

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

November 4, 2019

Notes

Attendance: Roger Blood, Susan Cohen, Lou Crimmins, Susan Granoff, John Harris, Linda Okun, Carol Seibert, Gordon Szerlip, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, & Frank Caro. Guests: Susan Helms Daley, Scott Englander, Jules Milner-Brage, Paul Warren, Bella Anderson, & Conor McDermott Welch

1. Review of warrant articles of special interest to seniors
 - a. Article 31 Sustainability as a goal for the Town. Susan Helms Daley, Scott Englander, and Jules Milner-Brage made a presentation about the article. The proposal is broadly concerned with the role of transportation in climate sustainability. The article proposes a long-term goal for the Town to shift the distribution of travel within the town away from the automobile and especially the privately-owned automobile with a single occupant. The article encourages more use of public transportation and more walking. The article includes health aims. Notably it seeks to reduce the adverse health effects of use of automobiles (such as traffic fatalities) and achieve positive health outcomes associated with use of some other modes of transportation. (Walking and biking both improve health.) The petitioners want Brookline to take full advantage of transit-oriented development of North Brookline that began in the late 19th century. Because of that development, North Brookline is highly walkable. The petitioners of the proposal have an interest in electrification of transportation because of the potential to reduce use of fossil fuels. To achieve the goals for 2050 set out in the proposal, the proponents want the Town to hire a new transportation planner. With the assistance of a planner, the petitioners would like the Town to engage residents in transportation planning and conduct demonstrations to test proposed design innovations.

The presentation stimulated a wide-ranging discussion that illustrated the many specific transportation issues that are encompassed within the aims of the proposal. Frank spoke about the connection of the proposal to the aims of the Livable Community Advocacy committee. He emphasized the committee's focus on walkability and attention to pedestrian issues. TRIPPS came up in the discussion as a reflect of BrooklineCAN's interest in transportation alternative for

older people who do not drive. TRIPPS was discussed as a model for Brookline residents of all ages who are seeking transportation options that do not involve ownership of an automobile.

The Committee voted unanimously to support Article 31.

Frank emphasized the interest of the committee in working with the petitioners in implementing the initiatives that will follow adoption.

- b. ARTICLE 9 a real estate transfer tax with Town's appropriation of funds into the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund. We continued the discussion that began at our September meeting. Since then, the Advisory committee has proposed that the Article be referred to the Land Bank Committee. The petitioners have agreed to the Advisory Committee recommendation. Referral means that Town Meeting will ask for more study of the proposal. The implication is that a refined proposal will be brought to Town meeting in the future. Consequently, there is no need for us to take a position on the proposal. Frank recommended that the committee send a letter to the Land Bank Committee identifying some principles that might be useful to the committee in refining the proposal. The letter might state, for example, that Brookline needs to increase its supply of affordable housing in general and housing for seniors in particular; a real estate transfer tax is an attractive revenue source for this purpose; a real estate transfer tax might also be used to address other capital needs such as schools and open space; a real estate transfer tax is particularly welcome if it includes some progressive features, that is, the tax is most heavily applied to higher priced real estate transactions. Frank will draft a letter and circulate it electronically. Only if there is a consensus that the letter reflects the committee's views, Frank will send out the letter in the name of the committee. There was consensus that this was an acceptable way to proceed.
2. Special Town Meeting articles on recreational marijuana stores. Paul Warren explained the concerns about recreational marijuana retail store in Brookline Village and the fears about the stores that have been proposed for Coolidge Corner and Commonwealth Avenue. He also explained what is being proposed for Town Meeting consideration. He indicated that the petitioners have agreed to modifications recommended by the Advisory Committee. We noted the fact that the issue has attracted widespread interest and that Town Meeting members are receiving a great many messages from constituents. We acknowledged that this is certainly an issue for the neighborhoods that are close to the retail operations. John Harris spoke about concerns in his neighborhood that is close to the proposed Commonwealth Avenue stores. We considered whether there were issues of concern to seniors either as customers or as residents generally. We discussed whether BrooklineCAN should take a position on the issue. We were

evenly divided on whether to take a position. Because we were so divided, we did not take a vote on supporting the proposal. Roger Blood made the useful point that as a committee we are most effective if we focus on issues on which we can make a distinct contribution based on needs of older residents.

Individual members of the committee may want to reach out to Town Meeting members based on what they learned at our meeting.

3. Update on Article 19, Accessory Dwelling units. The Accessory Dwelling unit proposal that we endorsed has also been endorsed by both the Advisory Committee and the Select Board.
4. Update on Article 3, transportation networking company funding to the Town. The proposal to use \$77,000 from Transportation Networking Company revenue for senior transportation has the support of both the Select Board and the Advisory Committee.
5. Hearing on proposed protected bicycle lane on westbound Beacon Street at St. Mary's commercial area. On November 13, the Transportation Board will conduct a hearing on a proposal for a protected bike lane on West-bound Beacon Street in the St. Mary's commercial area. According to the proposal, bicycles will operate along the curb. The parking lane will be next to the vehicle travel lanes. Older people who do not ride bicycles, have reason to be ambivalent about the proposal. The better bicycle accommodations will encourage more cyclists to use the bike accommodations rather than ride on the sidewalk. On the other hand, older drivers may find it more difficult to park in the new parking lanes; further, occupants of vehicles will have greater difficulty in getting out of automobiles. On the driver's side, those leaving cars will be stepping into a vehicle travel lane. On the passenger side, those exiting vehicles will have to pay attention to cyclists. Frank encouraged members to participate in the hearing.
6. Next meeting. Monday, December 2.

Notes prepared by Frank Caro