

**Minutes for COUNCIL ON AGING Meeting
JUNE 12, 2019**

PRESENT: COA Members: Jean Doherty, John Mulhane, Phil Fullerton, Nancy Heller, Yolanda Rodriguez, Rita d'Entrement, Clara Chin, William Wong, Doris Toby Axelrod, Joanne Katz, Pat Ahlin, and Barbara Kean Staff: Ruthann Dobek, Maria Foster, Jessica Milley-Gee, Freddi Langerthal and Patricia Burns. Public: Marcia Goldstein, Claire Slater, Monique Richardson, Carol Fullerton, Jane Youn and others.

WELCOME: Yolanda Rodriguez, COA Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming today.

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

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 8th MEETING: A motion was passed and seconded to accept the minutes of the May 8th meeting. No changes or comments were offered. It was unanimously voted to accept these minutes.

INTRODUCTION: Yolanda introduced the guest speaker for today: **Maria Foster, TRIPPS Coordinator**

TOPIC: Update on the TRIPPS (TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES, INFORMATION, PLANNING & PARTNERSHIP FOR SENIORS) Program

Maria began by saying that the TRIPPS program started with a core group of volunteers whose goal was to support seniors in their driving retirement. The program was initially funded by a 3 year grant from MASS DOT. However, they did not renew the funding for a 4th year. The COA is able to provide money to continue some local and regional efforts. Maria as the Coordinator is in charge of community outreach working on innovative ways for seniors to give up driving and ways to get around without their car.

Accomplishments over the past 3 years include: a) building a strong volunteer corp. to advise and support seniors; b) developing and implementing local and regional educational programs such as panel discussions on driving retirement for providers in Brookline, Newton and Boston; providing ridesharing classes; implementing transportation fairs; and developing a Resource Guide that now has 43 entries. TRIPPS works with Metro Planning, UBER, & the RMV and gives senior feedback on their services.

Statewide Resources for other COAs & providers include the TRIPPS Toolkit (on-line) providing information on programming and funding and the Survey on Development & Expanding Transportation Options that was developed in spring 2018, and administered online and in person by volunteers in the summer of 2018. Some key findings of the survey included:

- Respondents made use of multiple modes of transportation to compliment or substitute for driving
- The taxi industry, which had been a primary source of transportation for seniors, is declining. Seniors need professionals, peer volunteers and advocates to assist with transition to new modes and new technologies.

- Respondents who have stopped driving either understate or overstate their spending for alternative modes of transportation
- Those who were driving ‘fully’ were most likely to go out mornings, afternoons and evenings and to go out daily. Those who had stopped driving were least likely to go out at all times.
- Driving status was associated with satisfaction with community participation; those driving fully were most satisfied; those who had stopped driving were least satisfied.

Case studies to personalize situations were developed and used as training tools.

Future plans include:

- Continuing the model of volunteer driven programs and projects
- Implementing rideshare classes in Brookline and regionally
- Holding MBTA outings and other trips locally
- Conducting support groups in a more formal setting with the guidance of a social worker as well as continuing one-on-one support
- Continuing to collect and disseminate resources via the Resource Guide (print and online)
- Providing ongoing educational programs that support older adults as they transition to non-driving
- Advocating for older adults and transportation options and engaging in community and statewide forums

Brookline Future Plans include:

- ITN’s continued funding for 3rd year providing free transportation to eye care appointments
- Small grant from NCOA and Lyft to provide subsidized transportation on Lyft to Brookline residents who qualify for BETS
- Survey to BETS clientele to assess their capacity to transition to smartphone technology
- Rideshare revenue funding through the Town of Brookline
- Ongoing fundraising to continue the pilot Concierge Service with Uber & Lyft
- Research the most workable and most liked options
- Information on how seniors can give feedback to the MBTA and other providers

Maria then reviewed the many ways that seniors can connect around transportation options and issues. She also responded to a question asking if TRIPPS would be a regular Town budget issue or if it was a onetime application. Ruthann explained that she would apply for the Uber/Lyft refund to the Town in July. Originally the Town was not interested, but now through our advocacy, the Town is becoming interested. It will be voted on at the Town meeting in November. If we receive the money, this will be very big and hopefully ongoing.

Ruthann also asked BETS program recipients to look for the brief survey to see if they would be willing and/or able to use smartphones to access and track Uber or Lyft.

Ruthann reminded attendees of the Gender Diversity Forum with Speak Out Boston next **Wednesday, June 19th at 2:30 PM** in Rm. 103 of Town Hall.

Nancy Heller explained the activities of the Climate Action Plan. Brookline is aiming to eliminate gas and oil by 2050. Brookline Green Electricity is an aggregate of all Brookline users. She explained that there are three levels of Green by 2050 – 0 level which is the same level as Eversource, but cheaper through the aggregate, 25% - more green and 100% all green. In addition, Brookline is in competition with Newton to reach 100%.

The state has mandated 20% renewable with an increase of 2% each year. IPPC last fall said that we really only have until 2030 not 2050 to eliminate fossil fuel due to major weather changes.

In response to a question about the estimated financial impact on seniors who cannot easily move away, Nancy and Ruthann said that we all need to do as much as we can. Each Town department will pick an area to work on. Brookline COA will work with seniors on this issue.

Bottom line – the focus in the future is on electricity, not fossil fuels like gas and oil. Nancy urged seniors to go to Brooklinegreen.com for more information and how to opt up. This information will also be an insert in the July real estate tax bill. Nancy reminded us that Cape Wind is coming as well as solar energy.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Open Floor** – Yolanda said that she and Ruthann had been talking about a format that many other organizations use – that of a 5-10 minute period at the beginning of each meeting when participants could raise non-agenda items. While she agreed that this could add to the length of meetings, the engagement and discussions would most likely be well worth the time. She mentioned the very rich discussions of the last few meetings as cases in point.
- **Springwell Report** – Yolanda said that:
 - **Innovation Award** – Springwell won the 2019 Aging Innovations Award from the National Association of Area Agency on Aging (NA⁴) for its work providing health coaching to Beth Israel Lahey Health’s ‘Rising Risk’ patients. Yolanda added that this is wonderful recognition for their work with health providers.
 - **Title 3B** – Seven letters of intent were received followed by 4 proposals. They will be reviewed, evaluated and voted on in June or July
 - **Search for new CEO** – The search continues. It is down to 6 candidates. Interviews of the 6 candidates will be held in July and August.
- **Nominating Committee** – this committee will meet in August. There will be no regular COA meeting until September
- **Budget Report** – The budget was passed at the Town Meeting and will go into effect on July 1st as the 2020 budget.
- **Recreation Report** – Frank d’Entremont and Fran Perler have agreed to be Co-Chairs. Ruthann thanked all who participated in the meeting for all the great input and suggestions for more trips to hopefully be included in the future Brookline Recreation catalogue. Marcia Goldstein affirmed that the trip to Larz Anderson had been cancelled. Since the Recreation Department had not taken names and numbers of those enquiring about the trip, no notification was given to those anticipating going. Marcia called to ask a question about the time and place of pickup and was told then that the trip had been cancelled. Improvements on this process need to be made.

Report from Select Board: Nancy Heller, Select Board Liaison- Nancy relayed that the Select Board had reviewed many warrant articles at the May Town meeting. Some of the most relevant to the COA were:

- Frank Caro’s Pedestrian-Friendly Street Lighting
- Easements at the high school
- Increase for parking by .25c in Brookline Village for infrastructure that should add parking and benefit area businesses
- Diversity incentives
- Banning menthol products being marketed to underage kids
- Menstrual products free in Brookline public schools and buildings – some discussion about perhaps adding products like those for incontinence that would be of use to some seniors
- Waldo Bergin project at the juncture of Pleasant, John and Beacon streets. This large block is owned by Chestnut Hill Realty (CHR) and is expected to include a hotel, residences and commercial space on the ground floor. Hotel space is particularly good for the Town as it contributes revenue through property and hotel taxes. CHR has decreased the height and number of affordable units, but is contributing \$3 million to fund other affordable housing programs.
- Green electricity – The Town is working towards its Green Goals by replacing Town vehicles with electric or hybrid ones and using green electricity in all Town buildings
- Outdoor swimming pool – it is in the study phase with no location proposed yet.
- A question was raised about the expense of solar energy. Nancy said that residents do not have to purchase panels themselves. They can purchase the solar electricity from the Town making it much more affordable.

Report from School Committee: Barbara Scotto – Barbara had a fall and needed surgery. Yolanda was happy to report that she had spoken to Barbara and that she was doing better.

Report from Director: Ruthann Dobek -

1. Transportation Update – Ruthann expressed her personal gratitude to Maria for her wonderful management of the TRIPPS program and coordination of the TRIPPS volunteers.
2. Update on Senior Tax Aid Program – Ruthann relayed that starting July 1st there will be a few openings for seniors wishing to join the Tax Work Off Program. Seniors work 125 hours and receive \$1,500 off of their real estate taxes for the year. She said that one of the openings is because a Tax Work Off participant has been hired where she had been volunteering and another had increased income making them ineligible for the program. Ruthann asked that everyone help to get the word out to seniors that they know who might be eligible.
3. Review of Scooter Meeting, May 6th – Ruthann thanked Pat Ahlin for collecting the articles that were available on the handout table at the back of the room. She reminded people to voice e-scooter concerns on the email address specifically created so that all concerns will be noted.
escooter@brooklinema.gov
4. Recreation Update – Ruthann thanked all who came to the May 22nd Recreation Subcommittee meeting with Sara Nelson from the Recreation Department and who gave input and lots of new ideas. Unfortunately, the fall brochure has already gone to press, but our ideas can be considered for the future Brookline Recreation catalogue.
5. Program Updates – Ruthann urged everyone to take and read the monthly Newsletter.

- a. Theater Club – This Sunday *Mame* is playing. There are more interesting offerings to come.
 - b. Elks Barbecue – This very popular activity will be held on 7/13 with sign up starting 6/28
 - c. Sidewalk Sale – 6/20 starting @ 10 am
 - d. Shredding – the shredding event was a HUGE success with an estimated more than 100 people participating. Ruthann said that she received calls the next day and for the following week asking when it would happen again.
6. House Worker Position Update - Ruthann said that thanks to the Budget Committee and the Advisory Committee, this position that actually translates to our Assistant Custodian position will continue to be funded. Sergio has been a wonderful addition to our staff. He is always willing to help and has expertise in IT so he can set up equipment for events. He also has electrical engineering education and experience.
 7. BETS Survey – Through TRIPPS, a survey will be sent out soon to all BETS recipients. Ruthann asked that those people look for the survey and complete and return it.
 8. COA Board Meeting 2019-2020 Schedule – (available as handout)
 9. COA Annual Report – (available as handout)
 10. Wall Street Journal Article – (available as handout) This article discusses the advantages and limitations of living to 100.
 11. Age-Friendly Parks brochure - (available as handout) Ruthann also mentioned that there is a trip through TRIPPS being planned to go to the Fisher Hill Park.
 12. Pride Month – Stonewall 50 presentation – Monday, June 17th @ 1 pm
 13. Jessica’s maternity leave – Serena Johnson – Ruthann said that ‘Baby Josephine’ is on the way. Jessica will be on maternity leave starting sometime in July. Serena Johnson attended the recent Networking Workshop where Patricia reinforced that a good way to get a job is by volunteering. Serena volunteered on the I&R desk and now will cover some of Jessica’s hours during her leave.
 14. Autumn Benefit – Wednesday, October 23rd – This year’s honoree will be Senator Cynthia Stone Creem.
 15. SHOP MIT AgeLab Award – Patricia attended the MIT AgeLab 2019 Award Ceremony where Sidonie Brown, the Student SHOP Coordinator was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Patricia gave a brief talk in support of Sidonie, her organizational skills, her pleasant and positive attitude and her above and beyond duty caring and follow up of the seniors who the students helped.
 16. Agnes Rogers Scholarship – Ruthann was pleased to announce that this year’s winner of the Agnes Rogers Scholarship is Charlotte Cahill. Charlotte started volunteering as a graduating 8th grader helping out in our Food Pantry and the lunch program. While at Brookline High School, she participated in the SHOP program for 3 years. Bay State Federal Charitable Foundation will fund the \$1,000 scholarship. Charlotte will attend Holy Cross in the fall and study philosophy. Ruthann said that this year is even more special as Agnes will be 100. Ruthann is hoping to get the 100th birthday refreshments from New Paris Bakery as they are celebrating being in business for 100 years!

Announcement: LeRoy Neuberg, who had moved to California, passed away on June 7th, just after his 104th birthday. We all remember him fondly. He was a real role model for staying fit and active.

Handouts- Articles

- a. COA 2019-2020 Board Meeting Schedule
- b. COA Annual Report
- c. Age-Friendly Parks brochure
- d. Miscellaneous scooter-related articles

e. Wall St. Journal- *“The Advantages and Limitations of Living to 100”*

OUR NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Wednesday, September 11th, 2019. No meeting in July.
Nominating Committee ONLY meets in August

Yolanda asked for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned at 2:07. It was so moved and seconded.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia Burns