

**Newton Council on Aging**  
**Meeting Minutes, October 28, 2014**

COA/AB Members Present:

B. Dugan, C. Gibson, H. Gunner, H. Haywood, JE Hefron, A. Hoffman, M. Knapp, (Chair), N. Krasner, E. Lorant, D. Murphy, S. Paley, J. Picard, E. Picard, C Rose, E. Rosenbaum, CA Shea, D. Sostek

Notified: A. Cooper, T. Shoemaker, N. Scammon, N. Brown, E. Wade

Staff: J. Colino, Director DSS

Guests: Tamara Bliss, Rick Reilly

Guest speaker: Frank Caro, Brookline: B-CAN

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Minutes: Changes to minutes. Donna Murphy attended the last meeting. Minutes approved.
3. Meeting with Mayor Setti Warren and Dori Zaleznik, Chief Administrative Officer

The Executive Committee met with Mayor Setti Warren and Dori Zaleznik on October 2, 2014 to discuss a potential name change and repurposing of the Senior Center building. The Mayor shared his vision for Newton as a whole. He talked about how the building fit into master planning for the city. Participants in the meeting shared their concerns regarding perceived reduced access to services for seniors. The Mayor indicated that this meeting was intended to be the beginning of "the conversation" and more discussion will follow. Ms. Zaleznik said that the users of the building have the right to name the building. Concerns were shared about 1) a potential name change without the involvement of the COA; 2) building capacity, and 3) possible cuts in services. The Mayor and Ms. Zaleznik assured participants that senior services would not be cut and that any discussion about a change in name would involve the Council on Aging. Participants were assured that no decisions had been made about a name change. The Mayor and Ms. Zaleznik were asked who had the right to determine what the building was used for and who would be responsible for managing expanded use of the building. The vision is to use the building to its maximal capacity as a community resource. There was some discussion about what potential name could be that reflects both the Senior Center and the community at large? The mayor specifically asked for support around the Austin Street development project. The meeting ended with an assurance that there would be a follow-up meeting for discussion purposes.

#### 4. Updates: COA/DSS

COA and DSS have been invited to meet with the Program and Services Committee of the Board of Alderman on November 5, 2014 along with the Executive Department. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss aldermanic constituents' concerns about changes in Senior Services. The meeting starts at 7:45 in room 222 in City Hall. Staff and COA members are invited to attend.

#### 5. Guest speaker Frank Caro, Professor Emeritus, at University of Massachusetts.

Dr. Caro began BCAN, the Brookline Community Aging Network. Basic issues concerning the needs of seniors are the same everywhere. For effective change, it is important to take advantage of available opportunities where you can find them. Brookline's structure is unique but there are actions that are adoptable to other circumstances and communities.

Brookline has an aging population. Of the 240 Town Meeting members, 60 are seniors. Many town employees are seniors. There is sympathy toward aging people. There is an explosion of school population and seniors are a comparatively "good deal" in terms of cost to the Town. It's financially expedient to keep an older person in their home and avoid more school aged children moving in. Brookline desired to have a collaborative effort that went beyond the Beacon Hill Village model, which is a membership organization. B-CAN decided to form an advocacy arm to focus on Brookline as a place to live. Livable Community Advocacy Committee with the slogan: Why would anyone move to a retirement community when they could live in Brookline? They developed a dual strategy: 1) Call attention to good features including public restroom map on website, and identifying buildings with elevators and other features. 2) Establish relationships with town departments. In addition, the group began advocating for improvements, particularly in sidewalks, access to public transportation, and snow removal. Businesses and multi-unit buildings have to get their sidewalks in a non-slippery condition within 3 hours of a storm. This happens through a complaint-driven report system that uses a citizen network to report complaints. Some local government departments were not happy with this system. B-CAN does the preliminary work by helping to locate the snow removal problems for the Police Department to follow up on. Town Meeting Members were asked to create a proactive system and the town administrator has set up a task force to address this request. A "livability" theme is important to older people but also important to people of all ages. In spite of some town resistance, they are moving forward.

WHO Age-Friendly City designation requires that the head city official makes a commitment for a city to become Age-Friendly. Portland, OR and NYC are two examples. Brookline decided to move ahead and put together an application document, received accreditation, and now a team meets regularly. Dr. Caro was asked how to draw people in to operationalize objectives? He responded by saying that the diversity needs of everyone (including the older population) has to be considered. They created an event to bring everyone together.

There are some concrete results that would not have happened without the Age-Friendly

designation: Housing staff of affordable housing has projected the need for more senior housing; a forum on senior housing with developers which brought out a constituency to recognize this need. This constituency will now speak to neighborhoods that have concerns.

There has been an interest in accessory units, but it was unclear what was doable. There is now a collaboration between the Planning Department, the COA, and the Building Department. The Age-Friendly designation has helped build collaboration. An independent group like the advocacy group has more freedom than an official group like a COA. A group of citizens can operate more independently than an appointed group.

People fight density but density makes all kinds of things possible- activities, transportation, shopping areas. Harvard Joint Studies for Housing Studies had a conference recently that showed how savings in health care could cover all needed housing costs.

#### 6. Other Comments/Reports

- H. Haywood reported that the Mayor asked him to tell Jayne that she is important in the City, is among the top layer of people making change, and could be a leader for seniors statewide. She is one of the people who can make the vision happen.

- Remaining agenda will be carried forward to the next meeting.

#### 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM

Submitted by Carol Rose, Secretary