

Notes of May 18, 2021 Brookline Community Aging Network (BCAN) Membership Committee Meeting via Zoom

Members: Ellen Bick, Carol Caro, Susan Cohen, Ruthann Dobek (ex officio), Marsha Frankel, Janet Gelbart, Judith Kidd (co-chair), Melissa Trevvett (co-chair)

The meeting began with a review of progress on the to-do list from the April 19 meeting. The Committee confirmed that initially it will focus on communication with members and postpone for a time dealing with the issue of whether to change the dues structure. The renewal letter has been revised. Sandy Spector, the Membership Assistant, sends these out monthly to BrooklineCAN members whose memberships expire.

The “BCAN during COVID” letter will go out to the entire newsletter list (1,000 people via email)—members, former members, Town Meeting members, and other supporters. Carol Caro will send to the email list, and Ruthann Dobek will follow up on sending print versions of the letter to members who need or prefer print (approximately 120 members). Members thought that the COVID letter was very good. The suggestions were made that the monthly BCAN newsletter be mentioned, and a request encouraging people to join be included, along with the fact that membership is tax deductible. The COVID letter should come from the Membership Committee, including Ruthann. Janet will revise the letter to include these points.

The committee discussed the attachments to the agenda, beginning with the change in membership numbers. The committee briefly reviewed data, but did not find the two-years of data (FY2019 – FY2020) helpful in explaining membership drop-off. We will ask John Seay for data from FY2020 to present in FY 2021 to get some additional information. It was suggested that we not spend too much time looking at the history of membership, because it is more important to have a campaign going forward to add to membership. However, members felt that it was worth a trial effort to contact friends whose memberships had expired, and we should not only encourage them to re-new, but also try to have a brief conversation on why they are renewing or not. Sandy Spector, who is the Membership Assistant, has this data and will be contacted.

The Committee discussed what we need as follow up to the “BrooklineCAN during COVID” letter, and two ideas for outreach were agreed on 1) visiting buildings where many seniors live to briefly introduce BrooklineCAN to residents; and 2) holding a special event in Fall which would draw not only current members, but also potential members. The event would feature a speaker and refreshments.

- As an alternative to having people come out of where they live to learn about BrooklineCAN, we would go to them. BrooklineCAN volunteers would visit key independent living facilities to talk about what BCAN does, for example, 2Life’s Brown House and Hebrew Senior Life at 1550 Beacon St. and

- Waterstone. A couple of Membership Committee members could visit, make a 15-20 minute informal presentation with time for questions, then refreshments. We would provide copies of the monthly newsletter and the brochure. Ellen volunteered to take the lead in planning this effort; Janet and Melissa volunteered to work with her. Marsha will make the initial contacts with HSL and Brown House. Sid Gelb was mentioned as an active BrooklineCAN member who lives at 1550, and it could be helpful in planning a visit to involve people who live in the building. Approaching OTHER apartment buildings in which many older adults live is also an option.
- New people have moved into Brookline since the beginning of the pandemic (the new 2Life Building opened during the pandemic), and we discussed other places and ways to reach potential members: identifying care managers and working to make them aware of BrooklineCAN; geriatricians and lawyers specializing in older adult issues might be interested in having brochures in their waiting rooms, leave brochures in libraries.
 - Since brochures will be important in any outreach and upcoming programming effort, we need to know how many we have on hand and whether they are adequately up-to-date. Ellen and Marsha will go to the Senior Center and check on the brochures, as well as locate the black bag with other BCAN materials. Jude also offered to help.

Programs will be key in attracting newcomers or former members to BCAN and retaining current members. The Senior Center is the best place to have the September meeting. (Ruthann said that the building will open on June 1 and the Senior Center will re-open for in-person programs the week of June 21.)

- A welcome event in September for current members and potential members would be the kick-off of a membership campaign. We gave attention to the tone we wanted to set at the kick-off meeting and decided that we wanted a topic of broad interest to current and potential members.
- Joseph Coughlin, head of MIT's Age Lab, was mentioned by several people who had heard him speak in concrete terms about retiring and found it helpful. There was agreement that Coughlin would be a good speaker for a kick-off event. We can be flexible about a date in September/October. We decided we would like the primary focus to be stages of retirement with his new book as background. Marsha will contact Amy Scheckman about the process for arranging a speaking engagement with Coughlin.
- Ellen Bick and Marsha Frankel agreed to chair the September event.

Future Programs after September Event

In our discussion of topics for a September kick-off event many topics of interest came up and could be presented later (or in September if our first choice doesn't work) by the Membership Committee or in coordination with the Education Committee.

- Retirement is such a major step in people’s lives that it will always a topic of interest to BCAN members and potential members. We discussed a range of programs likely to be of interest to retirees at different stages of their lives. e.g. issues that the newly retired or those thinking about retiring face—how to prepare, understanding finances, what to do once you are retired. There used to be programs focusing on helping people plan retirement, for example, *Discovering What’s Next*. Jude will contact Doug Dixon, who presented these seminars. In addition, the former Executive Service Corps was one program of interest to retirees; it has merged with a similar program and is now called Empower Success Corps. Programs about the different stages of retirement and how to be an advocate for yourself at these different stages would be of interest. Carol Caro will contact the Gerontology Program at UMass Boston to find out more about what programs faculty there are aware of.
- Update on Aging-in-place options:
 - KNOX-BOX (Knox-Box Rapid Entry System) – Deputy Fire Chief could discuss this
 - Alert devices and systems, e.g. Philips and other vendors could attend a BCAN Annual meeting, for example
 - Gadgets helpful for older people; e.g. gadgets that help with pulling up a zipper, opening bags when your fingers are stiff, opening a jar, applying lotions. An occupational therapist could talk about some of these issues.
- Volunteering. Brookline Rec had a program “How do you volunteer? What to look for” in volunteering that Committee members thought would be helpful to members, especially those who are recently retired. We could contact Gerontology at U Mass Boston.
- Program on Care Coordinators, e.g. Life Care Advocates and others
- Intergenerational Focus. Steps to Success and its work with BIG teaching high school students how to use video cameras could make a good intergenerational program. Students have interviewed seniors as well as immigrants. A program about older people could focus on interviewers and interviewees as a pair, demonstrating the contributions of older adults and the work across generations. Perhaps the interviewers’ parents could attend and it would be even more intergenerational. Jude will contact STEPS to SUCCESS Director find out how BrooklineCAN could work with the interviewing program.
- Topics for BCAN advocacy, e.g. new senior center space

Distribution of Programs through Brookline Interactive Group (BIG)

- How can we make more seniors aware of local Channel 3 or other channels of viewing Brookline Interactive Group (BIG) content filmed for older adults. Matt Weiss and John Seay have an Age Friendly TV program in which they interview Town government officials to educate them on needs of older Brookline residents and to hear the perspectives of these officials. For

example, newly-elected Select Board members will be interviewed as well as new people in key Town positions, e.g. Erin Gallentine, the new head of the Department of Public Works. There is a link on the website as well as in the newsletter to the interviews. Jude will follow up with Matt and John and BIG staff (Ann Theis) to find out how to select a BIG greatest hits of the Age-Friendly TV interviews.

- BIG trains students in making videos by having high school freshmen interview seniors who live in Brookline. Students have also interviewed immigrants to present their stories. BCAN should consider how we can make greater use of BIG for outreach. Ruthann stressed that BIG is open to any kind of topic.

Publicity about programs

- Carol Caro, Chair of the Communications Committee said that a member of the Communications committee will write a press release and she has been successful in placing publicity articles in Patch and the TAB.