

COUNCIL ON AGING—APRIL 26, 2022

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

Absent: Beth Dugan, Mary Glendon, Tyrone Hooks, Eric Rosenbaum, Lisa Samelson, Tom Shoemaker

Staff: Jayne Colino, Emily Kuhl, Liz O’Connell

Call to Order/Review/Vote on Minutes

The meeting was held by Zoom Webinar and called to order by Joan Belle Isle at 7:43 PM. The start delay was due to the new Webinar format; it took a little longer for people to join the meeting. Ena Lorant moved that the minutes of the March meeting be approved; Sue Rasala seconded. The minutes were approved.

Introductions- Guests and Staff

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

Presentation by Jennifer Molinsky, Project Director, Housing an Aging Society Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University (www.jchs.harvard.edu)

Jennifer Molinsky presented on “The Evolution of Housing for Older Adults, What Is Possible in Newton?” The purpose of the presentation was to increase the COA’s understanding of housing variables so the group can advocate well for seniors in the future. Jennifer’s talk focused on the 65+ cohort, acknowledging that those in the 80+ age group typically have different housing needs. Her presentation addressed housing trends and resources and was supported by numerous data points.

Slides are attached to the email as an inclusion to the minutes.

A few basic points from the presentation included:

- A review of international housing trends and resources.
- Service coordinators (staff) in senior housing are instrumental in decreasing isolation. Just living in an apartment building doesn’t guarantee a social environment.
- Health and residence resources for seniors need to converge.
- The availability and affordability of different housing types for seniors and the staffing of them are concerns.

Discussion followed the presentation, during which it was noted that Newton is mostly single-family homes. There is a tax deferral program through which one can use deferred tax dollars to modify his/her home. Jayne suggested a possible goal for the COA could be to learn more about resources for home modifications. Jennifer Molinsky stated that the U.S. lacks a coherent housing policy. Dan Shaw noted that since there is not a lot of new housing being built in Newton, the COA needs to focus on services, i.e. mobile services, with someone acting like a Service Coordinator. Another suggestion was to involve the COA earlier in the city planning process, so the COA could better support seniors living in Newton. Emily Kuhl wondered if Newton senior housing could be more flexible; right now, when a person is offered housing, they must accept that offer or return to the bottom of the list. Another suggestion was to push for a universal application for housing.

Mark Development will be presenting on the Crafts Street project next month.

Membership

Ellen Penso's nomination has been submitted to Mayor Fuller's office and is pending. John Pelletier's nomination for reappointment has been submitted to Mayor Fuller's office.

Nomination Slate Open for Officers

In May, the slate for nominations opens up. One can nominate him/herself or others. The Vice Chair and the Secretary spots are open. The Vice Chair must come from one of the nine COA members. Nominations for Secretary can come from either the COA or Advisory Board members.

A vote will be taken at the June 28th dinner meeting at 6 p.m. Sandra will coordinate the dinner for about 25 people, ordering an affordable catered meal.

Updates

- NewCAL: Senior Center staff is planning to transition to an interim location as soon as the details can be agreed upon a public announcement will be made. The construction of NewCAL will take 18-24 months.

All the Lonely People: The viewing of this documentary will be held on Wednesday, June 15th at 6:30 p.m. at the West Newton Cinema. Two hundred people can attend. The planning group, which includes Dan, Laura, and Sandra, will meet tomorrow.

- The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.