

Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING Hybrid Meeting

MARCH 8, 2023 - 1:00 PM

via Zoom and in-person at Senior Center Room 304

PRESENT: ZOOM: COA Members: Sigalle Reiss, Rina Jacobson, William Wong, Alberta Lipson, Soo Moy, Helen Liu, Claire Chin, Sherry Lee, Rosaline Lowe, Toby Axlerod **Staff:** Julie Washburn, Maria Foster, **Public:** Maria Morelli, Sarah Shelton, John Bowman, David Trevvett, Perry Grossman, Ellen Zellner, Akemi Minami, Lucille Tawa, Elizabeth, and other members of the public

SENIOR CENTER ROOM 304: COA Members: Yolanda Rodriguez, Sherry Lee, Fran Perler, Marcia Goldstein, John Mulhane, Jennie Chan, Judith Chasin, Joyce Wishnick, Enid Leiber, John VanScoyoc **Public:** John Harris, Richard Aarons, Myrna Balk, David Lescohier, Ivana Lescohier, Anne Greenwald, Leslie Friedman, and other members of the public **Staff:** Ruthann Dobek, Jamie Jensen, Freddi Langenthal, Sharon Sandalow, Barbara Rabinovitz, Katie McClean

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

CALL TO ORDER: Yolanda called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM

ROLL CALL OF ATTENDEES: Jamie Jensen and Julie Washburn read the names of those in attendance as of 1:03 PM (see above list of attendees)

OPEN DISCUSSION: Yolanda opened the meeting to participant discussion and topics not included on the agenda, which included:

- Yolanda asked if Brian Kane was in attendance- he was not. Yolanda then asked the public to respond to a request from the Transportation Board on transportation and micromobility in Brookline- specifically the proposed updating of a section of Brookline’s Traffic Rules and Regulations.
- Monique Richardson read a response to the proposed changes to Article IX regarding micromobility (See ATTACHMENT A.). This issue was brought before the Council on Aging at the January 2023 meeting during the public comment portion.
- Fran Perler raised the issue of requiring helmets for micromobility users, requiring rear lights on bicycles, and the issue of allowing micromobility use on sidewalks in residential areas
- Myrna Balk raised concern over the issue of speeding in Brookline
- Toby Axlerod spoke to the difficulty of enforcing laws related to modes of micromobility, Ellen Zellner reiterated this concern.
- John Harris (member, Livable Communities Advocacy Committee) presented the e-scooter, and spoke about positive response to the 6-month e-scooter pilot that Brookline implemented in 2019, the positive effects of increased scooter ridership on the climate crisis. John advocated for two separate, well-defined lanes—one for cars, the other for cyclists and other micromobility users, and that the sidewalk be designated for pedestrian use only.
- Leslie Freidman raised concern for the balance of seniors on two-wheeled e-scooters.
- David Trevvett reported on the current town rules and regulations allowing bicycle use on sidewalks outside of business districts. David distinguished between the results of the 2019 e-scooter pilot in Brookline, and the micromobility regulations in discussion.
- John Bowman raised concern about pedestrian safety on the sidewalks and in the crosswalks of Brookline, and noted the importance of micromobility devices in combatting the climate crisis. John urged the Transportation Board to work with the Dept. of Public Works to fund projects that provide places on Brookline streets for bicycles and other micromobility devices that are separate from pedestrians and other motor vehicles.

- A participant spoke to the need for a public safety campaign to educate the community on mobility issues, and on current micromobility regulations.
- Akemi Minami raised concern over the need for Brookline residents to remove snow from sidewalks.
- Sharon Sandalow spoke to the concern for children’s safety on Brookline sidewalks in addition to the town’s older adult population.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: Due to the lengthy public comment period, Yolanda postponed the vote to accept the minutes of the January 11, 2023 hybrid meeting.

INTRODUCTION TO GUEST SPEAKER: Yolanda welcomed and introduced Maria Morelli, AICP, Senior Planner for the Town of Brookline.

Maria thanked the Council for the invitation to speak and provided a brief personal background, noting that they work in the regulatory division of the Planning Department. Maria presented on the Harvard Street Study, supplemented by a slide presentation (see ATTACHMENT B). Main presentation points included:

- Massachusetts’ passing of the MBTA Communities Act, which requires that an MBTA community shall have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria set forth in the statute (minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, Located not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable, and no age restrictions and suitable for families with children).
- Request for participation in upcoming community workshops
- The end goal to increase housing supply in the community
- Issues arising from antiquated zoning laws in Brookline
- Form-based zoning as a solution to reinforce current building character while allowing for density
- Every community must do its part in solving the housing crisis

Maria stressed that there would be other opportunities to voice opinions on this important topic. Maria invited residents to reach out via phone, email, or to set up a meeting to discuss, ask questions or raise concerns. Maria opened to participant questions and comments, including:

- What reservations the community might have to the proposed zoning changes
- Concerns over the potential effect of zoning on the Stop and Shop site
- What is the role, if any, of Brookline By Design?
- Concern over lack of communication with Harvard Street neighbors over zoning meetings, perceived setbacks of “by right” zoning
- The prospect of increasing the allotted 15% for affordable housing, and how that can be achieved
- The risk of losing funding to benefit BHA by failing to comply with MBTA Communities Act

Maria clarified the definition of “as of right” zoning, meaning that a developer can get a permit because they comply with every regulation but in place by the Town.

Yolanda thanked Maria for an informative presentation, and extended an invitation to return to present at a future meeting.

REPORT FROM SELECT BOARD – John VanScoyoc

John reported on the following:

- The necessity of the Town to comply with the MBTA Communities Act, or risk losing major sources of funding and/ or being sued in Federal Court.

- The importance of the timeframe between the current time and November 2023, as there are many major moving parts within Town policy and politics.

REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE –Nancy Rhei Gorer

No report today- Nancy not present at meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Springwell Report- Judith Chasin

Judy Chasin reported that Springwell is still seeking to hire staff, and is impacted by the widespread labor shortage.

B. Nominating Report—Yolanda Rodriguez

Yolanda reported that COA member Paula Friedman has moved out of state, leaving a vacancy in the board to be filled.

C. Recreation Report

Fran Perler urged those interested to sign up for pickleball, and to reach out to Josh Cooke at the Recreation Department to request expanded opportunities for pickleball in Town. Two pickleball courts were painted in Coolidge Park.

Jamie Jensen reported on opportunities for older adults available through the Boomers and Beyond Travel Club, as well as the Recreation Department.

D. Redesign Report—no report today

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR – Ruthann Dobek

1. EVERSOURCE UTILITY BOX UPDATE

Eversource will contract with an artist to submit a design and paint the utility box directly outside of the Senior Center.

2. MARCH 13TH 2023 IS ANNIVERSARY OF CLOSURE DUE TO COVID

Ruthann reported on the great change and progress made in the three years since the first major closure due to COVID-19, and acknowledged the lingering trauma associated with COVID.

3. FY24 BUDGET PROCESS

- a. Budget review Advisory Subcommittee for COA met March 1
- b. Full Advisory meeting is March 9 at 7PM
- c. Select Board budget meeting for the COA is April 4. COA is submitting a level services budget for FY24 thanks to ARPA funding.

4. ARPA FUNDING

- a. ARPA round two application was submitted. COA has requested an additional \$50k in funding toward transportation and an electric vehicle. A third project would fund a collaboration with

FriendshipWorks and Brookline Housing Authority to add more volunteers to the BHA site.

5. TECH BUDDIES PROGRAM

The COA received \$20k award from Brookline Community Foundation to distribute tablets to low-income older adults. More tablets are available, and the eligibility for this program has been broadened. Annie Braudy will be directing the program- those interested should reach out for more information.

InCLUDE ANNIE CONTACT

6. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

COA is seeking community input and stakeholders on the prospect of filling a community-wide need through a transportation program modeled after Newton's city-sponsored rideshare service, NewMo.

7. VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT/ NEXT HYBRID COA MEETING – APRIL 19 at 12:30 PM

12:30 PM start time with entertainment followed by our Appreciation Award ceremony

8. CODE OF CONDUCT BROOKLINE (SEE ATTACHMENT C.)

Board members and volunteers please read and review.

Yolanda motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:46 PM. It was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Milley-Gee.

ATTACHMENT A.

Community Concerns and Responses from the Council on Aging 3/2023 to Memo on the recommended Alteration of Article IX, Section 1

- How do we protect pedestrians from other modes of transportation on the sidewalk? How do we create streets and public ways that are friendly for pedestrians, cyclists, and micromobility users?
- Seniors in Brookline use walking as one of their primary modes of transportation. Of Senior Center transportation participants:
 - 68% of participants do not own a personal vehicle
 - 99% are using walking as a mode of transportation with a satisfaction rate of 70%
 - 73% of survey respondents were low to moderate income older residents
- Fall prevention is a serious topic among older adults:
 - In Massachusetts 26% of older adults fell in 2021
 - 37% who fall reported an injury that **required medical treatment or restricted their activity for one day.**
 - Sidewalk obstructions, lighting, and usage then become important topics for ensuring fall prevention for all residents.
- Residents that use assistive devices and other pedestrians may find it hard to quickly move out of the way of any moving micromobility device allowed on sidewalks. Even the recommendation that an audible warning be given may not be sufficient for those who are hearing impaired and have slow reaction time.
- Concern and comment regarding definition of normal walking speed (g) and sufficient time (h).
- A distinction between scooters used as an assistive device rather than a transportation/recreational vehicle must be made.
- The importance of an age-related criteria for those that are allowed to ride on the sidewalk using a micromobility device.
- Concern regarding enforcement of rules and regulations.
- Separating modes of transportation in the public way reduces risk for all types of transportation, walking, biking, scootering etc.
- Educational campaign is needed on rules around using the public way in a courteous, safe, and responsible manner.

