

COUNCIL ON AGING—MAY 26, 2020

Present: Jayne Colino, Sandra Davidow, Beth Dugan, Adele Hoffman, Naomi Krasner, Mary Glendon, Jo Edith Heffron, Ena Lorant, Norm Meltz, Maria Meyer, Donna Murphy, Julie Norstrand, John Pelletier, Ernest Picard, Joyce Picard, Sue Rasala, Nancy Scammon, Allison Sharma, Sue Schlesinger, Laura Shaw, Emma Watson

Absent: Dov Bard, Tyrone Hooks, Jess Johnson, Marian Knapp, Eric Rosenbaum, Lisa Samelson, Tom Shoemaker, Gordon Szerlip

Guests: Joan Belle Isle, Josh Morse, Alex Valcarce, Dan Shaw

Meeting was held by Zoom Videoconference and was called to order at 7:35 PM.

Minutes approved from April 28 meeting; approval was unanimous with no abstentions.

2020 Age Friendly Award

The 2020 Age Friendly Award was conferred upon Joyce Picard for her tireless advocacy for ‘gap’ housing options – specifically, housing options for older adults who are above affordable, yet unable to afford market rate units.

NewCAL

Josh Morse and Alex Valcarce attended the meeting to update the Council on Aging on the status of the NewCAL site selection. Josh summarized the presentation that was made at the Community Meeting on May 21, noting that almost 100 people attended that meeting. He noted that the potential sites have been reduced to two: Newton Centre Triangle and the current location of the Senior Center in Newtonville. Sentiment seems to lean toward the Newtonville site, primarily driven by cost, timeframe, and concerns of local Newton Centre businesses over parking disruptions during construction. Josh indicated that the Working Group expects to make a final recommendation to the Mayor in the next 8-10 weeks, after meetings with Ward 2 and Ward 6 City Councilors, and presentations to the Programs and Services Committee of the City Council.

Questions from COA members included why the cost of building in Newton Centre was so much greater than in Newtonville (Ans: factors include visioning process, traffic and parking mitigation, streetscape changes and storm water mitigation), role of Newton Historic Commission (current Senior Center building is a registered historic building), where Senior Center activities will be held during construction (TBD).

The biggest tradeoff in adopting the Newtonville site is that the new Senior Center will not have the target 75 on-site parking spaces.

The COA took a straw poll to determine support for the Newtonville site, and a slight majority expressed preference for that site after listening to the presentation and asking questions.

General Updates

The Isolation and Social Engagement Library Event will be held as scheduled on June 8 at 7PM. The meeting will be held via Zoom.

Following up on the “Life in a Post Quarantine World” discussion in our last meeting, we are working on developing two seminars: one focusing on helping older adults navigate in a post-quarantine, pre-vaccine world, and one focusing on mental health issues that can arise as a result of isolation. Both are in preliminary stages of development.

The Newton Senior Center continues to operate remotely. During the shutdown, they have served a growing population, including non-seniors, and some who live outside Newton. Fitness classes continue to be popular, and lectures have now been added to the offerings. The first lecture, on memory fitness, attracted 65 attendees. Jayne is currently developing a plan to safely reopen the Senior Center.

Both Jayne Colino and Nancy Scammon were recognized for their extraordinary efforts in engaging Newton Seniors, expanding services, and serving growing populations of users throughout the shutdown period.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.