

**Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING Meeting
JANUARY 8, 2020**

PRESENT: COA Members: Yolanda Rodriguez, William Wong, Phil Fullerton, Jean Doherty, Rita d'Entremont, Pat Ahlin, Roberta Winitzer, John Mulhane, Helen Lew, Martha Schieve, Nancy Heller, Barbara Scotto, Barbara Kean, Marcia Goldstein, Fran Perler, Clara Chin, Mimi O'Connor, Sherry Lee **Staff:** Ruthann Dobek, Jessica Milley-Gee, Serena Johnson, Patricia Burns, Joshua Cooke (BrooklineREC) **Public:** Joyce Wishnick, Almas Dossa, Carol Fullerton, Allen Greenberg, Ellen Zellner, Lorraine Bossi, Akemi Minami, Claire Slater, Joseph Canavan, Sheriff Jerry P. McDermott, Monique Richardson

WELCOME: Yolanda Rodriguez, COA Chair, welcomed everyone, wished them a Happy New Year and thanked them for attending the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER: Yolanda called the meeting to order at 1:05pm

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 11th MEETING: A motion was passed and seconded to accept the minutes of the December 11th meeting. No changes or comments were offered. It was unanimously voted to accept these minutes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Nominating Committee – No report today.

Springwell Report – Yolanda revealed that Springwell's first meeting since November will be held on Thursday, January 9, 2020, and that Springwell has hired a new Associate Director of Community Service that will be working on the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) contract.

Recreation Committee Report – Fran Perler stated that the Recreation Department Committee had a successful year in 2019 with a goal of creating more programs for seniors. This goal was accomplished through various means including a newfound partnership with Brookline Recreation Leader Josh Cooke. The Committee now meets quarterly. Frank d'Entremont is the committee co-chair representing the older senior demographic. At the most recent meeting, the Committee discussed desired Spring/ Summer 2020 programs including a trip to the Newport Flower Show, and walking groups for both "easy" and "moderate" walkers.

Fran made a plea for Brookline seniors to be ambassadors to the Recreation Department by ensuring that seniors programs are filled. Fran asked for ideas and suggestions for future activities and trips that Brookline seniors would like to see advertised.

Fran reiterated that Pickleball will be held on the 3rd floor of the Senior Center at 2:30pm for those interested in learning and/or watching the game. Those that are interested in adding their names to the roster of Recreation Committee members were asked to email Fran at franpix15@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION: Yolanda introduced the guest speaker: Norfolk County Sheriff Jerry P. McDermott

TOPIC: Meet and Greet with Sheriff McDermott

Sheriff McDermott thanked the Council for the invitation to speak. Sheriff McDermott was appointed in December of 2018 by Governor Charlie Baker, when former Sheriff Michael Bellotti became the president of Quincy College. Baker appointed McDermott to tackle the issue of mental illness and addiction among Norfolk county inmates at the jail in Dedham.

McDermott revealed that 80% of inmates suffer from mental illness and addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, and that the aim is now to assess, provide treatment and continued resources to these individuals. McDermott detailed the effects of the opioid crisis on a broad spectrum of individuals (most specifically those with an unaddressed/ inadequately addressed mental health issue), and its contribution to a rise in drug-related crime.

McDermott explained the need to use a window of opportunity to help those serving time recover from drug addiction and to provide the necessary tools and services that will lower the risk of reoffending. Those coming into the jail are triaged, given a classification, assessed by medical and behavioral health teams, and placed in rehabilitative programs. There is clergy present at the jail—two rabbis, two Catholic priests, Protestant Reverends, an imam, and a non-denominational spiritual leader.

McDermott detailed the different levels of the US prison system (County Jail, State Department of Corrections, and Federal Penitentiary), and explained that those serving time at the county level will serve a sentence of 2.5 years maximum. There is a larger focus on placing individuals in rehabilitative programs through the court system rather than imprisoning them for drug-related offenses.

McDermott revealed that the cost of housing an inmate at the county level for one year is \$70,000. The ultimate goal of the staff at the Norfolk County jail is to help inmates achieve sobriety, and maintain success when reentering society. Individuals serving longer sentences in the county jail are given a greater chance of rehabilitation, the opportunity to further their education, and to develop valuable skill sets for reentry into society. Those serving shorter sentences are assessed and enter a “continuum of care” with outside providers, access to jobs and housing, and health insurance coverage.

Individuals with a dual diagnosis (mental health issues plus addiction) comprise approximately 70-80% of the inmate population, while the other group is comprised of U.S. Marshall detainees from the Latin Kings gang.

McDermott explained that the county jail is currently undergoing facility renovations to house and better accommodate female offenders. Many female offenders have lived lives of abuse and victimization and are being offered therapy (including canine and equine therapy).

McDermott presented a deck of cards developed by the Norfolk Country Sheriff’s Office that

have missing persons, unsolved crimes, and serious offenders printed on them. These cards are distributed to inmates in the hope of obtaining actionable tips. Actionable tips are also obtained through recorded lines.

Q&A

Question: *What data is used to measure success within the Office?*

McDermott: State legislature has recently mandated a “medication-assisted treatment program” that required drug-addicted inmates to be treated with medication while in the care of custody so as to reduce the risk of fatal overdose when released. As an example of evidence-based programming, it is mandated that these individuals are tracked for 12 months following release to gauge success. Recidivism rates are currently in the 40th percentile.

Question: *Does the Office work with MA Rehab?*

McDermott: There are many service providers out there, both non-profit and for-profit. Even so, there is a shortage of beds to meet the growing need. At least 90 days of intense psychiatric counseling is recommended for the best chance of success, though insurance companies typically do not cover more than the first few days of treatment. There needs to be a demand for mental health to be on the same level, both societally and legislatively, as medical. This country has a major lack of mental health providers pairing with individuals in need.

In a movement to mainstream rather than “warehouse” people with mental health needs, many of the state-run mental health hospitals were closed under the Dukakis administration. With the advancement of surveillance technology, there may be grounds to revisit the possibility of alternate state-funded facilities to help combat the great need for mental health services in MA. An individual should not have to go to jail to get psychiatric help.

Questions: *What about organizations like Rosie’s Place?*

McDermott: Rosie’s Place is a great organization. Sometimes it takes street-workers to go out and convince individuals to enter a shelter. You cannot force an individual against their will, and it can be a challenge to determine whether an individual is making an informed decision regarding their best interests.

Question: *Are there any other countries that have successfully dealt (through their culture or otherwise) with mental illness that can be used as a model?*

McDermott: There is something called the Mass Sheriff’s Association and the National Sheriff’s Association that meet monthly, and there are annual conferences where best practices in the USA and in other countries are examined. Europe is way ahead of [the US] in thinking about best practices as they relate to mental health. The reexamination of practices is much-needed, especially with regard to female offenders and the management of their mental health needs.

McDermott revealed that a Norfolk county task force has been created to address juvenile mental

health and substance abuse with representatives from each of the 28 towns. A great need persists in this area, especially in school settings.

McDermott said that there exists a specific need for mental health resources for first responders and corrections officers. A new facility in Canton, MA will have a floor dedicated just to police, fire personnel, and first responders. Corrections officers in particular have a suicide rate twice as high as the general population—higher than any other profession—and a life expectancy rate 10 years below the general population.

Question: *Are there many older inmates?*

McDermott: There are some individuals that have been in and out of the jail for decades, though the majority of inmates are under 30, and the driver of this statistic is the opioid epidemic.

Question: *How is input provided to the State, and to the people who are making policy decisions? How successful are you in bringing together people of all disciplines on these matters to make decisions?*

McDermott: The House of Representatives and the Senate hold the purse strings. “Legislative Breakfasts” for the Norfolk County delegation are held during which representatives receive a tour of the facility, and are shown what it means for the jail to implement laws that are passed, and what hurdles they must overcome. Sheriffs are underfunded approximately \$3 million per year, but the Norfolk County has a positive, collaborative relationship with Governor Baker and things are moving forward.

The jail was just awarded a \$9000 music foundation grant from Ernie Boch Jr. to be used toward music therapy.

Report from the Director: Ruthann Dobek

1. Fitness Equipment: The Fitness Center is in need of new/ updated equipment. A fundraising letter has gone out, and donations have been received, but alternative funding resources are welcome.

2. Staff Updates: Permission to hire a new van driver was granted by the Select Board. In the meantime, individuals should continue to leave their contact information and pick-up requests on the van reservation line at 617-277-2750 to be triaged.

3. Thank You to the Elks: Thank you to the Elks for hosting a wonderful holiday dinner, for the donation of the annual holiday tree, and for their ongoing support of the Senior Center.

4. FY19 Grants: 70% of Senior Center funding comes from the Town of Brookline, and the remainder is dependent on grants. See handout for a breakdown of grants received in FY19.

5. Program Updates:

- A. Long-Term Care Insurance Program- Thursday, January 9th at 1:00 PM
- B. *Brookline, Facing Civil Rights* -Coolidge Corner Theater, January 9th a 7:00 PM
- C. Chinese New Year- special tribute to Claire Yung, Monday, January 13th at 12:00 PM
- D. Racism as a Public Health Issue Jan 13th 6-8 PM; Ridley School
- E. Brookline's MLK Celebration, January 20th at 3:00PM- Coolidge Corner Theater

7. BETS Update: The Lyft pilot program is ongoing- Maria Foster has enrolled 35 individuals with smartphones, and they receive 4 Lyft coupons per month. Contact Maria if interested in enrolling at 617-730-2644. Ruthann and Maria will be attending a transportation meeting January 27th to give an update and talk about the future of the cab industry.

8. Affordable Housing Cohilitation: The Town of Brookline has started an Affordable Housing Stakeholders Cohilitation, and will be organizing a Town-Wide Affordable Housing Educational Forum before the May Town Meeting.

9. Snow Policy: The Senior Center is only officially closed when the Town Administrator closes the building. Programs may be cancelled, however, due to inclement weather. The best way to receive up-to-date information on cancellations and/or closures is to call one of the main phone lines.

10. No February Meeting: A reminder that there is historically no meeting in February.

Pedestrian Lighting Committee Report: Jean Doherty

Jean said that the Committee meets for two hours monthly. Jean showed an example of the many lighting options that are discussed by the Committee. Most plans are still in the discussion phase, and Jean will provide updates as warranted.

Report from the Select Board: Nancy Heller

Nancy relayed that the Select Board had some intense Town Meeting sessions. Some of the most relevant topics to the COA were:

- By-Law proposition WA21: Prohibition on New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure in Major Construction, which is in the review stage by the Attorney General.
- The Newbury Zoning Committee has divided the former Newbury College campus into three usable parcels. The east parcel will be the location of an independent & assisted living senior housing and memory care development, and the Town is still hoping to purchase the west parcel. The third parcel will be affordable housing, as required of the east parcel developer by the Town's Inclusionary By-Law. Location and other specifics are still undetermined.
- A Census Committee has recently been established with the goal of being able to capture everyone via the census, including immigrants, the elderly, and homeless.

Report from School Committee: Barbara Scotto–

Barbara spoke on a number of topics related to the School Committee. Some of the most relevant topics to the COA were:

- Barbara said that the Driscoll School override passed, and the Committee will be moving forward on that project.
- There is still much discussion on what will happen with the Pierce School, and what will happen to the rented Pierce building in the next schoolyear. The MSBA will pay for 30% of the project.
- The Town has created a Superintendent Search Committee and is hosting focus groups that are open to the public to assist with the search for a new Superintendent of Schools (see website for details).

Old Business/ New Business:

Nancy Heller urged everyone to sign up for the Brookline Green Electricity Program, and detailed the four tiers of opting in.

HANDOUTS

- A. E-scooter CNN article (repeat handout)
- B. Robert Weisman Globe article (repeat handout)
- C. Senate & House E-scooter contacts (repeat handout)
- D. Grants & Non-profits FY19
- E. Free MBTA Bus Editorials
- F. *Are You OK?* Program Flyer- Sponsored by Norfolk County Sheriff
- G. Misc. Scam Alert Flyers- Sponsored by Federal Trade Commission

Our next regular meeting will be **Wednesday, March 11th, 2020 at 1:00pm.**

Yolanda asked for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned at 2:22pm. It was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Milley-Gee