

COUNCIL ON AGING—NOVEMBER 24, 2020

Present: Joan Belle Isle, Jayne Colino, Sandra Davidow, Mary Glendon, Adele Hoffman, Jo Edith Heffron, Naomi Krasner, Ena Lorant, Norm Meltz, Maria Meyer, Donna Murphy, Julie Norstrand, John Pelletier, Sue Rasala, Nancy Scammon, Sue Schlesinger, Allison Sharma, Dan Shaw, Laura Shaw, Sue Schlesinger, Gordon Szerlip

Absent: Dov Bard, Beth Dugan, Tyrone Hooks, Joyce Picard, Eric Rosenbaum, Lisa Samelson, Tom Shoemaker

Guests: EOEА Secretary Elizabeth Chen, Amanda Bernard, Alice Ingerson

Meeting was held by Zoom Videoconference and was called to order at 7:35 PM.

Minutes approved from Oct 27 meeting; approval was unanimous with no abstentions.

Roundtable with Secretary Chen

Donna Murphy provided a brief overview of the Newton COA, highlighting Newton's focus on becoming an Age Friendly City and recent outreach initiatives in response to COVID19. Norm Meltz then provided an update on NewCAL, before handing the floor to Secretary Chen.

Secretary Chen noted this was her second visit to a Council on Aging, her first being in her hometown of Lexington. She expressed her concern of the isolation being imposed by the pandemic, and how increased isolation was being linked to more rapid physical and cognitive decline. We mentioned the initiatives we have taken to address isolation, including the work of the Isolation and Social Engagement Group, calls from senior center staff to people living alone, and Julie Norstrand's ongoing survey to assess the needs of older adults during the pandemic.

Sec'y Chen emphasized the importance of engagement, expressed concern for caregivers, addressed issues that are pertinent to Assisted Living and Nursing Home facilities and to those living in them, and expressed concern for the ongoing need to address age-related loss of hearing and vision. She also addressed the overall budget. She concluded her remarks with a discussion of the importance of ensuring that our built environment is truly age-friendly, and the need for economic security, which means people need to be prepared to work during their older years.

Updates

Transportation (John Pelletier) – John reported back that community feedback has led to a delay in the proposal to reduce public transportation offerings, but emphasized that we need to continue to reach out to the State and our state representatives, notably Sen. Creem, to ensure that the State understands how reduced public transportation offerings impacts older adults. John also noted Mayor Fuller’s strong support for maintaining public transportation, including by her vocal participation in community meetings.

Boomer Project Update – After discussions with COA members and the Executive Committee, we have decided to wrap the Boomer Project into the activities of the Domain Action Teams, and will be reaching out to each team to have them start to strategize around a world that will have more adults over 60 than under 18 as of 2030.

Proposed Mental Health Seminar (Laura Shaw) – The Mental Health Seminar is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec 1.

Zoning – The Planning Department will be holding a community update meeting on Weds, Dec 2 (7-9PM) and Thurs, Dec 3 (12-2PM) to update the community on progress to date. Donna to send link for sign up.

General – Jayne provided an update on the activities currently being undertaken to ensure that older adults are able to enjoy the holiday season despite the limitations of the pandemic. This includes home delivery of Thanksgiving meals, cookie distributions and ongoing outreach.