

COUNCIL ON AGING and ADVISORY BOARD MEETING—MAY 23, 2023

Present: Joan Belle Isle, Sandra Davidow, Naomi Krasner, John Pelletier, Robert Pierson, Ellen Penso, Sue Rasala, Eric Rosenbaum, Laura Shaw, Dan Shaw

Absent: Mary Glendon, Ena Lorant, Maria Meyer, Julie Norstrand, Nancy Scammon, Susan Schlesinger, Allison Sharma, Tom Shoemaker

Staff: Mignonne Murray, Liz O'Connell

Welcome/Call to Order/Vote on Minutes

Joan Belle Isle called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. Joan introduced our two guests, Jen Molinsky and Lisa Monahan, who, along with Alice Ingerson will present on Older Adult Housing. The minutes of the April 25, 2023, meeting were approved.

Senior Services FY2024 Budget Status

The Program and Services Committee Hearing on May 17 went well. Every city department's budget has been affected because the override did not pass. Senior Services had a cut, with which we can deal this year. The budget will go to the City Council now.

A brief discussion on NewMo/transportation addressed the NewMo rate increase this month and the fact that the Via contract is up for renewal this year. There has been a complaint(s) on NextDoor that NewMo doesn't go into the Longwood area and MGH. This is a known limitation. Mignonne has spoken with Springwell; all communities in our area cannot get into Boston through their transportation programs.

Needs Assessment Project

The Needs Assessment Project will be officially launched in September. Joan advised COA members to read the 2014 Needs Assessment Report on the newtonseniors.org website for background and a framework for entering this year's needs assessment. The COA must determine over the summer what groups we want to involve. The UMass Gerontology Institute will then help us to refine our focus. Obvious areas we will address are housing, isolation, transportation, and community engagement. There may be others. The Gerontology Institute will work with us to determine how to approach our topics and the partners involved.

NewCAL Update

The Design Review Committee gave their blessing to the construction documents; now the remaining 5% of the design can be completed. The project will go out to bid in mid-June. Construction will begin in September. There is no update on the pending lawsuit.

Older Adult Housing

Jen Molinsky, Lisa Monahan, and Alice Ingerson presented on Older Adult Housing—Village Center Zoning 2.0 and the MBTA Communities Law and the effect these two things may have on older adult

housing. Alice ran Newton's Community Preservation Committee for 12 years and is involved with Engine 6, a housing advocacy group in Newton. Jen is a planner who worked with Alice in Newton for several years. For the past 11 years, Jen has worked at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University where she is currently a Senior Research Associate. Jen also sits on Newton's Planning Board. Lisa is an architect who works on residential projects; her experience includes working with both public and private entities. Lisa has been following Newton zoning through Engine 6 as well as a professional group.

Alice Ingerson's presentation slides are attached for reference. It was noted that Newton's current zoning code isolates us into single families, and that unlike many other communities, obtaining a special permit for zoning requires a 2/3 vote to accept by the City Council. The COA must advocate for new choices, especially since now so many things require a special permit.

Zoning affects everyone. It is important to attend zoning meetings and hearings to make our voices heard. Can the COA get 6-10 people to attend a zoning hearing meeting, influencing the discussion as a group? The Zoning and Planning Committee is holding its public hearing on the proposed new Village Center Zoning 2.0 and MBTA Communities Law on Monday, June 26. COA members will email Dan Shaw with their thoughts on the kind of vision we want to present. Joan Belle Isle will be following up regarding being present at public meetings.

June Year End Meeting

This year, we will have a normal business meeting on Zoom at the end of June. We will plan a social gathering once we have a logical place to go.

Other Updates

There were no additional updates.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 PM.