

Minutes for Council on Aging Meeting January 13, 2016

Present: COA Members: Agnes Rogers, Yolanda Rodriguez, John Mulhane, Peter Ames, Judith Chasin, Helen Lew, Roberta Winitzer, Barbara Kean, Irving Finn, Vera Sharma, Jackie Wright, Rita d'Entremont, William Wong, v. Celia Lascarides and Sherry Lee. Staff: Ruthann Dobek, Julie Washburn, and Patricia Burns. Public: Lucille Tawa, Monique Richardson, C. Slater, Jill Haase, Stan Klein and others.

Call to Order: Mrs. Agnes Rogers & Roberta Winitzer called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. Agnes Rogers announced that Roberta Winitzer, who is being trained as the new Chair of the COA, would be assisting today due to Mrs. Roger's cold and laryngitis.

Acceptance of Minutes of December 9, 2015: It was so moved and seconded to accept the Minutes of the December 9th COA meeting.

Introduction of Guest Speaker: Roberta Winitzer introduced the speaker for today - **Kerri Ann Tester, Program Director, TRIPPS**

Topic: Transportation Resources, Information, Planning & Partnership for Seniors Program (TRIPPS)

Kerri Ann opened by saying that this is a three year Federal Department of Transportation grant through the state. Brookline is partnering with Newton on the project. Kerri Ann has office hours here at the BSC on Thursdays from 11-1 and in Newton as well. Kerri Ann mentioned that she herself has not driven in 10 years and she and her family are passionate about public transportation, bicycling and walking.

She divided our transportation needs into three categories:

- Urgent – doctor and food for which we can usually rely on family and friends
- Pleasure & fulfillment – arts and film
- Visiting with family & friends – not much transportation support in this category

Kerri Ann polled the group as to how they had come to the meeting. Various attendees used public transportation, LIFT, and the van while others walked and only one drove.

Transportation options were then discussed.

- Traditional – MBTA/RIDE, Taxi vouchers (BETS), friends/family, and paid assistance... and don't forget – walking and cycling
- Less traditional – paratransit, carpooling, faith and other community, Veterans' Taxi in Newton
- ITN, ride share programs

She discussed how isolation impacts seniors and the importance of transportation options. Isolation impacts included: health and well-being, income, housing and hunger. Some interesting statistics she shared were that once a woman reaches 70 or more and stops driving, she will likely live another 10 years. For men in the same circumstance, they will live an additional 6

years. Kerri Ann stressed that the time to make a transportation plan for when we stop driving is NOW.

Reasons why people stop driving include:

- Health -poor vision, Parkinson's, stroke, arthritis and dementia
- Recommendations from family, physicians or law enforcement following an accident
- Financial – cheaper to take alternate transportation than to own, insure, maintain and garage a car in Brookline

The obstacles seniors give for not stopping driving include:

- Lack of options
- Unfamiliarity with alternatives
- Frequent requirement to plan ahead from 1-3 days
- Health & mobility
- Financial resources
- Lack of support from personal networks - family and friends
- Feelings of autonomy, independence and self-worth
- Options may be (or may be seen as) inconvenient and unresponsive to seniors
- Social stigma

Kerri Ann said we should consider stopping driving as 'driving retirement'. It is a transition from driver to rider that can take years. She is preparing a TRIPPS Transportation and Information Guide which will be both on line and in print and can also be used for outreach, education and training.

Kerri Ann then spoke about the three main areas of the program:

- Transportation Resources and Information Guide
- Outreach, Education & Training
- Transit Advisor Program

Areas where volunteers are being recruited:

- Researching each transportation option for the pros and cons of each and develop 'tips and tricks' for using each (this job can be done from home)
- Recruiting and training volunteers as 'transport advisors' – an orientation will be held for new potential volunteers on February 4th from 10-1 at the BSC
- Event organizing for information sessions
- Other activities include: compiling and updating the resource guide, creating a document library and having our model and resource guide available for other COAs

Ways to connect with TRIPPS include: information events, the TRIPPS phone line, the website, resource guide, social media and by volunteering.

Some questions and concerns were raised.

- Concern – licensing or lack of licensing of UBER and LIFT drivers. Kerri Ann relayed that for UBER & LIFT, you get a photo and name of the driver as well as a photo and

license plate of the vehicle so you can check these before entering the car unlike regular cabs. Roberta stressed that we are ultimately responsible for ourselves and no system is perfect. Ruthann said that advocating for and monitoring licensing for these new modes of travel at the State House and for wheelchair taxis in Brookline would be good tasks for seniors.

- Roberta Winitzer described her experience using Lift including that if the wrong destination option is shown on your phone, you can update this in the car.
- Vera Sharma relayed that she is sometimes worried about driving with her friends who are hard of hearing and don't hear sirens.
- A recommendation was to have a workshop/training/session on having the conversation with a senior about stopping driving.
- Kerri Ann clarified that yes, this is a three year grant, but it could continue on a volunteer basis after the three years even if funding was not extended. Ruthann stated that BCAN and BSC are working on the annual renewal of the grant which is highly competitive.
- For seniors who do not have Smartphones, an alternative is to have a friend or family member call for their ride. However, the senior would not get the driver and car information.
- Irving Finn asked about the Newton Veterans' Cab Program. Ruthann said that the City of Newton has more than \$200,000 for subsidized cab vouchers with Veterans' Cab. This program, which is not income tested, provides services in Newton for events in all 14 Newton villages. This company also has a sub-contract with The Ride to provide services for those who do not need the chair lift vehicles.

Committee Reports:

Springwell – Yolanda Rodriguez: there were no meetings in December, so there was no report

Nominating Committee – no report

Budget Committee – no report

Director's Report:

- *Grant Received by the Fire Department:* Ruthann reminded attendees that the Fire Department had received the grant and would be at the BSC tomorrow at 1:30 to discuss fire safety. She also said that seniors should sign up for free smoke detectors that the Fire Department would install even if they are not able to come to the fire safety information session.
- *Alzheimer's Respite Program:* Due to Nancy Daly's Dancing with the Stars fundraising, the Dementia Respite Program CARE is able to provide respite care through the HELP program. Ruthann also reminded everyone that the Memory Café is also meeting for its monthly meeting next week.
- *Springwell Makeup for Holiday Lunch:* In December, Springwell scheduled a special holiday luncheon. Inadvertently, our lunches were delivered to Belmont by mistake. To make up for this mix-up, a chef will be coming to the BSC on January 21st to prepare a special fancy desert.
- *Martin Luther King Holiday:* While Monday is a holiday, there is an event planned at the Coolidge Theater that day. Center Communities has offered to share their van for transportation from BSC. The tickets to the event are free. Interested seniors should

contact Julie for tickets. In answer to a question, Ruthann said that while we are a cooling and heating location, we are not an emergency center like the police department or housing buildings. Seniors are welcome to come for heat or cooling during our normal hours of operation.

- *New Quilt:* Ruthann asked everyone to please see the new quilt just finished by the BSC quilting team. It is magnificent and hanging in the 1st floor lounge. Tickets for the quilt raffle will be on sale soon.
- *Snow Days:* While we do not want to think about snow, Ruthann reminded us that while it has not snowed yet, it was not until the end of the January last year before the real snow hit. She said that the best way to find out if the BSC is open and/or certain programs such as lunch and the van are cancelled is to call the BSC's main line (617 730 2770). Information is updated as soon as changes are made. Ruthann urged everyone to always think of their safety first before venturing out in bad weather.

Program Updates:

Upcoming events mentioned –

- **Chinese New Year lunch** – February 1st – tickets will go on sale on Tuesday, January 19th
- **Advanced Care Planning:** Monday January 25th @ 1.
- **Aging Alone:** a new group for seniors without children
- **AARP Tax Preparation Assistance:** Appointments will start being taken on January 19th for slots starting February 1st.
- **Ukulele and other music groups:** two new groups are starting this month

- *Update on Food Commodity Program:* Nancy Lee is the new Program Coordinator; we have three Brookline sites – BSC, 50 Pleasant Street and 61 Park Street; the State no longer requires showing proof of income; we will be doing more outreach as we now have 90 slots and some approved seniors have decided not to take the food for various reasons.
- *Mike Dukakis's Turkey Soup:* The turkey soup was enjoyed by many here at the BSC on December 23rd. A big thanks to Michael and Kitty for their generous and tasty treat.
- *Open Door Soup Kitchen:* Ruthann asked Patricia to read a thank you letter from the Open Door Soup Kitchen for our collected donations of mittens, scarves and hats and for our on-going support.
- *Jennifer Lynch Donation:* The BSC collected another \$250 to combine with the \$250 from the craft fair to total \$500 for the Jennifer Lynch Domestic Abuse Program.
- *Our next COA meeting will be on February 10, 2016:* However, this is not a formal meeting. It is the orientation meeting for new and existing board members. COA is looking for more interested members for the board.

Mrs. Rogers asked for a motion to adjourn at 2:01pm. The motion was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia Burns