

Newton Council on Aging & Advisory Board Meeting

February 28, 2018

Present: E.Dugan, E. Lorant, JE Heffron, M. Knapp, N. Krasner, D. Murphy, E. Picard, J. Picard, T. Shoemaker, S. Paley, N. Brown, A. Cooper,

Visitors: M. Albandalejo-Meyer, J. Bell Isle, S. Rasala, J. Pelletier, A. Cooper, L. Shaw, A. Sharma, L. Shaw

Notified: J. Norstrand, H. Haywood, E. Watkins

Staff: M. Leipsitz, J Colino, N. Scammon,

I. Meeting called to order at 7:35 p.m.; minutes were reviewed; Minutes were approved.

II. Chair's/Director's Report

▪ Meeting with Mayor Fuller

The executive committee met with Mayor Fuller to provide an update on Age-Friendly planning and to discuss Council on Aging (COA) priorities.

- The executive committee requested that the Mayor help to convene **a cross sector group** including members from the City, business and community to be advocates for “age-friendly” policies and actions across the City.
- B. Dugan shared how the executive committee had talked with the Mayor about the State’s **Community Compact** initiative which gives Massachusetts cities and towns the chance to make needed improvements through collaboration with and support from the Commonwealth. The goal is for Cities to implement best practices in a focus area. There are a variety of areas ranging from education, the environment, housing and technology. Each Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement between the State and local government. The state offers incentives for communities that join the effort, including:
 - A grant program for Compact Communities
 - Extra points on certain grants
 - Technical resources from the Commonwealth to help communities achieve their goals

It is anticipated that “Age friendly” will become an option to put on the compact and the COA asked the Mayor to consider adding this to Newton’s compact. Newton would be the first City to add this to the compact. The Mayor was very interested in considering and has asked Jayne’s support in crafting the language; The Mayor has asked other City departments to give their feedback. Previously, Newton’s Community Compact included maximizing energy efficiency and

renewable option and adapting streets to accommodate people using all modes of transportation.

- Also of note, The State of Massachusetts recently joined the AARP and World Health Organization Age-Friendly network. MA is the second state to join, New York was the first.
 - J. Colino also provided background on the State Formula Grant that supports municipalities' services for seniors. Currently the state allocated \$9.70 per elder. Gov. Baker has proposed increasing allocation to \$12 per elder. This would translate into approximately a \$45,000 increase to Newton Formula Grant.
- **Meeting with Dana Hanson**, Coordinator of Community Engagement for the City of Newton met with the M. Knapp, J. Colino and M. Leipsitz on Feb 21 at the Senior Center to give an overview of the PLAAN process and to discuss the development of the COA membership.
 - **Feasibility Study** for new Senior Center—J. Colino shared that The Mayor has kicked off an official study for a new facility for senior programs and services. The TAB did an article about the Mayor's State of the Union address that mentioned the development of a new center.
 - The first step is to have a working group of City departments including Jayne to determine the needs and possible options. Typically it takes between 5 to 7 years to see a project built once the feasibility study is launched. However, the Senior Center poses a unique challenge as opposed to a school which has more prescribed requirements. There needs to be a community engagement process to determine needs, wants and parameters.
 - The second step is to develop a Building Committee who creates a deeper community process.

Questions were brought up about what will be done with the current building while the study is conducted. Jayne said that they were trying to address issues but it is a challenge. For instance, private donations are allowing the Center to purchase new chairs.

- **Staff Changes at AARP**, M. Knapp shared that Valerie Spain who had been coordinating the AARP's Age Friendly efforts has left AARP. At this point there is not a replacement. The thinking is that perhaps AARP will elevate the role of age friendly within the organization.

III. Legislative Report

- **Bond Bill for new Building**, Senator Cynthia Creem has ear-marked a \$6M budget line item into a bond bill for the purpose of supporting space development for the Senior Services activities. They could be for a new building or improvements. It has not yet been approved.
- **Susan Albright**, Board of Alderman and member of the Programs and Services wrote a resolution that Newton use city funding or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to create a program that will help to identify and serve isolated seniors. It was determined that at this time this program would not be eligible for CDBG funds. After consultation with CDBG staff, Jayne has submitted an application to request CDBG fund be used for Senior Fitness Classes.

IV. Membership Report

J. Colino and M. Knapp provided an overview regarding the Mayor's plan for the City's development of Boards and Commissions. Some of the City's boards have multiple vacancies. There are several boards and commissions that have fiduciary responsibility that will be the Mayor's first priority to fill. M. Knapp recognized those in attendance who had expressed interest and encouraged them to apply. She stressed that COA is looking for residents with specific expertise. The COA is relatively good shape although there are several spots open. Marian Knapp is the only members whose term is up. Also noted is that many terms are up in July. To avoid all members rolling off, in the future terms will be staggered. COA has 20 advisory board members and a 9 person council. The Mayor has instituted a new process that includes:

- Interested residents should submit application online to <http://www.newton.gov/gov/featured/boards.asp>
- The Mayor's office will forward all applications to relevant departments/boards to interview all candidates
- Then a final recommendations will be made to the Mayor and an invitation extended or not
- Potential members must attend 2 COA meeting
- COA members must sign conflict of interest statement
- The process should take around 4 weeks

V. Springwell Report

Naomi Krasner, The COA Springwell representative gave an update and shared that the monthly meeting had focused on finances and that the organization was sound. Naomi continues to be impressed with the scope of services provided.

VI. Senior Citizens Fund Report

Nancy Brown and Audrey Cooper from the Senior Citizen's Fund, the 501c3 organization that supports various activities and needs of the Senior Center, gave a report on the 2017 appeal. The appeal raised \$13,283 from 113 contributions. In the past the fund has supported capital needs expenses like a new fence around the Center and also provides support through the emergency fund that responds to the urgent needs of individuals including prescription drugs, car and home repairs and transportation.

VII. Working Group Reports

- **Housing Group:** Donna Murphy and Joyce Picard provided an update on their activity including:
 - Newton Housing Authority Howard Hayward building that's in process of developing 55 units of senior housing near the Lincoln Elliot School. Donna indicated that the COA had provided a letter of support and that project is now undergoing the public review process.
 - M. Knapp, Joyce and Donna reported on their meetings with developer Stuart Rothman regarding the development of the old library in Newton Center and Rothman's abutting property. Rothman would like to develop 9 units of 55+ housing. During the Warren administration the library had been slated for development of housing low income family housing. This concept has been changed by Mayor Fuller and they are starting from scratch.
 - COA is working to have the City make it a priority to have all surplus property be considered for the development of senior housing.

- **Transportation:** Jayne Colino reported that the City's contract for senior transportation with Veteran's Taxi is coming up for bid. The department of Senior Services is working with Planning Department's transportation staff members Nicole Freeman to explore new possible vendors. They have met with Sheprd, Lyft, Uber and Via. They are considering implementing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for ride-share services as opposed to a public bid which would allow the City to find a vendor who shares a vision for transportation rather than just be the lowest price. They are considering extending Veteran's contract while exploring options.

- **Community Engagement:** Nancy Scammon gave the update. The committee headed by Julie Norstand has met twice and developed a preliminary plan for how to approach social isolation. She mentioned the priority of addressing the needs of those most isolated. She spoke about the need to have direct outreach to this population and about the concept of "Be a friend, Bring a friend."

VI. General Updates

- Susan Paley will be the new chair of the Newton Rotary. She indicated that preliminary discussions have indicated that Social isolation will be the next focus of the Rotary's community service.

VIII. The meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm