

# Brookline Community Aging Network

## *Livable Community Advocacy Committee*

### Notes

July 23, 2018

Attendance: Carol Seibert, Susan Cohen, Ruthann Sneider, Julie Levesque, Susan Granoff, Frank Caro, Michael Allen. Guests: Ruthann Dobek, Olga Swila, Virginia Bullock, Eddie Bates (Planning Department), Priscilla Garcia Wittig (Nesterly)

1. Priscilla Garcia Wittig gave a presentation about Nesterly, a regional organization dedicated to facilitating home sharing. Nesterly seeks to place college students (especially graduate students) in homes of seniors. Students pay submarket-rate rents in exchange for services that they provide to their hosts. Nesterly makes extensive use of web-based technology for registering participants and exploring match possibilities. Nesterly seeks long-term housing arrangements, that is, arrangements that will last at least 4.5 months. Nesterly estimates that there are 90,000 unused spare rooms in homes in the Boston area. There is no fee for joining Nesterly. Nesterly charges an ongoing 5% fee on monthly rentals. Nesterly collects payments from renters and then pays hosts. So far, Nesterly has registered 2,000 students and 40 potential hosts. To date, Nesterly has made 11 matches.

Nesterly does criminal background checks on both students and hosts. Nesterly has an extensive process through which both students and potential hosts get acquainted and explore their potential compatibility.

Nesterly is open to registrations from older people who are interested in renting a room on a long-term basis.

To expand the number of registrations from home owners, Nesterly is seeking media publicity, encouraging word-of-mouth communication, and developing interest among public officials. In outreach to home owners, Nesterly emphasizes three themes: making money, getting help from renters, and making friends with renters.

Information about Nesterly is available on its website: <https://www.nesterly.io/>  
Olga Swila, editor of the *Elder Resource Guide* may include information about Nesterly in the next edition of the guide.

Legislative election forum. Michael Allen reported on preparations for the August 6 legislative forum at the Senior Center. Doors will open at 4 PM for informal conversation with the candidates. The program will run from 4:30 to 6:00 PM. Michael has negotiated details with both candidates. Attendees will be required to submit questions in writing. Michael will pick questions randomly but filter them for repetition, relevance, and possible objectionable content. We identified major topics of concern to seniors that Michael will use in writing a few questions on senior issues (housing, financial security, health care, and transportation.) We will find a time keeper. Michael will read the standard BrooklineCAN opening statement. Frank will create a poster that will be printed and posted in the Senior Center. The poster will also be distributed electronically.

2. Follow through on Coolidge Corner Dunkin Donut complaint. Frank reported on his effort to help Julie Levesque get an automatic door opener for the Dunkin Donut shop in Coolidge Corner. The manager would not speak to Frank. The Commission on the Disabled is supportive, but ADA does not require that stores install door openers when they have a single door. (Dunkin Donut has a single door.) A Boston Globe reporter wants to interview Julie. Frank will inform the reporter that Julie is willing to be interviewed.
3. Update on Green-John pocket park. In response to our advocacy, the Parks and Open Space Division has planted a dozen new shrubs to replace shrubs that failed because of drought and harsh winter conditions. Weeds have also been removed. The pocket park looks much better now.
4. Update on street lighting. Winchester Street remains dark at night. Street lighting does not consistently penetrate the tree canopy. We complained to DPW about Winchester Street and requested new pedestrian-friendly lighting. DPW promised to do more effective tree pruning instead. Either the trees have not been pruned or the vegetation has grown back. (Frank learned subsequently that the trees have not yet been pruned.)
5. Frank reported that he complained to Transportation Director Todd Kirrane about electric scooters on sidewalks as a threat to pedestrians. Currently the Town has no restrictions on use of these devices on sidewalks. Todd proposes a change in traffic regulations to prohibit electric scooters and electric bikes from sidewalks. The Transportation Board is likely to take up this topic in September. Frank is concerned that highly specialized traffic regulations of this kind are not widely known and are rarely enforced. He prefers that greater visibility of change in a Town bylaw.
6. Volunteers are needed for a Coolidge Corner design project August 2. The project is sponsored by the Coolidge Corner Merchants Association. It will be led by the Institute for Human-Centered Design. We have incomplete information on what will be expected

of volunteers. (The project will probably be postponed until it can be planned more carefully.)

7. Need for volunteers at LCAC table at annual meeting September 13. Susan Granoff and Susan Cohen volunteered to help at the table. We need coverage between 5 and 6 PM. We need to expand the number of ACTIVE committee members.
8. Susan Granoff gave a brief report on the work of the moderator's committee on property tax relief. The committee is developing a questionnaire that is to be administered to Brookline senior homeowners. Committee meetings are open to the public. The Next meeting of the committee is on August 13 at 6:30 PM
9. Frank will poll the committee to establish a date for the next meeting. We will meet again either in late August or sometime in September. The Jewish holidays pose a scheduling challenge in September.