

**Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING Meeting  
October 5, 2016**

**Present:** COA Members: Agnes Rogers, Yolanda Rodriguez, John Mulhane, Peter Ames, Roberta Winitzer, Barbara Kean, Nancy Daly, Helen Lew, Sherry Lee, Judith Chasin, Rita d'Entremont, Vera Sharma, Doris Toby Axelrod and William Wong. Staff: Ruthann Dobek, Julie Washburn, Dotty Bell, Maureen Deery and Patricia Burns. Public: Clara Chin, Carol Fullerton, Martha Schieve, Susan Granoff, Henry Winkelman, Roger Blood, Conrad Montero, Monique Richardson, Faith Sudbury, and others.

**Call to Order:** Roberta Winitzer, the new Chair of the COA, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

**Move to Accept Minutes of June and September:** It was moved to accept the minutes of the June and September meetings.

**Introduction of Guest Speakers:** Roberta introduced the guest speakers for today:  
**Susan Granoff, Henry Winkelman and Roger Blood**

**Topic: Discussion of New Warrant Articles 33 & 34**

**Susan Granoff** was the 1<sup>st</sup> speaker. She thanked the COA for giving her the opportunity to explain Warrant 33. She said that there is a resolution to ask the Board of Selectmen to create a special committee to look at options for property tax assistance for seniors with modest incomes. It is hoped that the results of the committee could be brought before the Town Meeting by November 2017.

Susan then gave the reasons for needing the committee and the additional tax assistance. Primarily, the reason is over rides. We have recently had one for the renovation of the Devotion School and are likely to have more in the next 5 years for the expansion of the Brookline High School, the building of the 9<sup>th</sup> elementary school and renovations to other schools. Also, the burden for seniors who can't qualify for Circuit Breaker assistance under the MA eligibility guidelines of <\$57,000 for a single person and <\$83,000 for a couple. She explained that property value is keyed to the state-wide average, which has decreased over the past years while the Brookline property values have increased. The statewide guide does not keep up with allowable assets other than the primary home either. These limits are \$43,000-\$53,000 including retirement funds and 401ks.

Susan said that other towns have other options that the committee should explore. For example, Sudbury in 2012 got qualifying based on a town-wide average for income and the allowable assets are up to \$850,000, both of which better reflect their population. Sudbury started with 112 participants the 1<sup>st</sup> year and then increased to 124 the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Sudbury held a town-wide vote and got approval for these changes.

Newton has a tax deferment program. While Brookline also has one for seniors wanting to stay in their homes, but unable to pay ever increasing taxes, Brookline's interest rate is 5% and Newton's is a more affordable 0.75% that is scheduled to increase to 1% soon.

Susan stressed that seniors are often embarrassed to talk about not being able to afford their homes so it is even more important to establish a committee to look at all possible policy proposals.

Q: Will the committee be open to groups of seniors who are working to come up with their own proposed options?

A. Susan said a definite yes, that the committee will want input from seniors. Ruthann added that it wants new ideas and not just what other towns are already doing. Nancy Daly added that we should request that the committee present its findings to the Selectmen's Committee. Roberta Winitzer added that the selectmen want to support the community so it is appropriate for us to be involved in discussions about warrants. Ruthann agreed that we would invite the study committee to come to a COA meeting. It was also suggested that perhaps one of their meetings could be held here at the BSC to make it easier for our seniors to attend. We were also urged to contact our Town Meeting members with important issues. Nancy said that the contact information for Town Meeting members is on the Town website. Ruthann added that we have printed booklets here at the BSC with this information as well. The following Town Meeting members who were in the room included: Susan Granoff, John Mulhane, Roger Blood and Nancy Daly. It was also noted that BCAN unanimously approved the passing of the warrant. Nancy said that we could not vote on the warrants as the vote was not listed on the agenda. A straw vote was allowed to get a sense of the support. The straw vote showed support by the majority of those present.

**Henry Winkelman & Roger Blood, Chair of Town Housing Advisory Board:** Henry and Roger spoke about the need for support for the resolution of Warrant 34. This warrant requests that the Board of Selectmen and Housing & Planning Departments support the addition of Senior Housing in the Northern half of Brookline. Henry said that with Baby Boomers retiring there is a tidal wave of new senior retirees. He noted that the Advisory Committee did not approve the original wording of the warrant indicating only the Brookline Village site and asked that the wording be changed to 'the Northern Half of the Town'. There will be a public hearing tomorrow evening at the Town Hall. A straw vote indicated full support of the Kent Street site. Roger said that a study was done with public input and the recommendation was to build over municipal parking lots. The Kent St. and Station St. lot was deemed suitable. He said that the logical next step would be to go to Town Meeting and to ask the Selectmen, Housing & Planning Departments to move forward.

Q: Why is this only proposed for North Brookline? Aren't there any municipal parking lots in South Brookline?

A. The answer was, no. There are no municipal parking lots in South Brookline. Also, two other criteria for the sites are walkability to shops and proximity to public transportation. Nancy added that this needs to be a 'Friendly 40B'. A regular 40B has only 20% affordable units and 80% luxury units. A 'Friendly 40B' has 100%

affordable units at various pay ranges. Roger confirmed that the public parking would remain as such with the building of the units above the lot. When asked where tenants would park, Roger said that there would be parking for tenants below the municipal parking lot so tenants' parking would not impact available spaces for other non-residents. Henry said that there are still some concerns from neighbors. He also said that a Strategic Asset Plan had not yet been started.

Q: How will this new building differ from the current 5 Public Housing buildings in Brookline?

A. The difference is that this would be private. It would then be able to have a wider range of affordability.

Q: How can a private developer afford to build for low to moderate income seniors?

A. The Town has funds for such programs and this developer is familiar with the Federal Tax Credit System. Roger said that we will need to look for outside investors. Multiple sources are needed – state, local and investors.

Roberta asked if we could do a straw vote. While there seemed to be agreement, some said they needed more time to look at the complete warrant and perhaps go to a public meeting before casting a ballot. Ruthann said that this is just the beginning, education part of the process as many people are not yet feeling fully informed.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Springwell** – Yolanda spoke about the new Family Caregiver Support Services. Like our Caregiver Support Program, both hope to prevent caregiver burnout. The Springwell program, unlike our Caregivers' Support Program for Alzheimer's, gives support for any family caregiver of someone with a disability including grandparents taking care of grandchildren. The process starts with an interview with Molly Saldo who can then design a program that is flexible and dependent on the individual's need. This can include organizational assistance, training, support, meditation techniques as well as respite time. Another important resource is the Springwell Caregiver Notebook covering many topics such as care, finance, call logs and locations of important documents. Yolanda said that this is funded by Title 3E, the Older Americans Act and therefore is more stable than a grant. Each caregiver would be able to receive \$500/year in services. Yolanda said this supports the Five Wishes Program. The program will be available in the same 8 towns that Springwell serves. Vera Sharma also mentioned that the Brookline Housing Authority is involved in the program. It was suggested that we have Springwell (Molly Saldo) come to the COA meeting in the spring to report on the program which has not yet been means tested.

**Nominating Committee** – Ruthann reported that she is finalizing a letter for reappointments of COA members. She also introduced Clara Chin who is being recommended for inclusion in the COA Board. Ruthann then took the opportunity to congratulate Clara as the Team Leader of the very successful BSC Alzheimer's Walk effort. This year we had 13 walkers and raised a whopping \$2,023. We are all hopeful that our donations will help find a cure for this terrible disease. Ruthann said that we would still gladly accept donations if anyone had not had the opportunity to donate before the walk. Ruthann also said that there are still places on the Board and those that are interested should apply.

**Budget Committee** – Nancy Daly said that the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, an open meeting, will be held on Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. The next meeting with Town administrators will be on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> @ 10 am.

### **Director's Report:**

**Ralph's Retirement Party** last Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. It was enjoyed by all who attended. Elvis was wonderful! Ruthann noted that she has applied and received permission to fill his position. Jimmy Tong has moved inside just in time to avoid the winter weather. Ruthann has started the process to get permission to hire a replacement driver.

**CDBG Grants 2017** – Ruthann noted that these are Federal Community Development Block Grants. The 1<sup>st</sup> is for the BETS taxi discount coupons that are available to income eligible people 60 and over, but it has been requested to expand to include disabled people of any age soon. The 2<sup>nd</sup> is a program for low to moderate income seniors that allows them to work. The Town has been informed that HUD guidelines do not allow seniors to continue in the program without finding outside jobs. The application will be amended to fit these guidelines.

**Grant for Low Vision Computer Assistance:** This is a grant thru the Commission for the Blind, the MA Association for the Blind and MA Council on Aging. The Brookline COA was chosen to receive specialized equipment for the computer lab, a trainer and training and technology to assist low vision seniors. A winter 2017 rollout is expected.

**Age Friendly Program:** Roberta urged interested attendees at the meeting to watch a show on Wednesday at 7pm either on BCAN (BIG) local TV or Youtube. Neil Wishinshy, Chair of the Selectmen will be talking about the Age Friendly Programs.

Also Newton has now become an Age Friendly town. Ruthann and Roberta attended their recent meeting and presented our program and listened to theirs. The aims of both are based on advocacy and passion. Their model is the AARP model which is more formal than ours. Brookline's model is more open and less formal. Ruthann noted that Newton is now also facing a serious elderly housing crisis. It was suggested that we invite the Newton group to a Brookline COA meeting.

### **Program Updates:**

**Craft Fair: November 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>.** Julie reported that this year we have 13-14 crafters as well as raffles, baked goods and the white elephant. Ruthann urged everyone to start their holiday shopping early... at the Craft Fair.

**TRIPPS Challenge:** Ruthann announced that Kerri Ann is promoting TRIPPS Challenges – challenging seniors to use a new means of transportation. Participants will be entered into a raffle and will be interviewed after to tell their story. Barbara Kean is conducting a group challenge on October 21<sup>st</sup> using the T to go to Copley Square, the Public Library, the Farmers' Market and perhaps either Trinity Church or Old South Church.

**Reel In The Closet:** This exclusive public screening on October 19<sup>th</sup> at the Coolidge Corner Theater is a feature-length documentary that lets us connect with LGBTQ people from the past through the rare home movies that they left for us. The BSC has a few free tickets left.

**Autumn Benefit:** October 26<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

**Nancy Daly Report on the Brookline New School:** Nancy indicated that the site selection is expected to be voted on at a meeting with the School Committee at the High School on October 13<sup>th</sup>. She said that there are still some questions so perhaps final site selection may not be voted on that evening.

**Dancing With The Stars:** This year Betsy Pollack will be dancing for the COA. She will be raising funds for increased transportation options for seniors. Ruthann said that there are many wonderful raffle prizes that have been donated - \$300 in gas and auto repairs, gift certificates to some very pricey restaurants, and a weekend at the Marriot Hotel to name a few. She urged us all to buy our raffle tickets. The tickets will be pulled at the Autumn Benefit. You do not need to be present to win a prize although all are encouraged to attend if possible.

**New Parking Meter Rates:** Brookline parking meters have gone up from \$1/hour to \$1.25/hour. They are now the same as Boston. Only quarters are accepted except in areas that have new meters that accept credit cards. There is also a Smart Phone app coming. Ruthann urged those present to tell their friends who may not have seen the increase so they can avoid getting a ticket. As an aside, exploring driving alternatives with the TRIPPS program would alleviate the need for paying parking at all.

**Election Day:** Since the BSC is a voting station and voting for the national election historically brings huge numbers of voters to the Center, some of our usual Tuesday programs will not be held on that day. Ruthann also noted that this year Brookline residents can vote early. She urged interested seniors to check the TAB this week for the dates and sites where early voting will happen. She also said that Evelyn Roll, a COA honorary member said, 'Voting is the most important thing a citizen can do', so get out and vote.

**Happy Birthday:** Ruthann announced that our COA Chair Emeritus, Agnes Rogers will be having a birthday on October 15<sup>th</sup>. She will be 97 years old. All wished her a happy birthday. Ruthann said that we are already planning her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Mrs. Rogers said she would be there!

**Handouts:** Roberta urged everyone to pick up the handouts on the back table that give in-depth information about the warrants and other issues discussed.

*Our next regular COA meeting will be on November 9th, 2016. The topic will be the new electricity proposal. This topic is both complicated and important. There will also be a public forum on October 24<sup>th</sup>. How this proposed program will help with global warming will be discussed.*

Roberta asked for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned at 2:05. It was so moved.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia Burns

**Attachments:**

What You Need To Know About Warrant Article 33

Warrant Article #34

Springwell Family Caregiver Support Services

## **What You Need to Know About Warrant Article 33**

Warrant Article 33 (which was submitted by a member of Brookline CAN's Advocacy Committee) asks the Town of Brookline to create a special committee to study how other Massachusetts communities are providing property tax relief for senior homeowners with modest incomes and to propose comparable new and improved programs for Brookline seniors to the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting.

### **Why is a committee to study property tax relief for Brookline senior homeowners needed now?**

- Brookline homeowners ages 65 and older with modest incomes (about \$57,000 or below for an individual taxpayer) are facing a rapidly growing property tax burden due to recent and likely future tax overrides intended to finance the school construction needs of Brookline's growing school population.
- At the same time, many Brookline senior homeowners with modest incomes no longer qualify for the Massachusetts Circuit Breaker (CB) Income Tax Credit that they once qualified for, or would have qualified for, in the past – no matter how low their current income is. That is because the home property value qualifier cut-off point for the CB Credit, which is based on a state-wide average, has been decreasing during the past 7 years while Brookline's residential real estate values have been increasing by about 5%-10% a year. In 2008, the CB property value qualifier maximum was \$793,000. In 2014, it was \$691,000.
- Hundreds of senior homeowners are already struggling with paying Brookline's rising property taxes, and their problems will only get worse in the future. Many purchased their homes or condos decades ago, when they were employed full-time and their incomes were much higher (and Brookline property taxes were much lower). They love Brookline and the neighborhoods where they live and don't want to sell the homes they love and in which they have lived for decades.
- Other Massachusetts communities, like Sudbury and Newton, currently offer innovative, wider-reaching, and more generous programs to their senior homeowners with modest incomes than Brookline does.

It is time for Brookline to act now to establish a committee to study this problem rationally, to learn from the experiences of other Massachusetts communities, and to make concrete policy recommendations (including proposed warrant articles) for additional property tax relief to struggling senior homeowners with modest incomes.

**Please contact the Town Meeting Members in your precinct  
and urge them to support WA 33.**

Questions? Contact petitioner: [susangranoff@msn.com](mailto:susangranoff@msn.com)

Warrant Article # 34

November, 2016 Town Meeting

**Resolution in Support of Affordable Senior Housing Development  
Using Air Rights over Town-Owned Parking Lot in Brookline Village**

Petitioners:

Henry T. Winkelman  
1724 Beacon Street  
[htwink@me.com](mailto:htwink@me.com)  
617-413-1112

Kenneth Goldstein  
111 Holland Road  
[kgoldstein@brooklinelaw.com](mailto:kgoldstein@brooklinelaw.com)  
617-739-0400

TO SEE IF THE TOWN WILL ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

*Whereas*, the Town of Brookline has committed to taking meaningful actions toward becoming a more age-friendly community;

*Whereas*, the aging of the baby boom population cohort has created a need for a substantial expansion of Brookline's supply of housing for seniors;

*Whereas*, Brookline's need for more affordable housing for seniors with low and moderate incomes is already acute;

*Whereas*, senior citizens benefit from living within walking distance of public transit, services, shopping, and cultural resources;

*Whereas*, Brookline Village is a pedestrian friendly location that meets the living needs of seniors, including those who do not own an automobile;

*Whereas*, the Town's municipally-owned parking lots offer an opportunity for attractive air rights development of senior housing, including for low and moderate income households; and

*Whereas*, the public process leading to the Town's Housing Production Plan identified Town-owned municipal parking lots, including the Town-owned site situated between Station and Kent Streets in Brookline Village as a suitable location for affordable senior housing development;

*THEREFORE*, be it resolved, that Town Meeting urges the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board and the Housing Advisory Board to pursue a suitable air rights development of age-restricted affordable, mixed-income housing over the existing Town-owned parking lot in Brookline Village situated between Kent and Station Streets across from the Brookline Village MBTA station (Parcel No. 140-05-00);

And act on anything relative thereto.



## FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES

*A service to support friends and family members who provide care to seniors and individuals with disabilities.*

### Information & Referrals

Information Specialists are ready to answer your questions and help you find the support you need. This *free* service provides referrals to resources and community programs, information on issues of aging, and options for long term care.

### Lending Library

Borrow a book or video at *no charge*. Subjects include family caregiving, long term care planning, financial issues, Alzheimer's disease, family relationships, bereavement, and more. Stop in or call and we will be happy to make a suggestion.

### Training and Support for Family Caregivers

Do you need practical suggestions on coping with changes in your loved one due to Alzheimer's disease? Would you like advice on adapting an elder's home for safety and independence? We provide one-on-one training on these and other issues to enhance your ability to care for your loved one. *No charge* for this service!

### Caregiver Consultations and In-Home Assessments

Our Caregiver Advisor Molly Saldo is available for family meetings to address their concerns and challenges for caregiving. She will assess the elder's needs, suggest resource options, and provide follow-up assistance. *A free service!*

### Planning and Organization

Caregiver Advisor Molly Saldo can advise caregivers and provide tools for planning and organizing care for a loved one. The Caregiver Notebook is a tool created by Springwell for caregivers to have a central place to record and document the important aspects of care. As the Notebook is intended to be comprehensive, it is recommended that the caregiver meet with Molly as she can act as a guide to personalize this tool to fit the caregiver's needs.

To make a referral or to learn more about the Springwell Family Caregiver Program, call the Information and Referral Department at 617-926-4100.

[inforef@springwell.com](mailto:inforef@springwell.com)

Funding for this program is provided in part by the Administration on Aging under Title III-E of the Older Americans Act through the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.