

**Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING REMOTE MEETING
MARCH 10, 2021 - 1:00 PM via ZoomGov**

PRESENT: COA Members: Yolanda Rodriguez, Nancy Heller, Barbara Scotto, Judith Chasin, Jean Doherty, Doris Toby Axlerod, John Mulhane, Joyce Wishnick, Barbara Kean, Rosaline Lowe, William Wong, Paula Friedman, Saul Feldman, Martha Schieve, Pat Ahlin, Sherry Lee, Clara Chin **Public:** Erin Chute Gallentine (guest speaker), Mary Mindess, Ellen Zellner, Monique Richardson, Lydia Kaufman, and other members of the public. **Staff:** Ruthann Dobek, Julie Washburn, Jamie Jensen, Jessica Milley-Gee

WELCOME: Yolanda Rodriguez, COA Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting.

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

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 13th, 2021 MEETING: A motion was passed to accept the minutes of the January 13th, 2021 meeting. No changes or comments were offered. It was unanimously voted via roll call of voting members to accept these minutes.

INTRODUCTION: Yolanda introduced the guest speaker: Erin Chute Gallentine, Brookline Commissioner of Public Works

TOPIC: Department of Public Works—an Introduction to Erin Chute Gallentine, and an Opportunity to Ask Questions About Snow Removal, Sidewalks, and More

[SEE ATTACHED PRESENTATION SLIDES]

Erin Chute Gallentine reviewed her 23-year history of public service working for the Town of Brookline, culminating in her appointment to Commissioner of Public Works in September 2020.

Erin gave a comprehensive presentation with accompanying slides on all of the different ways in which the Department of Public Works (DPW) serves Brookline residents, with a focus on older adults in Brookline. Erin gave an overview of Public Works' mission and the five major Service Divisions, as well as:

- DPW's driving goal for all Brookline public parks and open spaces to be multigenerational, accessible, and inclusive. This includes the addition of circuit pathways and accessible restrooms to public spaces, and the development of partnerships to add vibrancy to these areas (e.g. musical performances and art installations).
- The DPW's use of plantings to beautify areas of the town, support local wildlife habitats, and for storm water management.
- The forthcoming project to restore the Carlton Street Footbridge
- The development and implementation of the Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan (UFCRMP)—chaired by Nancy Heller. The need for an UFCRMP arose out of the 2017 Climate Vulnerability Assessment planning process. This Plan identified the significance of the urban canopy as a nature-based solution to climate change, and recommended several priority actions and strategies aimed at sustaining and strengthening the urban forest.
- Shared connections and separate, designated space for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improved accessibility to MBTA bus routes and crossings.

- The completion of a DPW “conditions assessment” of sidewalk and ramp conditions in Brookline to assist in prioritizing investments and in the development a long-term Capital Improvement Plan.
- The addition of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) at various intersections in town.
- The comprehensive restoration of Brookline Reservoir Park, which should be complete by the end of April 2021.
- The DPW’s new approach to obstructions in the public way due to the growth of vegetation (e.g. private hedges growing into a public sidewalk). When a report is received, a homeowner now will receive a violation notice with specific instructions on how to resolve the obstruction, and is given 21 days to do so.

Q: If a homeowner in violation of the by-law does not cut their hedges, can the Town do so and send the homeowner a bill?

Erin explained that the Town does not currently have this ability, and that the specific by-law is in need of updated language and examples of violations to more clearly define follow-up and enforcement actions.

Q: Other cities had added “senior exercise structures” in open spaces and near playgrounds. Is this under consideration in Brookline?

Erin revealed that structures have been added to Summit Path, and Brookline is considering another exercise area on Pearl Street, though they are not specific to seniors. Erin expressed her desire to incorporate more “senior-gearred” structures.

Q: Is there a system in place for the DPW to find out where people have made reports of having fallen (via ambulance report or otherwise) so that follow-up action can be made by the town in these specific areas?

Erin said that there is not currently a system in place, but will look into the development of such a system with regard to falls in the public way.

Q: When there is an issue with large tree roots disturbing sidewalk surfaces, is there a type of material that can be used that will help resolve the issue while sparing the tree?

Erin explained that in this situation, the DPW will sometimes remove the concrete sidewalk panel and cut back roots, though this is not always possible. The town is looking into a rubberized, more porous material that would provide greater permeability, as well as planting strategies that will help protect large trees.

Nancy Heller mentioned that the Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan group will be meeting on Monday, March 15th at 6:00 PM with a consultant who is preparing a study, and reiterated the importance of the aforementioned trees in Brookline as a tool to fight climate change.

Q: Is there an online or physical directory of Brookline parks, with addresses and whether they are accessible by public transit?

Erin revealed there is a list of Brookline parks and open spaces and their amenities on the town website (<https://www.brooklinema.gov/1529/Parks-and-Open-Space-Division-of-DPW>). Ruthann Dobek mentioned that a brochure had been created with this information, though it requires regular updating, which may be a project for the Age-Friendly Cities Committee. Ruthann also noted that TRIPPS coordinator Maria Foster often holds walking trips around local parks, and that future issues of the Senior Center’s News & Events may highlight

Brookline parks and open spaces.

Barbara Scotto added that Brookline resident Linda Pehlke has written a book called *Exploring the Paths of Brookline*, which may be of interest.

OPEN DISCUSSION: The meeting was opened to participant discussion and topics not included on the agenda. No additional remarks or topics were offered.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

No **Nominating, Recreation, Redesign, or Pedestrian-Friendly Lighting Report** today.

Springwell Report— Yolanda reported that Springwell has been assisting in the vaccination effort by referring individuals to state resources, and assisting with scheduling online. Springwell is also one of the Aging Service Access Points (ASAP) in MA that has joined together to form an administrative service unit that will mainstream contracting among the ASAPs.

Budget Report – Ruthann Dobek reported that the COA budget review with the Advisory Subcommittee was held on March 8th, 2021 via Zoom with very strong attendance and participation. Many came to speak about the needs of Brookline older adults and the COA budget, and the effort was impactful and much appreciated.

Ruthann said that following the submission of the COA budget for FY22, the Town recommendation was to restore 7% of the 10% budget cut incurred in FY21 (a restoration of \$72k of the original \$94k deficit). The other request made by the COA was for the creation of a full-time Assistant Custodian position with benefits which would allow for the Senior Center to be open extended hours, coverage for the other custodian, and for coverage during heavy usage of the building. The Subcommittee is recommending that the \$22k cut (which is currently a reduction in a geriatric social work position) be restored, alongside the addition of a full-time Assistant Custodian position. The next meeting (full Advisory Board meeting) is tentatively scheduled for March 18th. While this is not a meeting for public comment, attendance is encouraged.

Select Board Report – Nancy Heller reported that Brookline Fire Department has received a Senior Safe grant from the state of approximately \$3k toward fire safety education for Brookline older adults.

Nancy reiterated the importance of trees in the battle against climate change, and referenced the upcoming meeting of the Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan group, encouraging those interested to attend.

Nancy revealed that due to time constraints, Hebrew SeniorLife has decided to scale back their proposed project at 108 and 122 Centre Street, opting instead to focus on a 6-story all-affordable housing building at 108 Centre containing 45-55 units, as well as expanded Senior Center space. Nancy Daly is taking the lead of fundraising efforts by the Senior Center board for this project, and additional volunteers for the fundraising effort are welcome.

Town Meeting Member and COA board member Paula Freidman expressed disappointment at the expectation that the Senior Center must raise funds toward the expanded space in the new Hebrew SeniorLife building, as well as the Senior Center not having a line item in the Town budget to help fund this expansion.

School Committee Report – Barbara Scotto reported that kindergarteners and first-grade students shifted back to in-person learning on March 1st, second through fifth-grade students will shift to in-person learning by the end of March, and sixth through eighth-graders will return in April.

Barbara reported that on Thursday, March 4, with a unanimous vote, the School Committee approved Dr. Linus Guillory as the new Superintendent of the Public Schools of Brookline.

Barbara noted that although demand for the COVID-19 vaccine still exceeds supply, teachers in MA are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Parents in Brookline have been volunteering to assist in finding vaccine appointments for Brookline teachers, which has been successful and much appreciated.

Report from the Director: Ruthann Dobek

1. UPDATE ON COVID-19 VACCINES

Ruthann reported that the COA has been at work helping Brookline Housing Authority residents receive their COVID-19 vaccinations on-site. The next focus is on homebound individuals who typically would not be able to travel to a vaccine appointment. There isn't a plan as of yet, but the COA is collecting names and phone numbers of individuals in this situation, and welcomes additions to this list.

2. JAMIE'S PROMOTION TO PROGRAM MANAGER

Ruthann welcomed Jamie Jensen back from her maternity leave, and revealed that she is returning in a new capacity as Senior Center Program Manager.

3. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Ruthann reported that TRIPPS has been working to provide individuals safe rides to vaccine appointments. The COA is also in the process of applying for annual subsidies from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program related to transportation including subsidized Lyft, Concierge services, and taxi coupons. Recommendations from CDBG are expected shortly.

4. FY21-FY22 BUDGET UPDATE

Ruthann thanked all those who have passionately advocated for the needs of older adults and for restorations in the COA budget.

5. BROOKLINE RESTAURANT GRANT FROM SENATOR CYNTHIA CREEM

It was reported that Senator Cynthia Creem put an earmark in the state budget for an upcoming program that allows 12 local restaurants to be paid via the state to provide delicious and nutritious weekly meals to the Brookline Food Pantry and Brookline Senior Center. The program will run between March 30- May 12 with hopes that arrangements can be made for continuation of the program through private fundraising.

6. BROOKLINE BAZAAR

The Senior Center's online gift shop—Brookline Bazaar—continues to do well, and has currently raised \$2200 in revenue to directly support programming at the Senior Center. To visit the shop, go to:

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/BrooklineBazaar> If you are interested in making a donation to the shop, please contact jmilleygee@brooklinema.gov for more information.

7. UPDATE ON PROGRAMS

Jamie Jensen reported that a monthly program providing free legal advice from a Metrowest attorney will begin on March 25, and continue on the last Thursday of each month. The program will be advertised in the monthly News & Events, and those interested may contact Jamie directly at 617-730-2753 or jjensen@brooklinema.gov

Julie Washburn recapped the "Healing Arts Initiative" virtual concert that was held on Sunday, March 7 in conjunction with Ezra Home Care, and that featured members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Ezra Home Care hopes to continue with a series of such virtual concerts, and the Senior Center will continue to

promote any future happenings in the monthly News & Events.

Julie revealed that the Piatagorsky Foundation has expressed interest in doing a virtual tour in the coming months, and any updates will be provided as they are received.

Additionally, the Senior Center has been able to secure a number of “Craft-Along” kits for distribution to seniors in the community. The kits are part of a monthly project funded by the Friends of the Brookline Public Library that distributes kits containing materials and an instructional DVD to complete a unique crafting project in the comfort of one’s home. Those interested can contact the Senior Center for availability—there is limited capacity to deliver to homebound individuals.

8. UPDATE ON GRANT PROPOSALS

Ruthann reported that TRIPPS has been awarded a MassDOT grant to provide video support in collaboration with Brookline Interactive Group (BIG). In addition, Brookline was selected alongside other area senior centers to receive a grant from MCOA for a pilot program. This program will provide five tablets with internet service to older adults in need.

9. PATRICIA BURNS’ RETIREMENT

Ruthann revealed that newly retired Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator Patricia Burns will be joining as the guest speaker for April’s COA meeting. This will be an opportunity to learn about Patricia’s experience at the Center, to ask questions, and wish Patricia well.

Ruthann wished all a blessed Passover and a happy Easter.

NEXT MEETING: The next COA remote meeting will be Wednesday **APRIL 14th, 2021** at **1:00 PM** with guest speaker Patricia Burns, former Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator. To join the meeting via Zoom, follow the link <https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/j/1610987305> and enter Meeting ID: 161 098 7305. To join via telephone, dial 1-646-828-7666 and enter Meeting ID: 161 098 7305.

A motion was made for the meeting to be adjourned at 2:19 PM. It was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Milley-Gee