacy again. Boosters are an important defense, even if you've already had COVID.

Many local clinics including pharmacy and School/Health clinics are posted on the town website. There will be a clinic at the Senior Center.

Sigalle presented some examples of the detailed case and vaccination data, broken down by age group, available on the website. Most Brookline deaths occurred early in the pandemic in the Spring of 2020. Currently most cases are found in 20-30 year olds who also have the lowest vaccination rates.

Other Important Updates:

–West Nile Virus: Brookline is now in the High Risk category. Those age 50 and over are at especially high risk and are advised to take precautions and avoid outdoor activity during the peak mosquito hours, dawn and dusk.

–Brookline Day, September 18 in Coolidge Corner where the Department will have a table.

–Flu Clinic Dates: (Advance registration required: To get an appointment, register online at the Department of Public Health webpage.)

October 23, Brookline High School Schluntz Gymnasium 7 am to 5 pm

November 5, Brookline High School STEM building, 7 am to 5 pm *November 19*, Florida Ruffin Ridley School, Upstairs Hall, 7 am to 5 pm

Working with the Senior Center, the Department also delivers high-dose vaccination for the home-bound.

–Blood Pressure Screening: First Wednesday of every month at the Brookline Public Health Building 2:00-3:00 pm

Many comments, questions and suggestions followed the presentation. Sigalle Reiss emphasized that her department is responsible for a wide array of vital services. Unfunded responsibilities, as well as new COVID-related expenses, have created a real financial crunch. ARPA funds continue for only four years and are not a good solution for long-term staff positions. She intends to tackle these problems with a combination of vigorous grant application, an interagency group model for coordinating services, and careful strategic planning based on a Comprehensive Community Health Assessment. ARPA funds will be used to develop a Community Improvement Plan to guide the rebuilding of the Department, including the hiring of an Emergency Response Coordinator. She would like to fill an Information and Referral for Human Services position. A high priority for Director Reiss will be to develop her policy staff. This function is invaluable and really needs to be a fixed item in the Town budget.

One of the current urgent problems facing the Public Health Department is rat infestation. This is now a problem throughout Brookline, due in part to changes in human behavior during the COVID pandemic such as increased outdoor dining. Director Reiss described their efforts and the process for tackling rodents. Here again, staffing is a problem. Each complaint should be followed by an inspection, abatement measures and ongoing monitoring. At present, the Department is working hard to deal with imminent health hazards. In all of last year there were 140 rodent complaints. By August this year, there have already been 160. The Department requires pest management by construction companies before and during demolition, but has a goal of expanding that requirement to cover the entire construction period. There have been recent

meetings of the Rodent Task Force to coordinate and improve management systems. Suggestions came from the group for good ways to communicate with Brookline residents about steps they can take to fight rodent infestation.

Susan Granoff thanked Director Reiss for her presentation and recommended keeping LCAC up to date. We can advocate in many different ways for her priorities and can also help to let older Brookline residents know about all the good work that is being done at the Department of Public Health.

6. **New Business**: None

NEXT MEETING; MONDAY OCTOBER 3, 2022.

2Life Communities will present on senior housing work they are doing in the region.