

**Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING REMOTE MEETING
APRIL 14, 2021 - 1:00 PM via ZoomGov**

PRESENT: COA Members: Yolanda Rodriguez, Nancy Heller, Barbara Scotto, Judith Chasin, Jean Doherty, Joanne Katz, Doris Toby Axlerod, Fran Perler, John Mulhane, Joyce Wishnick, Barbara Kean, Rosaline Lowe, William Wong, Saul Feldman, Martha Schieve, Pat Ahlin, Sherry Lee, Clara Chin **Public:** Patricia Burns (guest speaker), Ellen Zellner, Monique Richardson, 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

Jessica Milley-Gee read through the names of those in attendance as of 1:03 PM (see above list of attendees)

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

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 10th, 2021 MEETING: A motion was passed to accept the minutes of the March 10th, 2021 meeting. No changes or comments were offered. It was unanimously voted to accept these minutes.

INTRODUCTION: Yolanda introduced the guest speaker, newly retired Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator Patricia Burns.

TOPIC: Reflections on Volunteering from our former Volunteer Coordinator

Patricia Burns expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present during National Volunteer Month. Patricia reflected on the various roles and responsibilities at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) over the years. Beginning in 2013, after seeing an ad in the Brookline TAB for the Tax Work-Off program, Patricia started working with Deidre Waxman and the REAP program helping seniors looking for work with resumes and cover letters as well as facilitating Wisdom Works workshops.

When the Volunteer Coordinator position became vacant in 2014 Patricia applied and was hired to coordinate the then 360+ volunteers. In addition, Patricia created and facilitated more workshops for REAP - Resumes and Cover Letters, LinkedIn Profiles, Your Age Advantage and a 4-session Networking and Job Search support group.

In 2015, Patricia added writing and maintaining the monthly COA meeting minutes section of the Town website, became the leader of the annual Senior Center Alzheimer's Walk Team, as well as the BSC SHOP Coordinator working with Brookline High School.

Between 2016 – 2021 Patricia added writing and uploading the monthly volunteer webpage to the Town and COA websites, submitted weekly ads to the renamed Boomers & Beyond page of the Brookline TAB, developed and implemented Food Safety Training for annual training for BSC staff and all volunteers who handle food. Additionally, Patricia managed the monthly Food Commodity program, and organized and implemented the annual Volunteer Luncheon. Patricia was a contributor to the Easy Travel program, and was also a yearly contributor to the BSC Annual Craft Fair.

Patricia expressed pride in expanding the intergenerational engagement at Brookline Senior Center including the SHOP program, partnerships with Steps to Success, an annual program with Lincoln School, as well as student involvement in chess and the TRIPPS program at BSC.

Patricia shared general reflections on volunteering, citing the numerous proven benefits to the health and well-being of the volunteer as well as the recipient. The following inspirational quote from the Dalai Lama was shared:

“We are visitors on this planet. We are here for one hundred years at the very most. During that period we must try to do something good, something useful, with our lives. If you contribute to other people's happiness, you will find the true meaning of life.”

Patricia noted that the volunteers at the BSC have been exceptionally generous with time and skills over the years, remarking that everyone has something to offer in the way of volunteering- even if just a smile. Patricia expressed thanks for “all of the wonderful time spent at the BSC,” and looks forward to seeing everyone once again when the Center is able to fully reopen to the public.

Question: What is the key to a happy retirement?

Patricia: Staying busy, continuing to learn new things, and walking for exercise each day.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

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

Recreation Report—Fran Perler noted that there was little new activity to report on within the Recreation Department, but that inquiries have been made into the reopening timeline of the fitness center at BSC. Fran expressed concern that active members of the BSC fitness center may seek memberships elsewhere due to current capacity restrictions (in adherence to COVID-19 safety guidelines).

Ruthann Dobek acknowledged the general frustration and eagerness to return to a “new normal” following a year of COVID restrictions. Ruthann reiterated that the BSC continues to make decisions and to proceed in a safe and cautious manner based on the guidance of the Governor, local Board of Health, and state organization (MCOA). Updates to status will be provided as they are received.

Springwell Report—Yolanda reported that Springwell was awarded a \$90,000 grant from MassDevelopment, in partnership with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council through the Taxi, Livery and Transportation Partnerships Grant Program, an operational subsidy program aimed at expanding transportation service capacity through contracts with licensed taxi or livery businesses. With the financial support of this grant, Springwell has partnered with Alternative Transportation Systems to create a no-cost transportation resource for individuals age 60 and older who live in Springwell’s eight town service area (of which Brookline is a part). For more information or to book a ride, visit <https://alt-trans.com/springwell> or call 857-364-6570.

Select Board Report – Nancy Heller reported that on April 13th, the Town suspended the program to vaccinate homebound residents on account of recent CDC advice to halt the use of the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Updates will be provided as they arise.

Nancy reported on two ballot questions on the upcoming May 4th Town election:

- Whether the Town shall vote to have an elected Town Clerk vs. an appointed Town Clerk and

- Whether the Town shall adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA). This refers to the adoption a 1% CPA surcharge for the community with exemptions for low and moderate income senior homeowners. With a 1% CPA surcharge and the aforementioned exemption, the town is expected to raise approximately \$2.6 million in local CPA revenues annually for outdoor recreation, historic preservation, affordable housing, and open space projects. Adopting CPA would also make the town eligible to receive annual distributions of funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, monies that are available only to communities that have adopted the Act.

Nancy described the current status of the work underway at Brookline High School. The transformation includes both renovations and expansion of the school, additions of community space, numerous adaptations for ADA compliance, renovations to Cypress Field and playground, as well as renovations to the MBTA Green Line Brookline Hills station.

School Committee Report – Barbara Scotto reported that on April 12th, all 6th-8th grade students went back for in-person learning, with the exception of those electing to continue in the remote academy. Remote learning will not be offered next year. A comprehensive summer school program will be offered this summer to help students who may have suffered socially or academically during the past school year.

Barbara revealed that it will be her last COA meeting as liaison to the School Committee, and expressed thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to serve in this role over the years. After 12 years serving on the Committee, Barbara will not be running for re-election to the School Committee.

Yolanda and Ruthann expressed great appreciation for all of Barbara’s contributions to the COA and Town as School Committee liaison, and wished Barbara well in retirement.

Report from the Director— Ruthann Dobek

1. Thank You to Patricia Burns

Ruthann thanked Patricia for presenting at the meeting, and for sharing the ways in which volunteering promotes happiness, health, and longevity.

2. Shout-Out to Volunteers During COVID-19

Ruthann expressed appreciation and acknowledged the contributions of the following individuals, programs, and community partners during COVID-19:

- **AARP Tax Program-** First program back in building FY20 to complete cancelled tax appointments in 202. 240 appointments total.
-5 Tax Aide volunteers
-Jean Doherty
- **Grab-and-Go Lunch**
-Marcia Goldstein & Michael Weston
-served 55-65 meals each day (M,W,F)
- **Brookline Food Commodity Program**
-Lucy Nemirovskaya, Mei Chu, Tim McDonald, Mimi O’Connor, Jamie Hills, and Clara Chin
- **Tax Work-Off Volunteers-** provided wellness checks, participated in online programs
- **Senior Center News & Events**
-Michael Weston & Deb Levin
-Brookline Police Department
- **Thanksgiving Meal** – specifically VineRipe, Brookline Elks, Brookline Police, Brookline Rotary, Brookline Food Pantry

- **Brookline Senior Center Program Leaders**

Joyce Graff, Tom Faulhaber, Lynn Modell, Mike Borgos, Martin Anderson, Monique Richardson, Judy Chasin, Dan Siagel, Jude Burnim and Bonnie Lass, Charlotte Millman, TRIPPS Volunteers, SHINE Volunteers

- **Student Interns** Mark Catalano and Abhilasha Natarajan from Simmons School of Social Work

- **Other Community Partners:**

Goddard Assisted Living	Public Library of Brookline
Centre Communities	Town of Brookline Emergency Operations
BAYADA Homecare	Brookline Interactive Group
Linden Ponds at Dedham	Mutual Aid of Brookline
Wingate at Boylston Place	Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center
Brookline Chamber	MA Association for the Blind
BrooklineCAN	Brookline Community Foundation

- **Council on Aging Board & Brookline Multiservice Board**

3. COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Ruthann reiterated the Town’s decision to pause the vaccine program for homebound residents, and that additional information will be forthcoming. The Town is still collecting names of individuals in the community who may qualify for the homebound vaccine program. The Town has completed its second-dose clinics for Brookline Housing Authority residents, as well as a second-dose vaccine clinic for older adults at Town Hall. The COA is working closely with Brookline’s emergency service team and Brookline Department of Public Health on all aspects of the vaccine program.

4. Transportation Update

Ruthann reported that Roger Marrocco has resigned from the Van/ Bus Driver position at the Senior Center, and the now-vacant position has been posted. Those with transportation needs are encouraged to reach out to Community Outreach Specialist Maria Foster at 617-730-2644 or mfoster@brooklinema.gov.

Ruthann reported on a dramatic decrease in the number of Uber and Lyft drivers, which has resulted in longer rideshare wait times. Ruthann reiterated the fee-breakdown for rideshare, and that a portion of the tax for an individual ride goes back to the municipality to provide funding for TRIPPS, and another portion goes back to the state.

Brookline applied for and was awarded a small transportation grant that will provide transportation to medical appointments via taxi. The contract is currently being finalized.

The Senior Center’s HELP Program continues to partner with the Independent Transportation Network of America (ITNAmerica), which has renewed its yearly funding to provide free, community-based transportation to eye care appointments to older adults and to individuals with vision impairments.

5. FY21-FY22 Budget Update

Ruthann reported on a productive and very well-attended remote meeting with the Advisory Committee (AC) during which older adults were able to express concern over COA budgetary needs. The Subcommittee recommended to the AC that the recommended \$22k be restored, and additionally requested that the part-time custodial position be made full-time with benefits. These requests will next be brought to the Town Administrator, the Select Board, and then to Town Meeting.

The COA is waiting for the state to release its Formula Grant figures—the current \$12/ per elder figure is based off of 2010 census figures, and 2021 census figures are not yet available. The UMASS Donahue Institute

estimates an additional 500,000 new seniors are in the Commonwealth than in 2010, making the new census data as it relates to the Formula Grant impactful.

Nancy Heller added that the Select Board had been given a preliminary report by Melvin Kleckner on the American Rescue Plan, which will move funds from the federal government to the state government where they will be distributed. As part of this plan, Brookline is estimated to receive approximately \$34 million over a few years to make up for lost municipal revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Brookline Restaurant Grant

Ruthann reported on the program funded by a budgetary earmark by State Senator Cynthia Creem allowing 11 local restaurants to be paid via the state to provide weekly meals to the Brookline Food Pantry and Brookline Senior Center. The Senior Center has distributed delicious and nutritious meals from local restaurant Jin's over the past month, to great accolades. The very successful program is running between March 30- May 12, with sights set on continuation of the program via private fundraising.

7. Brookline Bazaar

The Senior Center's online gift shop—Brookline Bazaar—continues to do well, and has sold over 55 items, raising over \$2300 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

8. Program Update

a. Hadassah Margolis spoke on upcoming 10-week Zoom discussion series on **Spirituality and Mental Health**. The series will explore the connection between spirituality and religion and mental health. Space is limited to 12 and the series will be for an hour on **Wednesdays at 2PM starting May 12**. Email jjensen@brooklinema.gov or see May News & Events for more information and how to join.

b. Program Manager Jamie Jensen reported on the upcoming talk by retired journalist and author **Greg O'Brien** on **May 4th at 1PM via Zoom**. O'Brien will speak on the personal experience of living with the diagnosis of early onset Alzheimer's. Email jjensen@brooklinema.gov or see May News & Events for link to join.

c. **On May 10th at 1 PM-** virtual educational program on elder law sponsored by Mass Bar Association. The program will touch upon updates to elder law on a variety of topics. Email jjensen@brooklinema.gov or see May News & Events for joining information.

d. Save the date: **June 29th at 3PM** via Zoom. Respected author and New York Times journalist **Paula Span** will give a virtual presentation on new Audible audiobook, *The Bubbe Diaries: True Tales of Grandparenting*. Email jjensen@brooklinema.gov or see News & Events for joining information.

8. BIG- Steps to Success Intergenerational Program

A project between Brookline Interactive Group (BIG), Steps to Success, and the Brookline Senior Center is now available for viewing. Four students interviewed four active Council on Aging participants, and their engaging and inspirational stories can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_kXbXA0-Qd7Y2r28byeMX9RBCYdQ1uEG This is an ongoing project and is actively recruiting new participants. If you would like to be involved, contact Jamie Jensen at jjensen@brooklinema.gov or 617-730-2753.

9. Town Election and Candidates Forum

Ruthann reported that BrooklineCAN and the Brookline Senior Center will be holding an election forum for the

3-town wide contested races on **Tuesday, April 27 at 3:00 PM**. Again, this year the forum will be conducted remotely via Zoom. The annual Town election is scheduled for May 4. There are 5 candidates for Select Board, 2 candidates for the 1-year term on the School Committee and 2 candidates for Moderator.

The forum will be concerned with all Town issues but will pay special attention to concerns of older residents. Michael Allen of the Council on Aging staff will serve as moderator. If you have a question for the candidates, contact Michael in advance. mallen@brooklinema.gov or 617-730-2754. To watch the forum live on April 27th, register at this link:

https://brooklineinteractive-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QD2RTMpvRKKoiCQkTfyLWw

10. Update on Grant Proposals

Ruthann reported that the COA is continuously seeking new grant opportunities, especially in light of the Biden administration's passing of The American Rescue Plan Act stimulus bill.

Additionally, the COA was recently awarded a grant through Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) for a pilot program that will provide internet access and/ or a tablet to interested residents, as well as the training and support needed to utilize this technology.

NEXT REMOTE MEETING- MAY 12, 2021 at 1 PM via ZoomGov with guest speaker Michael Alperin, Executive Director of the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA). To join, go to <https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/j/1604435769> and enter Meeting ID: 160 443 5769 or toll call 1 646 828 7666 and enter Meeting ID.

A motion was made for the meeting to be adjourned at 2:32 PM. It was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Milley-Gee