

Newton Council on Aging Meeting Notes
Tuesday, May 22nd, 2018

Attendees: Maria Meyers, Jayne Colino (staff), Beth Dugan, Adele Hoffman, Julie Irish, Marian Knapp, Naomi Krasner, Margaret Leipsitz (staff), Ena Lorant, Julie Norstand, Joyce Picard, Ernest Picard, Nancy Scammon, Allison Sharma, Carol Ann Shea, Gordon Szerlip, Emma Watkins, Laura Shaw, Tom Shoemaker, Jo-Edith Heffron, Audrey Cooper, Donna Murphy

Guests: City Councilor John Rice, Ela Pelish, Norman Meltz, Joan Shultz, Sue Rasala, Joan Belle Isle, Alex Valcarace (Building Dept), Josh Morse (Building Dept.) , Jessica Johnson

1. Welcome Call to Order/Approval of Minutes

- Marian Knapp announced that she is no longer the Chairperson of the Newton Council on Aging (CoA). She expressed her appreciation to all the Council members and said it was a “great honor” to serve with them and that she was “proud of what they have accomplished together.”
- Marian then introduced Donna Murphy as the new CoA Chair.
- Donna thanked all the people around the table for being part of the Council. She appreciated being able to count on their feedback and looks forward to working with everyone.
- Donna thanked Marian for her service and described Marian as the “superlative” leader, who is “leaving gigantic shoes for her to fill.”
- Jayne expressed thanks to Marian but indicated that she is going to wait to say an official thank you to Marian at the annual meeting in June.
- Donna called for approval of the April CoA meeting, Notes approved.

2. Presentation by New-Cal Working Group and overview of process

- **Donna Murphy** introduced presenters:
 - Josh Morse, Commissioner of Public Buildings for the City of Newton
 - Alex Valcarce, Deputy Commissioner of Public Buildings for the City of Newton
 - John Rice, Newton City Council, Ward 5 Representative
- **Josh Morse** introduced the process:
 - The Department of Public Buildings is leading the process. An Executive Working group composed of key departments including Executive Office, Senior Services, Parks and Rec, Planning helps to steer the process
 - \$100K has been allocated by City Council for a feasibility study for the new space to be used to hire 1) a Owners Project Manager (opm) and 2) Designer
 - NewCAL is the working name for the project, it is an acronym stands for Newton Center for Active Living
 - The process has been launched and will include many in-depth meetings with the community
 - First priority is to establish the program needs; over the next 3 to 4 months they will be meeting with “user” and “interest groups” to determine needs
 - After the meeting process concludes, a list that includes two tiers: 1)what is needed and 2) “what we want” will be generated to help determine priorities.
 - The space must have a site that is not only able to accommodate programs on the inside but must have appropriate outside area that has adequate parking, green space, and can accommodate other transportation safely

- Once the programmatic overview has been established, this will be used to determine the square footage that is needed, important because the site must fit the space needs
 - No final decision has been set on location or a vision for the new center
 - Core mission of the process to meet the needs of seniors.
- **Beth Dugan** asked that the Committee look at the demographic projections just as it has done when looking at school building development. She stressed the growth in Newton's senior population and that a "senior space might actually be as large as a school."
- **John Rice** explained:
 - The Building Department leads the planning process but is it the City Council that actually allocates the resources for buildings and funds ongoing department budgets.
 - He indicated that he had worked as a member of the working group on the building of the Angier and Zervas Schools. He was very complementary of the team.
 - He stressed that this is a long process but that the meetings are necessary so that "we get full buy-in" and "don't have to go backward because not everyone was consulted."
 - Once the site is determined he went on to say it is necessary to have additional meetings that engage neighbors and abutters to the site.
- **Julie Nordstrand** asked about timeline for the development of the senior space. Josh shared that typically there is a three year of planning period and the building is completed in five years. But he stressed that "this is a different kind of project." Seventy-eight committees and commissions need to be notified about the project. It might take six years to develop. We are pushing as fast as we can, but quality is important" Josh went on to say.
- **Marian Knapp** asked the NewCAL team to explain who was considered a user group and who was consider an interest group. Josh clarified that "user groups" are those individuals and organizations who will use the building directly. "Interest groups" are those who might be impacted by the development of the space for example the City Departments that oversee conservation land and public safety to make sure that the building meets best practices. In addition, an "interest group" includes those who might live or operate a business adjacent to the proposed site.
- **Alex** shared that this is an entirely different from other processes that the department has been involved with to date. He explained that City Council has allocated resources for Phase 1. This includes an RFP to hire an Owners Project Manager and a Designer to help shape the project. Ultimately they will be able to present the community and the City Council with a feasibility study specific to sites that may accommodate the determined programs. He went on to say that we need to be "very flexible about our thinking about the space and the furnishing that might be used to better define space uses." He went on to say that, "This is not going to satisfy everyone 100 percent." He encouraged people "to get involved and to share their ideas and opinions. Even if not all the ideas are used, they help us to think things through and to get to new questions and possible solutions."
- **Jayne Colino** clarified that "while we don't know where we are going for this project, "we do have people in the room with a wide range of experience with senior centers." She highlighted that Audrey Cooper had been part of the leadership team that developed the current Senior Center. She went on to say that "we are here to help".

- **Alex** confirmed that the CoA will help do the work all along the way to help shape the priorities and invited council members to attend as many meetings as possible.
- **Jayne Colino** outlined the groups structure:
 - Executive Working Group (EWG) is the backbone of the process and meets every other week. EWG reviews and provides feedback for all bid submissions proposals, contracts, program documents, site selection matrices site layouts, feasibility reports and all passes of design including conceptual, schematic, design development and construction documents. Composed of key City departments involved with the project, EWG attends all meeting of the Executive and Advisory Building Committees.
 - Working Group (WG) is an expansion of the EWG which pulls in key stakeholders as needed to full vet programmatic needs and interdepartmental collaborative opportunities. The WG meets monthly.
 - Executive Building Committee (EBC) reviews and votes to recommend approval of site selections matrices, site layouts, feasibility reports and all phases of design including conceptual schematic, design development, and construction documents. The EBC may vote approval of the project to on to the next phases with our without conditions or refinement recommendations. The EBC determines that particular phase is not ready to move forward and provides feedback and direction on what changes need to be made. The EBC works in conjunction with the Design Review Committee. Composed of select COA members and other representatives from the community, the EBC meets monthly as needed.
 - Advisory Building Committee (ABC) is to make sure that the process is looking at every aspect of the program so the EWG best serves the needs of the community and to explore the community needs that might be addressed through this initiative. Open to the full community, the ABC meets every 1-3 months depending on project phase.
- **Julie Norstrand** asked if there will be a website with all the details of the NewCAL process that will open to residents. Josh explained that there will be a project website. The front page will explain the mission and there will be links that include meeting agendas. In addition, there will also be a project directory and list serves for direct communication. He went on to say that the City will own the process. An email: Newcal@newtonma.gov, will be established and that all communication can be directed to the address. Josh reiterated that he wants everyone to feel to share ideas. "Call me, I answer email and phone 24/7," he went on to say.
- **Marian Knapp** inquired " if we hire someone for the feasibility study would there be others hired to advise the project. Josh said that this is a possibility especially for special needs.
- **Josh Morse** shared that we hire the consultant to help lead the process and they hope to have the consultant hired by the end of the summer with the project really launching in the fall.
- **Joyce Picard** wanted to know "what are we buying for the \$100K" She shared that community members have participated on multiple projects over the years and added great value. "Citizen groups can do great work and don't spend money", she went on to say. Josh clarified that residents will be involved but that the feasibility study needs professionals who have expertise in various fields including conducting site analysis including conservation, water and other technical needs.
- **Marian Knapp** inquired about the Center being a multigenerational center. Josh said that that the process will analyze the current needs for seniors and then layer on other options for how the project

could interface with other departments, including parks and recreations. He said we “Need to think about the range of seniors, need to serve from 90 down to 60.” The core mission is to serve the needs of seniors. Applauding from the audience.

- **Jayne Colino** said, “I said we don’t want to scare people but we need to serve 6 decades; we have people into their 100’s.
- Alex said we are thinking about the new space as a Center for Active Living. Space can include new activities including a maker space for instance. While we need to be practical we should be creative. One reason you need a consultant is because we need experts who not have preconceptions about what was needed and can assess ideas based on feasibility and cost.
- **Donna Murphy** asked about the possibility of siting the Senior Center near a new Police Station. Josh indicated that Police are looking for more space to administrative. Josh said that this is something to look into as possibility.
- **Marian Knapp** asked if the Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) will we be involved throughout the project. Alex responded that “we are looking for someone to do both. However, sometimes we change. “The Owners representative is an office, not one person” he added. A designer is usually an expert in a focused area, so we might have two depending on our needs.
- **Marian Knapp** asked, “Jumping way ahead, at this time do you have a ball park on what this would cost?” Josh indicated that we really we don’t know and that methods for fundraising will follow the design. For instance, “If we cited near a park it could be conversation or CDBG. Funding sources could sway building site he went on to say.
- **Jayne Colino** shared that Senator Creem had earmarked \$6M for the Center in a Bond Bill that still has a long way to go if it is approved.
- **John Rice** stressed that the Mayor’s office and City Council must work together. He shared that there are 2 ways to fund:
 - City bonds 7 to 10 years
 - Or if the project get to big there may need to be debit exclusion over ride.
- **Alex** added that square foot cost varies based on use for instance computer lab space costs more than recreations space.
- Joyce Picard asked about the possibility of siting the Senior Center and housing together. Josh said that Barney Heath is involved in this project and that he is aware of the housing issues for senior housing. He added that building department staff members will be evaluating. For example for the Angier School we explore other sites including City Hall and the Cemetery.
- **Marian Knapp** brought up that “the senior center is currently in need of help.” She questioned about what is going to happen in the next 5 years to improve building. “We can’t stick our head in the sand”, she shared. Josh indicated that he had met with Jayne. In the short term they will do:
 - Industrial Cleaning
 - Striping and flooring

- Address water infiltration
- Spot painting
- Pest control

He shared that he knew about the current “Critter problem” and would be out with pest control tomorrow to address the mouse problem. “We can’t let the space deteriorate,” he went on to say.

- **Laura Shaw** asked, “What is the possibility of an annex to help fill the needs for space?” Jayne explained that “to some extent we have started this. Tai chi is being conducted at the Newton Housing Authority property” she said. “We continue to look at other sites and find alternatives. Another possibility is Hyde Community Center Building. One issue regarding off site program is staffing. Recently we were able to hire a part time program assistant to support these programs. In the past we did not have this capability.”
- **Jayne Colino** shared that Ilana, the program Coordinator, is pregnant so the program assistant is going to be pulled back into Senior Center activities in the Fall. “So we need to go a little slow in expanding to offsite,” Jayne continued.
- **Tom Shoemaker** asked, “What will happen to this facility (Senior Center) in the future. Josh shared that, “We need to protect this space and that it will continue to be an asset for the city. It is important for the city to keep this lovely building. It is just too small for current use”, he continued.
- **Sue R**, commented that she is pleased to know that the seniors needs are going to be center of the process. She indicated that sound proofing must be a major concern for the new space. “Jayne’s talking is disruptive”, she jokingly commented. Josh shared that while he “Can’t control Jayne’s volume. We have the experience, for example, music rooms near libraries in schools and also making sure that building are most be appropriate for hearing impaired students. An acoustical engineer will be consulted for the project”
- Alex shared that accessibility in all aspects of the space are a priority.
- **Marian Knapp** commented that there are “many different development projects around the city and that there are things that can be considered now. We don’t want to lose those opportunities she said. Josh responded that, “There are a lot of things going on and given that some of these are massive including the Northland Project on Oak and Needham Streets . I think we are in good position to be part of anything that makes sense, Josh went on to say.
- **Donna Murphy** wrapped up the question and answer period of the meeting. Addressing the NewCAL team, she said “You guys have been awesome. Knowing that our concerns are things that you are considering is important to us. We as a group are eager, ready, willing and able to pitch in. Please rely on us and we will take it upon ourselves to stay in contact. It has been a tremendous meeting”, she concluded.
- **Donna Muphy** announced that the end of year CoA meeting is Tuesday, June 19 at 5pm at the Senior Center. “We will have our usual dinner (\$15 per person will be charged) and then members will move into the NewCAL public meeting.”
- **Jayne Colino** provided an update on the status of State formula grant. She indicated that while the Governor had wanted to increase to \$12 per senior resident allocated to the community, the actual

number will be \$11 per person. This will result in an additional \$24K for Newton. This will not result in the cuts to any other program. Previously there was a fear that mental health programs would be cut. Jayne credited David Steven's from MCOA as a great advocate for seniors at the State level.

- **The meeting conclude at 9:30pm**