

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

January 4, 2016

Attending: Rudyakev Lyudmilia, Tatiana Rapoport, Liya Shmoter, Matt Weiss, Henry Winkelman, Elaine Mountleigh, Joan McCabe, Susan Granoff, Peter Ames, Ann Stitt, Evelyn House, Stan Klein, Asya Zimbov, Frank Caro, Cynthia Snow (guest), Officer Pat Elwood (guest), Officer Mike Disario (guest), and Lt. Phil Harrington (guest)

We welcomed new members who are residents of Brookline Senior/Disabled Public Housing developments and who participated in our recent pedestrian safety project. Joan McCabe and Susan Granoff reached out the new members and encouraged them to attend.

1. **Bicycle and pedestrian issues.** Cynthia Snow explained the proposal for west-bound Beacon Street between Marian Street and Washington Square to limit motorists to one traffic lane and dedicate the other lane to cyclists. (The parking lane would not be affected.) The Transportation Board and the Board of Selectmen will conduct a hearing on the proposal on January 7. The “buffered” bike lane would provide improved protection for cyclists and provide cyclists with less reason to operate bicycles on sidewalks. The change is expected to result in modest delays at some times for motorists. Feedback from the committee was positive.

We continued with a broad discussion of concerns about traffic regulation of bicycles. Three members of the Brookline Police Department were present: Lt. Phil Harrington, Officer Pat Elwood, and Officer Mike Disario. Officer Elwood is a bicycle regulation specialist. Officer Disario is a newly appointed community service officer with responsibilities that will include senior services.

Susan Granoff raised a question about registration and mandatory insurance for bicyclists. She is concerned about cyclist responsibility in cases of accidental injury of pedestrians by cyclists. Officer Elwood reported that there is no mandatory registration for cyclists and no mandatory insurance. Officer Elwood identified mandatory registration and insurance as state issues. There is no active discussion of these issues at the state level. When stopped by police, cyclists are not required to show identification cards. They are only required to provide plausible names and addresses.

We discussed the delay in signage prohibiting operation of bicycles on sidewalks in commercial areas. Late in 2013, the Transportation Board defined commercial areas in which operation of bicycles on sidewalks is prohibited. Signage has not yet been put in place.

Frank called attention to the fact that Brookline regulations regarding operation of bicycles on sidewalks have not been well publicized. The regulations, for example, require that cyclists yield to pedestrians and that they limit their speed on sidewalks to normal pedestrian walking speed.

Our major enforcement concern is with operation of bicycles on sidewalks. We are most concerned about Harvard Street and Beacon Streets. Officers Elwood assured us that the Police Department will address our concerns through their enforcement efforts.

Frank recommends concentrated enforcement and public education efforts when the Beacon Street proposal is implemented and when signs concerning operation of bicycles on sidewalks are installed in commercial areas.

2. Proposal for new benches along Beacon Street. Planning for installation of new benches on Beacon Street between the commercial areas has been delayed. Town Engineer Peter Ditto has promised to focus first on the section between Coolidge Corner and St. Mary's Commercial area. He hopes to find a place for benches on the north side of Beacon Street between St. Paul and Powell Streets. This block includes the Holiday Inn and a medical office building. On the South side of Beacon Street, he will seek a spot between Kent Street and Hawes Street. This area includes both the temple Ohabei Shalom and a medical office building.

Asya Zimbov expressed concern about benches that have been removed from Beacon Street in Coolidge Corner. She agreed to tour Beacon Street with Frank to identify places in which benches have been removed and should be replaced.

We recommend a bench on Beacon Street at Winchester Street to serve those who are walking to the Senior Center.

3. Frank reported that the proposed Route 51 bus stop at Dudley Triangle is on hold until Brookline constructs a "pad" at the proposed stop to serve transit riders with disabilities. The pad was to have been constructed during the 2015 construction season.

DPW failed to build the pad. We need to continue reminding DPW to install the pad so that it is put in place during the 2016 construction season.

4. Elaine Mountleigh provided a thorough report on a meeting with Police Department representatives on technical issues with calls for emergency services. The concern is triggered by fears that Verizon will drop its wired telephone service and its access to the "911" service. Elaine introduced us to two terms: "POTS" or "plain old telephone service" and "NG" "new generation." The major concern is that POTS is technically more reliable during power outages than other phone services. Verizon has no plans currently to discontinue its POTS.

We hope to make emergency response the major topic for a future meeting. We will plan that meeting in the spring after David Lescohier has returned from his international travels.

5. We discussed potential agenda items for 2106
 - a. Updating our web listings of automatic doors. Matt Weiss expressed interest in leading the update.
 - b. Updating restrooms available to the public. The proposal was well received. Volunteers will be needed.
 - c. Extending inspection of adequacy of street lighting for pedestrians. We acknowledged Susan Granoff's leadership on this topic. We intend to resume the effort in the spring.
6. We will consider proposals for new projects in 2016 at our next meeting.
7. Next meeting: Monday, February 1 at 3 PM