

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

May 23, 2016

Attendance: Peter Ames, Susan Granoff, Elaine Mountleigh, David Lescohier, Henry Winkelman, Roberta Winitzer, John Harris, Mila Rudyakov, Guests: Peter Ditto, Todd Kirrane, and Dan Martin

Street lighting. Town Engineer Peter Ditto and Transportation Department staff members Todd Kirrane and Dan Martin were present to discuss adequacy of street lighting for pedestrians. Susan Granoff reviewed the work we did last fall to identify dark spots on sidewalks in north Brookline. Peter Ditto spoke about the possibility of replacing old asphalt sidewalk sections that cover tree roots. In our monitoring of sidewalks, we should be looking for sidewalk asphalt that has deteriorated. Peter Ditto explained how the new LED lights can be directed to distribute light as desired. Peter Ditto is not able to provide insight about why street trees and utility poles are sometimes adjacent to one another with the effect that leaves prevent light from reaching the sidewalk. We spoke about the possibility that pedestrians might be better served by lower street lights on poles that are closer to one another than the typical Brookline poles. Some current poles in commercial areas on Beacon Street have a second, lower light that is directed to provide illuminate for pedestrians. Peter Ditto gave us approximate costs of new poles (between \$2,000 and \$3,000). The cost of the electrical connection depends on proximity to man holes. We discussed the possibility of a demonstration of the effectiveness of lower poles that are closer to one another. We discussed the neighborhood near the Senior Center as a good location for a pilot project. (We will have to take the lead in developing a proposal for a pilot project.) Peter Ditto does not have information on tree pruning that may have been done last fall and winter as a result of our reporting of dark spots.

Additional benches on Beacon Street. Peter Ditto has identified several potential locations for new benches on Beacon Street between St. Mary's and Coolidge Corner. He is focused on locations in the public right of way. He is thinking of locations close to the street. He wants to avoid conflicts with parked cars. Roberta spoke about the possibility of benches on property owned by the Holiday Inn. Cost may be an obstacle to the addition of new benches since each bench costs about \$2,500.

Henry Winkelman proposes that backless benches be placed at selected locations on Harvard Street where benches are needed but there is insufficient sidewalk width for benches with a back. Henry has made this recommendation to DPW but questions whether it will receive the attention that it merits. Some backless benches are already in place on Harvard Street. (We should document the current benches on Harvard Street, identify those with and without backs, and identify locations where additional benches would be useful.)

Signage regarding riding of bicycles on sidewalks in commercial areas. Todd Kirrane reported that 60 signs have been deployed on Beacon Street in St. Mary's, Coolidge Corner, and Washington Square. The remaining 40 signs will be placed on Harvard Street. By the end of June, all 100 signs should be in use. Additional signs will be purchased in the next fiscal year for other streets in Brookline Village and other commercial areas. The signs have the message: "Walk your bike." The signs are placed near handicap ramps that cyclists might use to move from the street to the sidewalk. The signs are placed at a height where they are likely to be seen by bicycle riders. Todd recommends that we communicate with the Bicycle Advisory committee and the Traffic division of the Police Department about public education concerning the new signs. We are concerned that some bicycle riders may not understand that the signs are concerned with use of sidewalks in the commercial areas. Frank will follow up with Cynthia Snow, chair of the Bicycle Advisory Committee.)

Warrant Article 17 (mechanized trash pick-up). Susan Granoff reported that DPW has been responsive to the warrant article by assuring that those with physical limitations who live in residences that meet the requirements for an exception will be able to opt out of the mechanized pick-up system. (They will be able to purchase plastic trash bags and place them on the curb.) However, the manner in which the exemption system will be implemented has not yet been determined. In some instances, participation in the system will be difficult because of a lack of storage for trash containers or because of difficulties associated with movement of trash containers up and down stairs. The extent to which residents will be able to opt out on the basis of these environmental considerations is not known. Susan will continue monitoring the issue.

David Lescohier is displeased with the proposed pricing of the new pay-as-you-throw system. In the proposed system, the cost per pound will decrease as the weight increases. David believes that the proposed pricing is unfair to those who will be disposing of less trash.

Adult 3-wheel bicycles. John Harris is stimulating interest in adult 3-wheel bicycles for seniors who need balance assistance that is not provided by a 2-wheel bicycle. John wants seniors with balance problems to have opportunities for continued bicycle use. John will solicit donation of a

3-wheel bicycle from a manufacturer. We agreed to recommend that John may solicit the donation on behalf of BrooklineCAN. The manufacturer will be asked to make a gift to BrooklineCAN. We will ask the Senior Center if it will provide a home for the bike. Three-wheel bikes can be purchased for \$300.

Pedestrian Committee. Acting on our request, the Transportation Board has voted to establish a pedestrian advisory committee. The committee will have six members appointed by the Transportation Board. The Transportation will issue a call for volunteers. Transportation Board Chair, Joshua Safer has been skeptical about whether the committee will attract sufficient volunteers. We have an interest in encouraging applications so that the Board will have a strong pool from which to select members. Frank and Susan plan to apply for membership. We do not know how soon the Board will activate the committee.

Reporting of pedestrian injuries. We continued our informal discussion of developing a system for voluntary reporting of falls on sidewalks leading to injuries. The aim would be to identify environmental hazards that should be eliminated to prevent injuries. Our committee might administer the program. Eventually the program might be administered by the Health Department or the Police Department. Frank offered to draft a form that might be used for reporting purposes. David reported that public health officials already have a protocol for collecting data on accidents that lead to visits to emergency rooms. His wife, Illana, has expertise in this area. Frank will contact Illana. Peter is skeptical about whether the frequency of pedestrian injuries is sufficient to justify the effort involved.

John Harris raised concerns about inadequate reporting of accidents involving bicycles. John recommended collaboration with the Bicycle Advisory committee to promote recording of both bicycle and pedestrian injuries. Frank will follow up with Cynthia Snow.

Green Street/John Street mini-park. Frank reported that major landscaping improvements have been made to the mini-park at the intersection of John and Green Streets. Benches have yet to be installed. The park renovation is the result of BrooklineCAN advocacy.

Pedestrian Safety Project. Preparations are being made for the June 28 meeting with DPW on the pedestrian safety project. Frank and Henry will lead a sidewalk “audit” at Morse Apartments on Tuesday, May 31 at 10:00 AM. They will lead a similar audit at Sussman House on Friday, June 3 at 10:00 AM. Roberta will help if possible. Other committee members are encouraged to participate.

Housing Production Plan. Frank encourages attendance of the Housing Production plan

meeting on June 1 at Town Hall at 6:30 PM. Participants will recommend sites for affordable housing. The “votes” may have implications for the future location of affordable senior housing.

Bocce. A space between the Senior Center and 100 Centre Street is now being considered for a bocce court. The site would be on property owned by Center communities. The location is shaded. Center Communities is considering improving the site with stone dust and a bench. Concrete rubble on the site needs to be removed. The timetable for moving ahead is uncertain.

New business. David Lescohier recommends attention to changes in the “The Ride.” He reported that the traditional service offered by the ride is being replaced by a subsidized taxi service. A pilot involving Bay State cab is underway. Traditional taxi service is getting weaker. Frank recommends collaboration with TRIPPS on a discussion of changing options for those who do not drive.

Susan is researching a program that would allow Brookline to offer a circuit breaker in the property taxes paid by seniors who are house rich but cash poor. A home-rule petition would be required. Two MA municipalities already offer the program. Town Meeting would have to submit a home-rule petition to the Legislature. Susan is thinking of submitting a warrant article to Town Meeting for the fall session.

Next meeting: Monday, June 27 at 3:00 PM