

COUNCIL ON AGING—FEBRUARY 22, 2022

Present: Joan Belle Isle, Sandra Davidow, Mary Glendon, Naomi Krasner, Ena Lorant, Maria Meyer, Julie Norstrand, John Pelletier, Joyce Picard, Robert Pierson, Sue Rasala, Nancy Scammon, Susan Schlesinger, Laura Shaw, Dan Shaw, Gordon Szerlip

Absent: Beth Dugan, Tyrone Hooks, Eric Rosenbaum, Lisa Samelson, Allison Sharma, Tom Shoemaker

Staff: Jayne Colino, Liz O'Connell

Call to Order/Approval of Minutes

The meeting was held by Zoom Videoconference and was called to order by Joan Belle Isle at 7:33 PM. Laura Shaw moved that the minutes of the January meeting be approved; Naomi Krasner seconded. The minutes were approved.

Introductions- Guests and Staff

Guests and staff were invited to introduce themselves when they spoke.

NewCAL Update

Joan Belle Isle thanked all those who attended the NewCAL meeting on February 17. Approximately 250 people attended, so it was great to have strong representation by the COA. Joan asked the group for feedback—any comments or ideas they had following the meeting, with an eye toward helping us to move ahead. Recognizing there are two sides to every argument, Joan managed a full discussion that included the following points:

- The stained-glass windows should be featured prominently in the new building.
- A review of the next steps of Historic Commission: The Historic Commission will vote on whether to move forward the nomination of 345 Walnut Street as an historic landmark on March 24. If they vote to move the nomination forward the Planning Department and Planning and Development Board administer the investigation to assess the criteria needed to be met. Shortly after the 2/17 NewCAL meeting, the City presented to the Historic Commission on the ways we plan to incorporate features of the current building into NewCAL. There is an appeal process to an Historic Commission decision on a landmark. The City Council has no formal role in designating a site as an historic landmark.
- If the site is designated as a landmark it would prohibit any public use of the building because of the inaccessibility of the front entrance.

- COA needs to be stronger in its view about the new Senior Center. We need to get our opinion out there. Jayne reviewed all the ways in which the Senior Center has reached out. The petition distributed by the COA and the Senior Citizens Fund of Newton Inc.* now has more than 1,000 signatures. The City is saying that they've never had such a huge response to a project.
- Perhaps we need to branch out beyond seniors and explain how NewCAL can benefit everyone in the city. Would expanded media outreach help?
- No certified letters were sent to abutters because nothing in the process called for this. There are three or four abutters to the Senior Center; the group from Newtonville goes beyond the abutters.
- It's amazing that in ten years the City has gone from not seniors being on anyone's agenda to today, with everyone talking about seniors!
- Beyond the building, the Senior Center is looking toward a campaign to rebrand itself.

Jayne announced that residents of a local independent senior living community will be coming to the Senior Center tomorrow, February 23, at 3pm to hold a rally in support of NewCAL. They have invited the press and others to participate.

Joan Belle Isle summarized the discussion by stressing the need for the Newton community to work and live together, both now and in the future. We don't want to make the NewCAL opposition from Newtonville turn into a fight. Jayne recommended that we let the next few steps play out. The will of the City Council is there to make NewCAL happen.

By-Laws Update

Laura Shaw reported that she, Beth Dugan, and Naomi Krasner did a first pass on the by-laws, updating outdated language. They had some questions and wondered if the best way to proceed would be for Joan/Jayne to meet with them to review the proposed changes. Jayne asked the By-Laws Committee to go as far as they wanted with the document, then submit it for review by Joan and Jayne. The last time the by-laws were reviewed was in 2006.

Membership

Jayne distributed an updated list of COA and Advisory Board members along with the announcement of this meeting. Robert Pierson has been included as a "pending" member.

Joan is communicating with those whose terms are expiring. City Hall contacts those in the months preceding the term expiration. An interview with Ellen Penso will be scheduled.

Technology Committee

Joan Belle Isle proposed setting up an ad hoc Technology Committee to keep abreast of technological changes and how they affect seniors. A good example of changes is the ending of the 3G network. The committee could also address social things, e.g., hosting a Netflix party with friends. Robert Pierson would be a good resource for this; the Senior Center's technology tutors could also be a good resource.

Nominations for Age Friendly Awards

This year will be our fourth nominating individuals for our annual Age Friendly Award. COA members were asked to consider individuals for this honor. Several members nominated Josh Morse. While this award has been given annually, we could award people more frequently in the future.

Updates

- Friendship Works is interested in co-sponsoring with the Senior Center the showing of *All the Lonely People*, a documentary. Tentative dates for the showing are June 14 or 15, which are the dates the high school has given to us. Jayne asked for the help of Isolation Committee members to get this effort going; Dan Shaw and Sandra Davidow will meet with Jayne or Ilana to move ahead.
- Joan Belle Isle and Jayne are planning to talk with Mark Development regarding the senior housing and memory care facility they are building on Crafts Street (behind the Whole Foods) to learn more about the project.
- The budget hearing for Senior Services is Wednesday, May 4, 7pm. COA members were asked to put this date on their calendars. NewMo is a larger budget item this year, since the commuters' NewMo was added. Another agenda item is staffing as we look toward growth with NewCAL.

**The Senior Citizen's Fund is the 501(c)(3) non-profit, fundraising arm affiliated with the Department of Senior Services. The current President is Beth Tishler; Vice-President is Marion Cooper Pollack; Treasurer is Norm Meltz. Margie Birnbaum and Nancy Brown are also involved, and the group is still recruiting.*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07pm.