

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

June 1, 2015

Meeting Location: Kickham Apartments, 290 Harvard Street

Attendance: Shirley Selhub, Joan McCabe, John Harris, Matt Weiss, Roberta Winitzer, Janet Selcer, Elaine Mountleigh, Carol Schraft, Peter Ames, Susan Granoff, Jane Gould, Ruthann Snyder, Frank Caro, Kara Brewton (guest), plus the following residents of either Kickham or Colonel Floyd Apartments: Kenneth Drummond, Thomas Orowan, Tom McNamara, and Ann Donahue.

Coolidge Corner improvements. Kara Brewton, Brookline Economic Development Director, made a presentation on the upcoming study that will examine options for better use of the Centre Street parking lots. A major aim is to create public open space behind the Coolidge Corner Theater. The space might be used for seating, eating and public performances. A portion of the property will be retained for parking. A deck with a second parking level is possible. Some parking might be eliminated from one side of Harvard Street north of Coolidge Corner and moved to the Centre street parking. The Harvard Street options include a wider sidewalk, a bicycle track, and a bicycle corral. Solar panels might be attached to the garage roof. Coordination with the Devotion school redevelopment will be considered. Devotion personnel may be offered daytime parking in the Centre Street lot. Coolidge Corner merchants may have access to Devotion parking at night and on weekends. An idea that was introduced is the inclusion of a public restroom in the open space. A Selectmen's committee will be formed to consider options that should be studied. The committee will narrow down the options before a consultant will be hired to conduct the study. Kara encourages interested attendees to apply to serve on the committee. Particularly welcome are those with knowledge about the experiences of efforts elsewhere to revitalize commercial areas.

The general decline of retail areas is part of the context for the study. Nationally, retail stores are losing ground to on-line shopping. Enterprises that are successful in commercial areas compete effectively against on-line shopping by providing experiences to visitors that are not possible on line. Successful enterprises include restaurants, other businesses in which the face-to-face encounter with a service-provider is important, and enterprises that offer live entertainment or social experiences as part of the visitor experience.

Senior Housing Pedestrian Access. Janet Selcer reported that the volunteers recruited for the senior housing pedestrian access project will be making a presentation to the Brookline Public Housing board next week. The presentation will emphasize the effort made by seniors in public housing and the BrooklineCAN members to document pedestrian hazards near the senior housing developments. Frank explained that we want to focus on the sidewalks between the senior/disabled developments and the nearest commercial area for each. We want DPW to take up our agenda and provide concerted attention to sidewalk repair, tree-well maintenance, and street-crossing safety in this densely-developed area around Coolidge Corner. Frank would like DPW to appoint someone who will take on this agenda and promote it in a concerted manner.

Senior employment program for renters. Frank reported that the Town has passed its budget for fiscal year 2016 with the inclusion of a new program offering part-time, temporary employment for seniors who are renters. The program is part of the Council on Aging budget. Participants will work for the Town. Compensation will be limited to \$1,000 each per year. The total amount budgeted is \$10,000. The implication is that 10 seniors will be served next year. BrooklineCAN initiated the proposal. BrooklineCAN hopes that the amount available will be increased in future years.

Update on Complete Streets. Frank reported that the Complete Streets study committee has drafted a strong policy statement. The statement includes explicit language advancing the interests of users of all ages and abilities. Strong pedestrian measures are included to protect seniors and other adults with disabilities. Frank expects that the document will soon circulate for comment to various stakeholders.

Update on expanded guide to residential buildings with elevators. Mary Dexter who was engaged through the ReServe program has completed data collection for the expanded guide to residential buildings with elevators. Carol Caro is now entering the data into the project data base. A new paper version of the guide is anticipated. We do not yet have a projected completion date for the project.

Town Meeting action on slippery sidewalk penalties. Town meeting passed a bylaw change that will increase penalties for property owners who do not keep sidewalks in a nonslippery condition after winter storms. The proposal came from the Slippery Sidewalk task force that was organized as a result of the BrooklineCAN advocacy a year ago. Frank spoke to the importance of continued sidewalk monitoring by volunteers. He asked for more volunteers to help with the monitoring.

STRAITS: needs for volunteers to assist with start-up. Shirley reported that we hope that funding for the STRAITS travel advisory project will be available by September 1. At that time, we will be able to appoint a project director. Especially needed in the period before September 1 are volunteers who will document existing travel resources and their limitations. We would

also like to have the information made available electronically. We are interested in collaborating with the BrooklineCAN website. Shirley and Frank would like to have this information available before staff leadership is in-place. We will circulate to the committee the position descriptions for the administrative volunteers whom we hope to seek very soon.

No new business was introduced.

Next meeting: Monday, Monday, June 29 at 3 PM. The location will be determined. Janet Selcer will try to arrange for the meeting to be held at the Morse apartments on Longwood Ave.