

Newton Council on Aging Advisory Board Meeting  
Tuesday March 25, 2014 – 7:30 pm  
Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street Newtonville MA 02460

**Attendance:** N. Brown , C. Gibson, H. Gunner, N. Hartstone, H. Haywood, A. Hoffman, M. Knapp, S. Paley, E. Picard, J. Picard, C. Rose, N. Scammon, C.A. Shea, D. Sostek,

**Staff:** J. Colino, Director Department of Senior Services (NDSS)

**Notified:** A. Cooper, J.E. Heffron, E. Rosenbaum, T. Shoemaker

**Guests:** E. Lorant, B. Dugan , D. Murphy, E. Wade, R. Garrity

**1. Welcome/Call to Order:** M. Knapp, chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Introductions.

**2. Guest Speaker:** Rob Garrity, Director of Sustainability, Newton. Rob explained his position to focus on:

1. More efficient operations
2. Social issues
3. Economic issues

Newton is a vibrant city and wants to encourage new people to come and current residents to remain. A Northeastern University study suggests that Newton and other cities must focus on "smart growth" which includes housing, environment, and energy. A community is challenged if it can't house the next generation.

He's creating a comprehensive sustainability plan: Some specific projects:

1. The city is spending \$1.5M for new street lights with LED lighting. This will save \$250,000-370,000 per year on electricity. With state grants the project pays for itself in 3 years.
2. Developing energy-efficient plans for 30 of the city's 70 buildings. Half will have solar panels.
3. Bump outs for pedestrian safety.

Housing issues are complex. We need clear plan that serves Newton's senior's needs and is also legal in relation to prior residency priority.

Discussion – RB and COA/AB members:

1. Savings from the LED replacement lights could help the seniors with increased street lighting. How savings are spent is up to the aldermen, but more money will be available.
2. Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) - seniors need more dense housing near shopping/transportation.
3. Often the same people come to public meetings on any specific issue.
4. Newton could consider signing up for the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance.
5. Over 25% of Newton residents are 65+ (Newton City Census). We need to consider this now.
6. Newton seniors have strong clout because they vote.
7. Housing could be intergenerational.
8. There are seniors who are frustrated with no concrete action for housing.
9. Accessory housing will work in some situations but need more types of housing for seniors. Need sustained leadership. It's hard to "densify" and we need everyone involved.
10. Sustainability plan will have several elements including
  - 1) Village walkability (1.5 miles of repair/year) so prioritization is important.
  - 2) Understand which villages people don't drive as much.
  - 3) Understand how T access impacts T usage.
  - 4) Decrease energy use by 20% (2% of use is from the city)
  - 5) We are a leading community and need to develop a model.

Discussion: The Department of Senior Services and the Senior Center are addressing sustainable, livable community issues. Transportation has increased to village centers and city events, budget is being used creatively to support programs/services. Data is being used to inform decisions. The COA works to have members attend meetings at city hall and the city to make sure we are known and that seniors have a voice.

Because of the quality of Newton's schools, everyone's property values are higher. We should consider having village list-serves to help people within villages and neighborhoods connect with each other. Lower Falls and Newtonville have them. A series of events in June will culminate in a "living" Sustainability Plan.

### 3. Projects:

- a. NDSS/COA is planning a benchmarking project to learn what other communities are doing. Project would
  - 1) Help document how Newton compares with other communities to be used in presentations
  - 2) Find other programs with which to partner.Contact Jayne or Marian if you are interested in working on the benchmarking project.
  
- b. Jayne announced an increase in FY15City budget specifically for operations and program costs. This will be the first time since the inception of NDSS that there will be program line item. NDSS funds come from the city (\$599K), the state(\$150K), and Community Development Block Grant (\$37,120) monies, program revenues ( avg \$35k/yr) and the Senior Citizens Fund ( \$25-30K/yr).
  
- c. The volunteer appreciation luncheon will be held at the NSC on April 8th.

### 4. Working group reports:

- a. Transportation: A "Design Classification for our Streets" has been drafted by David Koses and James Freas from the Planning Dept. Draft describes how to plan for different types of streets and then dictate signage, lighting, design issues, etc. A recommended "age-friendly zone" would be particularly safe for pedestrians with limited mobility. Holly is drafting part of the plan to incorporate needs of older people. Kay Kahn and Ruth Balsler introduced a bill for senior zones that would include a 20 mph speed limit.
  
- b. Housing: Marian said the housing group will reconvene as soon as she hears availability of the members.

5. Springwell: No report this month.

6. Membership: 5 new AB candidates are pending and hopefully will be fully appointed by next month. Additionally, 4 re-appointments to AB are pending.

7. **Legislative Report:** MCOA has two restoration items on their agenda- **See attached document from MCOA**

### 6. Old/new business:

1. Mayor Community meet-up flyers were distributed.
2. The Vet Center meets the first Tuesday of each month.
3. LGBT Pride event, 6/6 at 5:00 p.m., north lawn. Ellen Wade and Holly Gunner will speak.
4. VOIP technology (voice over internet protocol) does not have same consumer protections for 65 and over customers as land line service does. VOIP technology may not work with telereponse and security systems. Ask before purchase.
5. Memorial Day parade is on 5/18 and goes from NNHS to the Pelligrini Playground. There will be a seating area in front of the senior center.
6. Newton Cares coalition has formed to help raise awareness about suicide prevention and mental health issues. There is an event planned for Saturday May 3rd. See attached flyer. Please consider staffing the NDSS resource table.

**Next meeting: April 22, 2014. Staff will join us.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Submitted by Carol Rose