

BrooklineCAN Membership Committee
Notes from September 11, 2017 Meeting
(Notes by David Trevvett)

Attending: Ellen Bick, Barbara Cone, Karen Fischer, Judith Kidd, Andrea Meyers, Linda Richards, David Trevvett, Molly Turlish (chair), Ellen Young, and a guest, Asya Zimbov

Membership numbers. BrooklineCAN currently has 324 active (paid) members as opposed to 353 in July, after holding steady the previous 6 months. There are 298 former members. BCAN's historical high is about 400 members. Molly plans to call some of those whose renewals are overdue to encourage them to renew and learn more about what's driving the decline.

This decline occasioned lively discussion: What do members get for their membership contribution? Do members know whether their membership is current? Do people who attend BCAN events know that BCAN sponsors these events? Why pay to be a member if you can attend events as a non-member? How can we get the word out better to catch people's attention? Should we call people "supporters" rather than "members"? Points made included the following:

- Membership dues (contributions) help fund the BCAN budget, but currently are not enough to cover all BCAN expenses. BCAN funds pay for the membership assistant (4 hrs/wk), help fund the many Education Committee events, the newsletter, mailings, the web site, the spring BCAN meeting, the Annual Meeting, etc.
- Membership numbers are important to BCAN's ability to advocate effectively with the Town for improved conditions and services – the more members BCAN has, the more likely the Town is to listen and take action. An individual does not have as strong a voice as BCAN. (Molly added that the Senior Center, as part of the Town of Brookline government, cannot push the Town to the extent that BCAN can.)
- BCAN is an organization that provides a great deal to the community – supporting BCAN through a membership donation is a way of supporting all the work that BCAN does.

Asya point out that BCAN's financial report enables one to see where the money goes.

Assignments for the Annual Meeting, this Thursday, September 14:

- Registration & greeting (1st floor, by stairwell): Judith (Team Leader), Barbara and Ellen Young [Molly will check with Kathy Burnes to see if Kathy & others will also be working the registration table, and whether they are planning to have stick-on, fill-out-yourself name tags. If not, all agreed we should supply them, with markers of course.]
- BCAN Table in Coffee Lounge (1st floor): Molly, David, Linda
- Table on third floor: Karen, Andrea, Asya

Molly is taking the RSVP's for the meeting and will generate a list of those registrants.

Linda observed that none of the publicity for the event has named the Expo participants, which would have been helpful. Molly and David will raise this issue with the Planning and/or Steering Committee.

Planning the Spring 2018 Membership Event

- First meeting will be for brainstorming, Molly will arrange that meeting and chair it.
- Barbara, Ellen B, and Ellen Y will form the committee, with Linda participating at least for the brainstorming.
- With Panera gone, committees will need to find a new place to meet.

Annual Membership Drive

- Molly, David, and Linda will work on this.
- Molly will schedule a first meeting for early October.
- Molly indicated that this time, BCAN will pay the printer to insert the reply envelopes and apply the circular stick-on wafer seals.

Membership Renewal Process

Background: there had been several questions regarding whether we could have everyone renew on the same date, or at the same time of year, to minimize member confusion.

Molly walked the committee through the current process:

- On the 2nd Friday of each month, an email renewal reminder goes out to anyone whose membership expires the following month. (BCAN has email addresses for perhaps 75% of its members.) If BCAN has email addresses for more than one member of a household, each receives an email.
- Two weeks later, a paper renewal letter (personalized) is mailed (with reply envelope) to any of the above who have not yet renewed. (One letter per household.)
- When a renewal is received in the mail or online, the Senior Center deposits the funds to the BCAN account, and the Membership Assistant updates the membership database, checks the program that sends out the electronic newsletters, prints onto BCAN letterhead a thank-you letter to that member with the next renewal date, and mails it.
- If a renewal is not received by January, the member will receive a membership drive mailing.

The main constraints acting against having all members renew at the same time are lack of reliable work space and necessary equipment at the Senior Center any time other than Friday, and also insufficient budget to pay for additional assistant hours. The process of merging the letter with data is not intuitive and takes training to master.

Subsequent discussion included a suggestion by Asya that we call members in advance of their renewal date to give them a heads-up and tell them to watch for the renewal letter. Judith observed that such calls could be more beneficial to BCAN than the welcome/thank-you calls. David observed that even though most people we call don't answer the phone, they do typically listen to their phone messages, so a message left can achieve the goal of a heads-up. Molly agreed that we could try this out for people for whom we don't have an email address.

There was also discussion of whether it would be useful to publish a list of all members, and if so, at what time of year, in what form, accompanying what event or undertaking. Molly pointed out that we do not currently ask all members for permission to print names, which would be necessary before printing such a list.

Welcome/thank you calls to new/renewed members. There was only one call last month, made by Barbara; she left a message. There are two new members since July 1, and Judith will email them.

Future meetings. The next meeting is November 13, 3-4:30 at the Senior Center. We agreed to not meet in December, so the following meeting will be January 8, 2018. At that time, we'll revisit the question of monthly vs bimonthly meetings. At this point, confirmed future meetings are 3/12, 5/14, and 7/9/2018.