

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee
September 11, 2023

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair and Presenter), Sophie Gordon and Sara Schaffer (Guest Presenters), David Trevvett (Presenter), Carol Seibert (Notetaker), Yolanda Rodriguez, John Seay, Elaine Bakal, Henry Winkelman, Janet Gelbart, Kelly Pope, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Matt Weiss, Melissa Trevvett, Ruth Seidman, Fran Perler, Maureen Mayotte, Baker, Daniel Martin, Leslie Friedman, Roger Blood, Anne Meyers, John Harris

1. **Presentation: How to Prepare for a Future Health Emergency**

Guest Presenters: Sara Schaffer (Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Brookline Department of Public Health and Human Services) and Sophie Gordon (Emergency Preparedness Buddies Program Coordinator, Brookline Office of Emergency Management)

This was a joint presentation by both presenters who shared a number of useful tips and programs that can help older adults prepare for health emergencies.

File of Life: This card in a magnetized pouch contains vital emergency health information and is designed to allow EMT's and other first responders to give you appropriate and timely care. It speaks for you if you are unable to do so. Consider checking and updating your File of Life at least twice a year. Use the magnet to place it on the refrigerator at home and keep a second in your car or purse. Be sure to include your medical data such as your current medications, the name of your medical insurer, your doctor's name and contact number, and a list of your allergies. The "File of Life" kits are available at the Brookline Senior Center as well as at the Health Department or the Office of Emergency Management.

Emergency contacts are listed on the File of Life. Try to include one from out of state in case local phone service is unavailable. Be sure that your emergency contacts know that you have named them and that they know your preferred hospital and your emergency plans.

Look for the “Medical ID” app in Settings on your iPhone where you can list your important medical data. Information stored there can be accessed without a password. Make sure your emergency contact is listed in your Medical ID with their phone number. Android phones such as Samsung phones also have a feature similar to iPhones. Older Android phones do not, but you can download a Medical ID app.

“Go Bag”. This is a bag or other container that you keep at the ready so that you can grab it quickly if you need to leave home in an emergency. It should not be too heavy and can be tailored to your own needs. See attached slides for suggested items that you might consider including in your “Go Bag” or in your car. “Go bags” need to be checked regularly to make sure that some items such as medication or food have not expired. Remember that your needs can change over time, so make sure to add or remove items if appropriate.

The Town of Brookline offers an emergency alert system. Text “Alert Brookline” to 99411 to receive emergency notifications via text, call, or email. Notifications are available in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Be sure to enroll in order to receive emergency notifications.

There is a “Silent 911” system for use if a resident is unable to speak. To use this system, first dial 911. Once the operator has answered the call, press 1 for Police, 2 for Fire, or 3 for Ambulance. When the operator asks you a question, push 4 for YES and 5 for NO.

Even though it is always best to call 911, if you are unable to speak, you can text to 911. Make sure that you text your full name and your exact location as well as the nature of your emergency. The BrooklineCAN website has a section on Silent 911 under Selected Topics.

The Brookline Emergency Preparedness Buddies Program is available from the Office of Emergency Management. This program matches an older resident with a volunteer buddy who can help you make a preparedness plan. If you are interested in one-on-one help for your preparedness needs or have additional questions, contact Sophie Gordon at 617-730-2304 or sgordon@brooklinema.gov.

“Are You OK?”. This program from the Norfolk Sheriff Office offers daily telephone well-being robocalls at the same time each day. If the call is not answered, or if the individual says they are not ok, staff will notify their emergency contact or, if necessary, local police or emergency services. Be aware that you must remember to let the service know if you will not be available to answer their call. Otherwise, an emergency response will be triggered. To register, call 1-866-900-7865.

Yellow Dot Program: This free program provides first responders rapid access to the medical information of the occupant of a vehicle in the event of an accident or health emergency. A yellow dot decal placed in the driver’s side rear window alerts responders that the vehicle operator’s medical information can be found in the glove compartment. To sign up for this program, contact the Norfolk Sheriff’s Office Senior Program Division at 781-751-3300.

For more information on emergency preparedness, contact
Sara Schaffer, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator
Brookline Department of Public Health and Human Services
617-730-2333
sschaffer@brooklinema.gov

Sophie Gordon, Emergency Preparedness Buddies Program Coordinator
Brookline Office of Emergency Management
617-730-2304
sgordon@brooklinema.gov

Discussion:

Q. What is the best step to take in a health emergency such as experiencing symptoms of a heart attack or stroke?

A. The first thing to do, if in doubt, is to call 911. A landline or a cell phone will allow responders to obtain your location. Alternatively, one can text 911 with an address. The second step, if you can, is to unlock your door so responders are able to enter.

Q. Should one chew on an aspirin tablet at the first sign of stroke or heart attack?

A. Get advice from your doctor in advance.

- Q. If an individual does not wish to be hospitalized, should they call 911?
A. 911 Responders will want to take that person to the hospital if appropriate.

- Q. If someone has a DNR order, should 911 be called?
A. Calling 911 is still a good idea since the responders will be able to take next steps. Including a DNR order and the name of your Health Care Proxy in the File of Life pouch can be helpful. One might also store these documents in a fire-proof file and use the File of Life to designate the location.

2. Discussion: Micro-Mobility Device Traffic Rules and Regulations - Draft Proposal of Brookline Transportation Board Chair Brian Kane

Presenter: David Trevvett (Chair, Brookline Pedestrian Advisory Committee; Town Meeting Member; BrooklineCAN Steering Committee Member)

This presentation was intended to provide context and history around the development of proposals by the Transportation Board for the regulation of micro-mobility devices, including scooters, skateboards, tricycles, etc., both motorized and manual. Note that State law treats e-bikes separately and forbids their being ridden on sidewalks.

The Transportation Board is responsible for all policies and decisions affecting the public way in Brookline: the roadways and the sidewalks.

There are three Advisory Committees of the Transportation Board: the Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PedAC), and the Shared Mobility Advisory Committee, which includes public transit and also includes micro-mobility devices.

Last year, two Town Meeting members started looking at the Town's rules and regulations and realized that it was illegal for children to ride a toy scooter on the sidewalk in the public way anywhere in town. They then appeared at a meeting of the Transportation Board to suggest an update of these outdated rules and regulations. Previously suggested regulations had tended to treat micro-mobility devices like bicycles.

Chair of the Transportation Board, Brian Kane, met with each of the Board's Advisory Committees asking for input. The Pedestrian Advisory Committee attempted to balance the many differing relevant interests and in April 2023, submitted their recommendations to the Transportation Board.

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PedAC) recommendations emphasized that any regulations should not be complex. They distinguished between motorized devices and manually-powered devices. In the first of their two sets of recommendations, the PedAC said that no motorized devices of any kind (except wheelchairs and other mobility aids) should be operated on Brookline sidewalks. If non-motorized devices are operated on sidewalks, they should be restricted to slow speeds of at most 4-6 miles per hour. All users of micro-mobility devices (motorized or not) must always yield to pedestrians everywhere. They recommend that all micro-mobility users or their devices have sufficient lights to be visible after dark.

A second set of PedAC recommendations focused on infrastructure. They would like to see protected lanes in which bicycles and micro-mobility devices could be operated safely away from cars and pedestrians. They urge the Transportation Board to advocate for funding for the construction of additional separated and protected lanes.

The PedAC proposal has not yet been discussed at a Transportation Board meeting and may come up in October for the first time.

In January, 2023, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued its own regulations with a new focus on "vulnerable users." MA law now requires that motorists maintain a four foot distance between them and "vulnerable road users," such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and road workers, when passing. Users of micro-mobility devices including scooters, skateboards, and roller skates are also considered to be vulnerable.

Brian Kane has produced a draft Brookline regulation that basically follows Massachusetts law with consideration for the different levels of vulnerability among users of the public way. In his draft, the less vulnerable user should always yield to the more vulnerable user and, when passing, allow a distance of four feet. Please see the attached PDF of the proposed Kane regulations.

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee was to discuss Brian Kane's proposal, which in essence sets a standard of behavior, on the evening of September 11.

The Council on Aging was to host a hybrid meeting with Brian Kane at 1:00 pm on Wednesday, September 13 at the Senior Center and on-line to discuss his proposed regulations. (A notice with the link was sent to all those on the LCAC mailing list.)

Discussion:

- The narrow width of Brookline sidewalks makes it difficult to maintain the required four foot distance. Could some sidewalks be designated as pedestrian only, barring all motorized devices there? Or perhaps the town could designate one side of the street for users of these devices.
- Seniors may find scooters with seats and baskets to be useful. Though some feel it would be important to protect e-scooter riders from injury by vehicles by allowing their use on sidewalks, others point out that Brookline sidewalks have become very dangerous. Often bicyclists and joggers on the sidewalks present a hazard for pedestrians. Ideally sidewalks would be "side walks" where people can walk safely. We should get all wheels (except for wheelchairs and walkers) off the sidewalks.
- Any regulation should have age limits. Very young children would not be safe in the road.
- Our roadways are also very narrow. Adding bike lanes may not be feasible in many cases.
- Bicyclists and users of micro-mobility devices do not always abide by the rules of the road, which creates dangerous situations. Drivers of cars may not obey traffic rules. We need a stronger culture of care for others.
- Education and enforcement are key. Could bicycle rider education be offered at the high school level? A booklet on the rules of the road for bicyclists and micro-mobility device users would help. Without licensing

and registration for all motorized devices, who will be liable in the case of an accident or property damage? There are no requirements that these drivers have liability insurance. Ticketing and fines might help with enforcement.

- Maximum sidewalk speed limit of 2-4 mph should be mandated.
- The four foot distance for passing may result in a driver being required to veer into the lane of oncoming traffic.
- There was general agreement that no motorized vehicle should be on the sidewalk. Walking is a very important part of life in Brookline and should be a safe activity.
- Address manually-powered micro-mobility devices separately from electric powered devices.

3. Discussion: Which Fall 2023 Warrant Articles Are of Special Interest to the LCAC?

Presenter: Susan Granoff (Advisory Committee Member; Town Meeting Member)

Susan Granoff highlighted some possible articles for discussion and requested that the group indicate which might be of particular interest to older Brookline residents for presentation at October and early November meetings of LCAC. The following were suggested Warrant Articles (WA's):

- a WA that would amend the senior tax work-off program by basing the maximum allowable amount on a number of hours rather than a dollar amount. This would increase the amount of property tax exemption for those working in the program in that year.
- an amendment to the senior water and sewer rate discount program. This would require a home rule petition.

- an article that seeks to ban the sale of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians in pet shops within the town. This article is being brought by Brookline High School students.
- three WA's dealing with the re-zoning plan. There is a Select Board "consensus plan" which is a combination of two proposed plans, one of which is being offered by a special Select Board Committee headed by Dick Benka. The Select Board is offering that committee's plan as a fallback in case the combination plan does not pass. They both require a two-thirds vote at Town Meeting, a difficult bar to reach. The third plan is simply the proposal by the Benka committee standing alone.
- A home rule petition seeking to implement rent stabilization and tenant eviction protections.
- A WA related to fluorinated hydrocarbons (PFA's)
- a resolution on creating a Moderator's Form-of-Government Committee.

LCAC members suggested having Warrant Article presentations on the following topics:

- MBTA Communities Act WA's
- Form-of-Government Moderator's Committee/ Governance/Charter Commission
- Water and Sewer discount
- Senior Tax work-off program
- Rent stabilization

Additional topic suggestions for dates after Town Meeting:

- To invite the publisher of Brookline.News to convey what LCAC is doing and the kinds of issues we would be interested in seeing reported.
- To invite members of the Brookline School Committee to discuss school budget impacts and intergenerational efforts to engage senior volunteers in working with school children.

Susan Granoff noted that the Advisory Committee (AC) holds public hearings on every Warrant Article with a presentation by the petitioners. This is an opportunity for Brookline residents to make comments and ask questions. There will soon be postings on the town website of the public hearings, held through the month of October. Interested members can sign up for “Notify Me” to follow the scheduling of meetings of the Advisory Committee or its subcommittees. This can result in an overwhelming number of notifications. One solution would be to include the number of the WA in the subject line so that you can readily determine if this is a hearing you might want to attend (either on Zoom or in person). At an upcoming AC meeting, Susan Granoff will propose that the administrative assistant provide WA numbers when issuing these notifications. [Susan reports that Warrant Article numbers will now be included in the subject line of all notifications of Advisory Committee and subcommittee public hearings on Warrant Articles. In addition, if you go to the Advisory Committee’s page on the Town’s website, there is now a calendar listing forthcoming AC public hearings by both number and topic: <https://www.brookline.ma.gov/166/Advisory-Committee>]

Controversial articles are likely to be subject to modification. Amendments are often developed in response to feedback at the public hearings or as a result of suggestions made in Advisory Committee subcommittee meetings.

Susan Granoff proposed that our next meeting be on October 16, 2023 to allow time for consideration of more nearly final versions of Warrant Articles before the Fall Town Meeting which begins on November 14.

The video recording of this meeting will be posted on the BrooklineCAN website.

4. **Other Business:** None

5. **NEXT MEETING:** **Monday, October 16, 2023 at 3:00 pm on ZOOM**

