

**Newton Council on Aging**  
**April 24, 2018**  
**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Maria Meyers, Joan Belle Isle, Jayne Colino (staff), Beth Dugan, Adele Hoffman, Julie Irish, Marian Knapp, Naomi Krasner, Margaret Leipsitz (staff), Ena Lorant, Julie Norstand, Susan Paley, John Pelletier, Joyce Picard, Ernest Picard, Sue Rasala, Nancy Scammon, Allison Sharma, Carol Ann Shea, Gordon Szerlip, Emma Watkins

**1. Welcome/ Call to Order/ Approval of Minutes/ Introductions**

- Marian called meeting to order and the group went around and made Introductions/ Approval of minutes
- Marian offered a special welcome back to Adele Hoffman who had not been present at the last several meetings do to hospitalization. Adele thanked everyone for their good wishes while she was ill.

**2. Chair's/Director's Report:**

- Status of appointment of new COA Chair: Marian announced that Donna Murphy will be the new Chair of the COA. The baton will be formally passed at the May meeting.
- Status of new building development: The NEWCAL (Newton's Center For Active Living) is the name of the process for the development of the new senior center. It will be the working name not the official building name.
  - Structure of development process:
    - Internal Working Group will guide the process. The working group is composed of staff/representatives from : the Mayor's office, Planning, Public Buildings, Parks and Rec, Senior Services, City Council.
    - The Building Committee will be named at the end of summer. It will be composed of representatives from COA and Parks and Recreation and other members from those who applied.
    - This process is modeled on the process to develop a new school. However, the Senior Center development differs from schools because it is not neighborhood based and will not have a "prescribed use" in the same way schools do.
    - COA and senior needs are recognized as a driver in the new building process
    - Jayne has been charged with determining which centers that the Working Group will visit as part of the review process
    - Jayne is also charged with determining the initial program space needs and will be holding meetings with Senior Center staff to map usage and help set priorities.

- Time frame:
  - Working group members will come to the May COA meeting to get information and provide update on the proposed process and time frame. Marian stressed the importance that all COA members attend to be part of the process.
  - First community meeting to launch process, June 19th at 7:00 p.m. at the Newton Senior Center. This will kick off public process.
  - The process to build a new senior center may take at least 5 years.
  - City is going forward with a Request for Interest (RFI): The city has put out request for other land owners who would like to space swap to open up site options
  - RFQ (request for qualifications) has been sent out to solicit interest for a Project Manager and Design team.
  
- Discussion:
  - Marian cited Sue Rasala and Joan Belle Isle's research on other Senior Centers. Sue indicated that thought about what the needs and priorities for activities must be outlined before any development.
  - Marian led a group brainstorm to surface other Centers to visit. The following is the result of the group brainstorm:
    - Harwich
    - Needham
    - Wellesley
    - Waltham: Renovated Schools
    - Belmont
    - Natick Community Center (senior is in the name)
    - Lexington Community
    - Weston, Community center
    - Brookline
    - Salem, brand new in a mixed use (Community Life Center)
    - Swampscott, built in a school
    - Cambridge has partnership with YMCA, Parking & storage is an issue
  - Jayne requested that if others are visiting Centers outside of Newton that they go thru process instead of going as individuals. Multiple requests are hard on other Center's staff.
  - Emma Watkins, who is director of the Cambridge Senior Centers, reported that Cambridge City agencies gets to use the

senior center building and that it is the site for the City's food pantry which serves 200 people per week. She stressed the need to think about office space. In Cambridge the offices are too small and not safe.

- Every Senior Center identified storage as the biggest issue.
- Gordon asked if the selection of NEWCAL as the working name means that the city has determined that it will be a multipurpose building. Jayne explained that nothing has been determined and that the driving force for development is senior needs. This might mean that other populations might also use the building. A building exclusively designated for seniors is not the promise. All options are on the table.
- Group raised the issue that since the new building is at least 5 years away there are some short term building issues that need to be addressed. There are problems that happen every day. Jayne spoke about the needs to Public Buildings Commissioner, Josh Morse, advocating internally for changes now. Josh understands that there are current needs in the building and the plan for a new building will not deter those things from happening.
- Joyce would like "us to think out of the box." Need to think about Senior Center and housing together.
- Sue indicated that the change in parking due to construction has reduced attendance at the senior center.
- Jayne shared that she was able to get permission for seniors to park on Highland Ave which has taken pressure off for now. It is going to be bumpy. Jayne indicated that the Austin Street project should take around 18 Months
- Ena registered that there had a problem on Highland Ave when an emergency vehicle came by. She felt that there needs to be some planning for emergencies.

### 3. Membership Report: Update on Commission/Advisory members

#### New Members

- COA leadership has submitted names for appointment to COA and Advisory Board members to the Mayor and waiting for finalization. If all of the candidates go through it will be the first time in many years the COA has had a full advisory board. We have more applicants than openings
- Jayne indicated that filling Boards and Commission was priority for Mayor Fuller and that COA is better developed than most other City commissions.
- Jayne reported that the process has been "great"; two people from the COA spoke to all new candidates.
- Those CoA members involved in the process with Marian included Naomi Krasner, Carol Ann Shea and Julie Norstrand.

- Candidate Interviews focused on how each individual could bring their knowledge, interest and skills and experience to the COA to succeed.

Current members:

- Several COA members have terms that are expiring in July
- Those rolling off need to reapply, they will get notice three months before their expiration date.
- In the future, the COA will be staggering the terms so that we don't have so many roll off at the same time.

4. Springwell Report:

- Naomi Krasner, the COA representative to Springwell, gave a brief overview of the organization for the new meeting attendees. Springwell is a private, non-profit organization that creates, manages, and coordinates a wide range of services. Designated by the State as the Aging Services Access Point, Area Agency on Aging, and Protective Services Agency for the residents of Waltham, Newton, Brookline, Watertown, Belmont, Needham, Wellesley and Weston, Naomi shared that Springwell provides a range of services including information and referral service for:
  - Elder abuse
  - Shine program
  - Homecare services, visiting nurse other
  - Meals on Wheels
  - Operates congregate homes
  - Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Springwell provides lunches for the Newton Senior Center.

5. Senior Citizens Fund Report:

- Jayne shared for the new attendees that the Seniors Citizen's fund is the Friends group for Senior Services. It is the 501c3 that raises money for special needs including for emergency relief for residents.

6. Working Group Reports:

- **Housing:**
  - Question was brought up about the Newton Housing Authority's Haywood House at Jackson Gardens and what is the affordable factor? Joyce said that she was meeting with Barney Heath, director of the Planning department and will ask for clarification and report back at the next meeting.

- Allison Sharma was interested in learning more about the Riverside project. She shared that Mark Development had purchased the property and wanted to develop mixed use site. She felt it was important to have someone from the COA involved to make sure it was “age-friendly”. This might be a good place for Senior Center.
- Marian reported on the UCHAN educational forum on Thursday, April 19, 7-9 PM at the Elliot Church on "What is the spectrum of housing needs in Newton? This program provided an overview of the housing needs taken from Newton's Housing Strategy and included stories from people whose stories speak to the need for affordable housing. Marian provides the senior perspective. Ena Lorant also attended to share her experience. There was a strong showing of City Councilors at the meeting.
- Marian expressed the need to keep talking to city councilors about senior issues.
- Discussion of Needham Street and other developments
  - Marian shared that she had been part of the Needham Street visioning convened by the City on 4/23 to develop plan. She put out the idea of putting senior center in this area.
  - Joyce said that was private land. Master plan for development that by the City will shape Vision for the area and be an influence on private developers.
  - State owns the street. Northland owns 23 acres. Marian went on the Site walk.
  - City is going to make zoning laws for the Needham street areas including that there cannot be late entrainment.
  - Northland is buying up lands in the area and in 2016 City developed the comprehensive plan. Need to make the changes on the road.
  - John P indicated the DOT Needham to route 9 protective bike lines on both sides. State Road design plan is done and will be implemented.
  - Greg Reibman from Newton Needham chamber is on the visioning group and is very interested in mix use. Housing and commerce.
  - Marian would like the Northland developer to come to COA at some point in the future.
- **Engagement:**
  - Julie gave report on the committee. She shared that isolation was a national and international problem and that England had created a Ministry for Loneliness.
  - Julie indicated that the immediate goal for the committee is to raise the issues related to social isolation for the general public.
  - As a first step the committee will be participating in the Friendship Work’s annual Walk to end Loneliness on Sunday, May 20<sup>th</sup>. She

encouraged other Newton CoA members to join her and committee members in walking under the CoA banner.

- “The Walk to End Loneliness” raises support for Boston and Jamaica Plain senior programs. While Newton does not benefit directly, Julie thought it would be good to see how the event works with the possibility of doing something similar to support Newton programs.

- **Transportation:**

- John Pelletier gave an update and indicated that he would be pulling together a committee meeting soon and they will meet before the next meeting. John helped lead the Salem age friendly plan and stressed the need to do some short term stuff that we can control and to begin to look at long term things that we can advocate for future development.
- Jayne spoke about an AARP grant application that Newton is applying for to create a Transportation tool kit that will focus on helping people transition out of driving. Jayne will keep the CoA posted.
- Jayne gave an update about the City Senior Transportation plan. She is working with Nicole Freedman from the City’s planning department to develop a RFP for a new transportation vendor. In the meantime, she has extended Veteran’s Taxi contract to serve current needs.

## **7. Legislative Report:**

- Jayne reported that the State has taken action to raise the budget allocation from \$9 to \$12 per elder through the FY19 Formula Grant; this has made it through the house and is heading to the Senate. This will mean \$45K in additional funding for Newton based on the 2010 based data.
- Unfortunately this shift in funding will result in the reduction of funding for 5 mental health projects. State Rep. Ruth Balsler has proposed that this money be reinstated into mental health
- Beth Dugan gave an update regarding the State Community Compact and the move to include Age Friendly as component for the Compact. She expects this will be finalized in the next few months.
- By including Age Friendly in the Community Compact: Cities will have opportunity for State funding for implementing Age-Friendly activities.
- Beth also reported that MCOA grants are available and strongly recommend that Newton apply for travel partners
- State recently conducted scan of senior transportation across the state

## **8. Special Announcements:**

Jayne congratulated Beth Dugan who was named to receive the Louis Lowy Award. Mass Gerontology award for her important contribution in the state research, Policy and planning.

**9. Meeting Close:**

Marian closed the meeting saying she was very proud of the how much the COA has accomplished around the Age Friendly domains. Marian wants to do some envisioning for what needs to happen for Newton to continue to lead in the area.

Meeting Adjourned 9:35p.m.