

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

February 1, 2016

Attending: Carol Schraft, Ruthann Sneider, Jackie Wright, Vera Sharma, Liya Shmuter, Ellen Weiss, Henry Winkelman, Elaine Mountleigh, Joan McCabe, Lyudmila Rudyakov, Susan Granoff, Peter Ames, Ann Stitt, Evelyn House, Stan Klein, Asya Zimbov, Frank Caro, and Tom Brady (guest).

1. Our guest, Tom Brady, Brookline's arborist and Conservation Commission director talked about Brookline's street trees with an emphasis on their implications for pedestrians. Tom spoke about the long history of street trees in Brookline and the fact that Brookline was among the first Massachusetts municipalities to form a tree planting committee. Brookline has about 12,000 street trees and about 60,000 trees under its care. The Town employs 4 arborists. Tom circulated a street tree map on which all Town owned trees are identified. The Town has a seven year tree pruning cycle. Each town-owned tree is to be pruned at least once in every seven year period. Every year, between 240 and 300 trees are replaced. In some commercial areas, notably Coolidge Corner, tree life is relatively short because of the stressful situation for trees. At best, trees in Coolidge Corner last 25 years. Tom provided a rationale for diversity in selection of street trees. The greatest threats to street trees are dog urine and salt used to melt snow on streets.

Tom also spoke about his preference for asphalt as paving for sidewalks when tree roots may cause sidewalks to heave. He also spoke well about a machine used to shave cement when tree roots have moved sidewalks. The shaving reduces the trip hazard for pedestrians. Tom circulated a sample of pervious asphalt, a product that Brookline is testing in tree pits in Coolidge Corner. The material provides a firm walking surface for pedestrians. At the same time, water runs through readily. Pervious asphalt is a substitute for mulch in tree pits. If the material survives the winter in Coolidge Corner, it will be used in the other major commercial areas in Town. The material will be put in place gradually over the next few years. The material is much more expensive than mulch. It must also be installed with great care.

Another strategy used by the Town is use of structural soil in the root zone of street trees. Tree roots thrive to a much greater extent in structural soil than in ordinary soil.

Use of structural soil helps to avoid problems with sidewalk heaving caused by tree roots.

Outside of the commercial areas, the Town will continue to use mulch in tree wells. Mulch in tree pits is replaced once a year.

When Town residents have difficulty with Town trees, Tom encourages them to report problems electronically using Brookonline: <http://www.brooklinema.gov/933/Report-a-Concern>

Residents may also call the main DPW number: 617-730-2156 to report tree problems.

Tom discussed problems with sidewalk lighting that result from tree limbs that block light from street lights. The placement of poles for street lights is not always coordinated with the placement of street trees. In some instances the problems might be resolved if the tree limbs were higher. In other cases, the problems could be resolved with lower street lights. Tom acknowledged the value of our project that is assessing the adequacy of street lighting for pedestrians. Tom's staff is currently pruning trees in locations where we documented the inadequacy of street lighting.

2. Susan Granoff reported on the work of the "pay as you throw" task force on which she serves. Susan is one of two citizen members of the Task Force. Brookline is adopting an automated trash collection system similar to the recycling system. Susan is concerned about the impact of the automated system on seniors who live in multi-unit buildings without elevators in densely developed neighborhoods where residents do not have ready access from the street to the rear of the building. With the automated system, residents will be required to put trash in heavy mini-dumpsters for curbside pickup. The dumpsters must be stored in or behind buildings and wheeled out on trash collection day. In some buildings, seniors will have difficulty in moving the dumpsters. The system will be more demanding than the current recycling system since trash must be discarded every week. Recycling can be discarded less frequently. Susan is advocating for special supports for seniors who will have difficulty in handling the dumpsters. With the "pay as you throw" system, participants in the system will have to pay extra if they set out larger quantities of trash. The parameters of the extra payments have not yet been set.
3. Frank has circulated a proposal for standing pedestrian advisory committee for the Town. Creation of a pedestrian committee is a long-standing agenda item for the Brookline Age-Friendly city committee. By "threatening" to submit a warrant article, Frank hopes to get attention from the key stake holders. One option is for forming the

committee as an entity that reports to the Transportation Board. Another option is a Selectmen's committee that communicates not only with the Transportation board but also DPW and other boards.

4. A public hearing on Complete Streets policy will be held on February 3 at Town Hall at 7 PM in room 111. This will be a final opportunity for input before the proposed policy is submitted to the Board of Selectmen.
5. Residents will have an opportunity for input on the Town's Open Space plan at a hearing on February 8 at 7 PM at Senior Center. This is a chance for seniors to express their special interests.
6. New business: Susan introduced a discussion of an experimental exercise program that is being offered to seniors who live in public housing.
7. Next meeting: Monday, March 28 at 3 PM

Notes prepared by Frank Caro