

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

June 27, 2016

Attendance: Shirley Selhub, Peter Ames, Roberta Winitzer, Melissa Trevvett, Joan McCabe, Carol Seibert, Ann Stitt, Susan Granoff, Elaine Mountleigh, David Lescohier, John Harris, Henry Winkelman, Ruthann Sneider, Asaya Zimbov, and Frank Caro

We welcomed Carol Seibert as a new member of the committee

Property tax relief for seniors. Susan Granoff described an innovative approach to the property tax circuit breaker that has been developed in Sudbury. Sudbury was able to legislative approval for its program through a home-rule petition. Under Sudbury's program, seniors who meet the program's qualifications do not have to pay real estate taxes greater than 10% of their total family income, as long as they pay at least 50% of their real estate tax). To qualify, seniors must: (1) be at least 65, (2) have lived 10 consecutive years in the town, (3) have total income (both taxable and nontaxable) that would qualify them for the Massachusetts Circuit Breaker tax credit (currently \$57,000 for an individual and \$85,000 for a married couple), (4) own and occupy a personal residence in the town that has an assessed value of no more than the average assessed value of all the town's single family residences plus 10 % (which for Brookline would be \$1,034,500 at present). (In contrast, the state Circuit Breaker tax credit property qualification requirement currently has an assessed value ceiling of only \$693,000 because it is based on a statewide average, and doesn't adequately reflect Brookline's rapidly increasing real estate prices.) The program is funded by adding a small increase of from 0.5 to 1% to everyone's real estate tax bill. Susan is exploring ways to introduce such a program in Brookline. Currently, there is a bill in the State House (H4030) that, if passed, would enable towns and cities throughout Massachusetts to implement Sudbury's program if approved by their local governing bodies.

Retention of the Stop & Shop supermarket. Susan Granoff reported on the advocacy effort that she is leading to assure that the Stop & Shop supermarket continues in its current location on Harvard Street. The site is being considered for the ninth elementary school. Until recently, the premise was that that the site was being considered for mixed use including retention of the supermarket. At a recent meeting, attendees learned that the School committee is also

considering the site for exclusive use as a school. Susan circulated a petition calling for retention of the store. The advocates for the supermarket have a website:

<http://savestopnshop.weebly.com/>

We voted unanimously to support a resolution opposing elimination of the Stop & Shop from its current location on Harvard Street.

Pedestrian safety project. We discussed preparation for the June 28 meeting with DPW on the pedestrian safety project at Town Hall. In preparation for the meeting, we have conducted sidewalk audits near the five senior public housing developments. Susan reported that in the neighborhood of O’Shea, Kickham, and Col. Floyd, many the problems identified by the committee have been addressed. Ann Stitt reported that on Longwood Avenue near the Morse apartments, hardly any of our concerns have been addressed. Asaya Zimbov confirmed Ann’s report. Frank and Henry reported a similar pattern for the Sussman House neighborhood. We discussed strategies to encourage resident attendance at the meeting. Frank outlined the agenda that he has proposed to DPW.

TRIPPS. The TRIPPS project will receive second year funding from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. Second year funding will be substantially greater than first-year funding. The success of the renewal application reflects well on the efforts of project director Kerri Ann Tester. Credit also goes to Shirley Selhub who chairs the advisory committee for the project.

KI affordable senior housing proposal. Frank reported that he has been broadly supportive of the Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly proposal for affordable senior housing on the KI temple site. However, he and others have concerns about aspects of the project. The site is small for a 63 unit building. Among the challenges are parking and setbacks on Williams Street and Harvard Street. The Board of Selectmen will hold a hearing on the proposal on June 28. Representatives of JCHE will make a presentation to LCAC at our next meeting.

Accessory dwelling units. A bill recently approved by the Senate (S2311) includes significant provisions on accessory dwelling units. The bill broadly seeks to promote “housing and sustainable development.” The effect of the accessory dwelling unit provisions would be to mandate that municipalities make accessory dwelling units an option in single family districts. Municipalities would have the option of regulating them. If enacted, the provisions would advance possibilities for legal accessory dwelling units in Brookline. Frank will circulate the legislative language and a letter from Senator Cynthia Creem.

Bicycles on sidewalks in commercial areas. Frank reported on efforts to encourage public education regarding bicycles on sidewalks in commercial areas. The bicycle advisory committee

has circulated an email message to its extensive list explaining that “walk your bike” signs are intended to guide use of sidewalks by cyclists in commercial area. We discussed need for additional public education. Melissa expressed particular interest.

Adult tricycles. John Harris reported that he is hopeful of a donation of an adult tricycle to the Senior Center from a tricycle manufacturer. Seniors could borrow the tricycle to try it out. John is enthusiastic about the tricycles as a way of enabling seniors to continue cycling after they have developed balance problems.

Next meeting: Monday, July 25 at 3 PM

Notes prepared by Frank Caro with assistance from Susan Granoff