

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

November 30, 2015

Attendance: Jerry Small, Elaine Mountleigh, Henry Winkelman, Peter Ames, Matt Weiss, Susan Granoff, Shirley Selhub, Joan McCabe, Carol Schraft, David Lescohier, Molly Turlish (guest), and Frank Caro

1. **Review of Complete Streets policy proposal.** We reviewed the draft Complete Streets policy proposal prepared by the Complete Streets Study Committee chaired by Scott Englander. Frank, who is a member of the study committee, led the discussion. He placed the Brookline proposal in a national and state context. He also explained that the study committee is seeking feedback before it holds a public hearing and reports to the Board of Selectmen. The committee will be asking the Board of Selectmen to adopt the policy.

Although the committee generally is favorably impressed with the proposed policy statement, members identified a number of ways in which the proposed policy might be strengthened.

- a. Replacement of “should” statements with “shall” statements throughout the document. The word “should” suggests that statements are merely aspirational. The word “shall” implies a stronger commitment. Use of the word “shall” is appropriate in policy statements.
- b. In section 3.g. the sentence “In areas with high foot traffic, a “shared space” concept may be desirable, in which modal designations, grade separation, and signage are eliminated in favor of restoring a reliance on interactive human behavior.” Is troublesome in that it offers a convenient excuse for failure to apply Complete Streets principles.
- c. We recommend adoption of Susan Granoff’s recommendation for a new element under “design guidance” concerned with street lighting:

All sidewalks should be adequately lit so that sidewalk surfaces are clearly visible after dark to all pedestrians, including vulnerable populations such as senior citizens and persons with limited vision, even along sidewalks containing mature trees. This may require stronger lighting and/or

positioning of light bulbs lower to the ground, especially where there are irregular sidewalk surfaces that are potentially hazardous to pedestrians.

- d. The comprehensive assessment of the Town's transportation system included in Section 5 on implementation should include consideration of the adequacy of public transportation in providing access to parks. We noted that currently there is no convenient public transportation to Lars Anderson Park, Brookline's largest park.
- e. In section 4 (Exceptions), we are concerned about the statement: "Where the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways as part of the project would be disproportionate in cost to anticipated future use and value." The issue is who will be making judgements about value. Unless there is an open and inclusive process for determining value, this provision could be a convenient mechanism for excluding important but expensive projects.
- f. We recognize the importance of policy implementation. A well-positioned entity will be needed to oversee implementation of the policy. Significant staffing resources will also be needed for effective planning and evaluation.

We discussed the importance of our participating in upcoming hearings on the proposal. Frank will keep the committee informed about the date for the study committee's hearing and then later the Board of Selectmen's hearing.

- 2. **BHA pedestrian safety project.** Joan McCabe, Susan Granoff, and Frank reported on a November 2 meeting with DPW staff and representatives of BHA senior buildings. The meeting was concerned with recommendations of our pedestrian safety project. The meeting was well attended by senior residents of BHA buildings. At least one representatives of each of the five senior/disabled buildings spoke at the meeting. We learned that DPW has addressed a number of recommendations. Most significant was replacement of the sidewalk on both sides of Auburn Street between Harvard Street and Park Street. This improvement is especially important for O'Shea House residents on Park Street who use Auburn Street in walking to the Stop & Shop market. Kevin Johnson represented DPW very effectively at the meeting. Another follow up meeting will be held in late May.
- 3. **Calling 911 to report emergencies.** Elaine Mountleigh introduced a concern about Verizon's withdrawal in some areas from offering land lines. The loss of land lines could weaken opportunities to report emergencies by calling 911. In cases of power outages, land lines are valuable because they have their own power. Phone service bundled to cable television connections fails when electrical service goes out. Reliable phone

service in times of crisis is important in making 911 calls. Cell phones are of limited value in emergencies because cell towers can be overwhelmed when there are large numbers of calls. David Lescohier elaborated on the concerns that Elaine introduced. Elaine and David will draft a brief statement describing the problem. We will take up the issue at a future meeting. We may ask our state representatives to ask the Legislature to take up the issue. We may also introduce a warrant article that calls attention to the issue and seeks action by the Legislature. We would ask the Legislature to take up the issue because Brookline cannot take effective action alone.

4. **Senior housing.** Henry Winkelman reported that there are signs of increased interest in expanded supply of senior housing in Brookline. Henry and Frank have been invited to an event sponsored by the League of Women Voters concerning options for commercial areas. Both have been asked to speak from the floor about the need for increased senior housing. Former Selectman Ken Goldstein is also suggesting a warrant article for Spring Town Meeting calling for a study committee on development of senior housing making use of air rights above Town-owned parking lots.
5. **Winter Sidewalk monitoring team.** Frank continues to look for new members for the winter sidewalk monitoring team. Especially needed are volunteers to cover Brookline Village. Volunteers of any age are welcome.
6. **New business**
 - a. **Need for additional Senior Center space.** Jerry Small asked that we take up the need for additional space for senior programming. The Senior Center is overcrowded. Jerry proposes that the proposed new Coolidge Corner branch library include space for some senior activities.
 - b. **Water use in condominiums.** David Lescohier and Susan Granoff ask that we take up issues associated with water use charges in small condominium associations. Where there is a single meter, costs are often evenly shared among units. Seniors in small household may use less water than others living in larger households.
 - c. **Reduced water rates for low-income senior homeowners.** David Lescohier proposes that we ask the Board of Selectmen in the spring for a more generous reduction in water charges for low-income senior home owners.

Next meeting: Monday, January 4 at 3 PM at Senior Center

Notes prepared by Frank Caro

