

Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING Hybrid Meeting

JANUARY 11, 2023 - 1:00 PM

via Zoom and in-person at Senior Center Room 304

PRESENT: ZOOM: COA Members: Yolanda Rodriguez, Rina Jacobson, Jean Doherty, Toby Axlerod, Soo Moy, Enid Leiber, Clara Chin, William Wong **Staff:** Jessica Milley-Gee, Julie Washburn, Freddi Langenthal **Public:** Perry Grossman, Emma Staff

SENIOR CENTER ROOM 304: COA Members: Sherry Lee, Fran Perler, Helen Lew, Marcia Goldstein, Monique Richardson, Jenny Chan, Joyce Wishnick, Judith Chasin, Joanne Katz, John Mulhane **Public:** Claire Weston, Paul Warren, Akemi Minami **Staff:** Ruthann Dobek, Jamie Jensen, Michael Weston, Maria Foster, Barbara Rabinovitz, Kristine Farley, Sharon Sandalow, Katie McClean, Annie Braudy and others

WELCOME: Yolanda Rodriguez, COA Chair, welcomed everyone and expressed thanks for attending the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER: Yolanda called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM

ROLL CALL OF ATTENDEES: Jamie Jensen read the names of those in attendance as of 1:04 PM (see above list of attendees)

OPEN DISCUSSION: Yolanda opened the meeting to participant discussion and topics not included on the agenda. Yolanda introduced Perry Grossman (TMM 5, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Safe Routes to School Task Force), who spoke to the following main points on the topic of “micromobility”:

- A review of regulations revealed that micromobility devices such as skateboards, scooters, roller skates, in-line skates, etc. are currently illegal to operate in any “public way” in Brookline
- Former Brookline Transportation Administrator Todd Kirrane expressed in a Memo (*SEE ATTACHMENT A.*) that the above regulations were outdated, not fitting with best practices in other communities, and in need of revision
- Todd Kirrane’s proposed rule involves permitting micromobility devices on public ways, but “no person over the age of 12 shall ride a micromobility device on any sidewalk in any business district as defined by Article I of these traffic rules and regulations.”
- Perry is conducting outreach, and the topic of micromobility in Brookline will be discussed within various groups, boards, and committees in the coming weeks.

Perry welcomed questions and commentary from meeting participants.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: A motion passed to accept the minutes of the December 14, 2022 hybrid meeting. Minutes were accepted by unanimous vote.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Nominating Report—Yolanda Rodriguez

Yolanda reported that Ben Kaufman received a list of Council on Aging members. Kaufman has offered to assist in swearing in those members of the Council on Aging that still need to confirm or renew their appointments to the Board, possibly in-person at the Senior Center.

B. Springwell Report- no official report today. Judy Chasin mentioned that Springwell is still seeking to hire staff.

C. Recreation Report

Fran Perler reported that the Senior Center is hosting monthly Pickleball sessions, which are currently fully booked, and that there are monthly nature walks with the Recreation Department. Those interested in more information or would like to register can visit the Recreation Department website under Active Older Adults: <https://www.brooklinerec.com/245/Health-Wellness>

Ruthann reported that, according to Leigh Jackson, Recreation Department staff Josh Cooke will be able to concentrate more specifically on active adult recreation activities going forward.

D. Redesign Report—no report today

REPORT FROM SELECT BOARD – John VanScoyoc

John not present at meeting.

Ruthann reported that at the January 10, 2023 Special Town Meeting, Select Board Chair Heather Hamilton announced their resignation effective February 1, 2023. Additionally at this Special Town Meeting, a Warrant Article passed that will provide mailed information on Town ballot questions to all registered voters ahead of an election.

Paul Warren (TMM 1) added that a second, “stretch code” Warrant Article passed at Special Town Meeting that incentivizes new buildings to be more electric.

Emma Staff, Legislative Aide to Representative Tommy Vitolo’s office spoke to a Home Rule Petition related to the Means Tested Senior Property Tax Exemption just signed into law. The goal is to address the dilemma of older adult Brookline homeowners on fixed incomes unable to keep up with rising property taxes. Emma welcomed questions and comments, and provided contacts: Emma Staff: emma.staff@mahouse.gov Rep Tommy Vitolo: tommy.vitolo@mahouse.gov Rep Vitolo’s office phone number: 617-722-2220 ext 8408

REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE –Nancy Rhei Gorer

No report today- Nancy not present at meeting.

INTRODUCTION TO GUEST SPEAKER: Yolanda welcomed and introduced new Brookline Town Administrator Charles “Chas” Carey.

Chas thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak, and for the warm welcome received by the Town of Brookline over the past four months. Chas provided a brief personal background, noting that they had moved from a large city government role in New York City to the Town Administrator role in Brookline.

Chas welcomed and addressed questions and comments from participants on the topics of:

- Prioritizing rodent control in the main Town budget/ the role of Town government in controlling rodent infestations and maintaining solid waste regulations
- Requested salary increases for Council on Aging social work staff to be competitive and on par with comparable communities
- The Town’s methods of communication, its limitations, and ways to reach broader segments of Brookline residents
- Round Two of ARPA funding for Town departments and the broader community. The ARPA Committee has expressed its focus to be on underserved and under-reached communities—those most impacted by COVID-19 that have the fewest resources.

- Snow removal expectations in Brookline and the need to provide snow removal assistance to those residents without the physical capacity.

Chas spoke to the need to conduct meaningful community outreach to parts of the community where it is currently lacking, and the desire to address the need for a full-time Communications Manager in the next Town budget. The goal will be to engage with people most in need of Town services but do not have the knowledge of how to access them.

Chas extended an invitation for all to join a remote “Budget 101” presentation on January 31, 2023, which will address the topics of municipal budgeting, and Brookline’s initial budgetary outlook and “financial health,” and provided the following contact: ccarey@brooklinema.gov

Yolanda thanked Chas for presenting to the Council, and extended an invitation back at any time.

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR – Ruthann Dobek

1. SAD NEWS

Long-time Council on Aging Board Member and Senior Center volunteer and participant Phil Fullerton passed away earlier in the month. Deepest sympathies extended to Phil’s wife, Carol, and to the family.

Daily Senior Center participant and volunteer Eleanor Small passed away on January 9, 2023. Sympathies and condolences to Eleanor’s family.

2. STAFF UPDATES

Welcome to Leanne Cordischi, who was hired to the position of Communications Specialist at the Senior Center.

Welcome to Annie Braudy, who was hired as Tech Buddies Assistant with the popular Tech Buddies Program.

3. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Thank you to Brookline Police Department for warm items and gift cards donated to the Center
- Thank you to Grace Episcopal Church in Newton for running a collection and donating warm items to the Center. All warm items were distribute with much appreciation by the participants.
- Thank you to Brookline Bank for generously funding a new warming oven for the Senior Center.
- Toastmasters’ Toast with Friends group sent a kind thank you note in appreciation for being able to host their group at the Center on Wednesday evenings.
- Jamie Jensen read an excerpt from a thank you note from Roberta Miller:

“I am writing to you to let you know how much I appreciate you and your staff. Under your marvelous leadership the Senior Center has become the wonderful Center it is today. When people realize that I live in Brookline they reply, ‘You have a terrific Senior Center!’ Their reply makes me feel so proud. Thank you so much for your dedication and hard work.”

4. EMERGENCY AT 50 PLEASANT

On New Year’s Eve into New Year’s Day there was flooding at 50 Pleasant Street, and a number of residents were evacuated to the Hilton Garden Hotel. The Senior Center agreed to open as an emergency shelter if needed, though the need did not arise. The COA staff is now helping residents deal with the aftermath of the flood.

5. UPDATE ON AROUND TOWN SECTION OF NEWS & EVENTS

a. Brookline.News

Brookline is one of the many places experiencing a local news crisis. According to recent research from Northwestern University, “One-fifth of Americans live in a news desert or a community at risk of losing a credible source of local news, according to recent research. Count Brookline residents among them.” Ruthann reported on the outlet Brookline.News, and the “group of journalists and businesspeople [in Brookline]...working hard to found Brookline.News as an independent, non-profit outlet whose content will be free to all” (*SEE ATTACHMENT B.*)

6. FY24 BUDGET PROCESS

The Council on Aging submitted a “level services budget” to the Town for FY24. Budget meetings will occur in the coming months.

7. CONSTRUCTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT 108 CENTRE ST.

Construction is set to begin at the end of February 2023, with an anticipated completion at the end of 2024. Residents that typically walk through the rear of the building will be unable to do so, and access through the rear of the Senior Center will be limited. Access will continue through the 112 Centre patio area.

8. ARPA FUNDING

The COA is working to determine which requests it will submit in the second round of ARPA applications. Ruthann reiterated the vulnerability of the older adult population with regard to the impact of COVID-19: illness, isolation, social issues, food insecurity, etc.

9. TECH BUDDIES PROGRAM

- a. received \$20k award from Brookline Community Foundation
- b. Annie Braudy will be directing the program, and will be on site at the Senior Center on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
- c. A special thank you to Alex Krieger for service to the Tech Buddies Program, and for assisting in the transition to new Tech Buddies Assistant Annie Braudy.

10. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

- a. Medical transportation needs are returning to pre-COVID levels, and this is coupled with a lack of drivers in the industry.
- b. Anyone interested in learning more about transportation options for older adults should contact Maria Foster at mfoster@brooklinema.gov, or 617-730-2644

11. UPDATE ON VARIOUS PROJECTS

- a. Autumn Benefit No Gala 2022- as of Dec 7, has raised \$42,731.97
- b. Etsy – Brookline Bazaar as of 1/10/2023 has sold and shipped over 175 orders with a revenue of over \$8,300.
- c. Annual end-of year appeal was mailed

12. UPDATE ON PROGRAMS (Ruthann & Jamie)

The Center will once again offer The Police Academy (a pre-COVID program) beginning in March 2023.

Details and registration information on all upcoming Senior Center programs can be found in the monthly newsletter: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=37>

13. HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The Senior Center is closed MONDAY, JANUARY 16 in observation of Martin Luther King Jr. Day,

and on MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20 in observation of President's Day.

14. NO MEETING IN FEBRUARY. The next hybrid Council on Aging meeting will be on **Wednesday, March 8 at 1:00 PM**. The date of the April meeting has been changed due to Passover, and will now be on Wednesday, April 19 at 1:00 PM.

15. HANDOUTS

- a. Todd Kirrane Memo on micromobility (*ATTACHMENT A.*)
- b. Brookline.News (*ATTACHMENT B.*)

Ruthann wished all a happy, healthy, prosperous 2023.

CALL FOR OLD/ NEW BUSINESS

Yolanda made a call for any old or new business to be addressed. A question and two comments were addressed on the following topics:

- The Shovel Our Snow (SOS) free snow-shoveling program run by the Brookline Recreation Department. Those interested in the program were advised to call the department directly.
- Registration for the Senior Tax Aide Program starts on January 17. To register, call 617-730-2777.
- The Senior Center continues to distribute free COVID-19 test kits

Yolanda motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:13 PM. It was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Milley-Gee.