

COUNCIL ON AGING—SEPTEMBER 27, 2022

Present: Joan Belle Isle, Sandra Davidow, Mary Glendon, Naomi Krasner, Julie Norstrand, John Pelletier, Robert Pierson, Sue Rasala, Eric Rosenbaum, Nancy Scammon, Susan Schlesinger, Laura Shaw, Dan Shaw

Absent: Ena Lorant, Joyce Picard, Allison Sharma, Tom Shoemaker

Staff: Jayne Colino, Liz O'Connell

Call to Order/Review/Vote on Minutes

Joan Belle Isle called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. Since there were no minutes from the June meeting, no vote was required.

Introductions

Jayne Colino introduced guests and staff.

Chair's Welcome Back/Agenda Development

Joan Belle Isle welcomed everyone and took a look at the year ahead. Joan will be requesting input monthly from COA members regarding issues (standard or otherwise), events, and activities of interest to seniors and the broader community that might affect older adults. Such items may be positive or negative in nature and will be reviewed by the Executive Committee with the goals of planning in advance and improving our discussions. Board members discussed keeping in regular contact with City Councilors, possibly by having one member give the weekly City Councilors' report to the group. Another idea was to follow the activity of neighborhood and area councils. Possibly in the future, we could have Advisory Board members representing every Newton zip code.

City of Newton Transportation Director Nicole Freedman resigned to take next career steps. This move is important to us because Nicole established NewMo and was our partner in its implementation. Currently NewMo has eight cars on the road, with the highest number of rides in a single day being 400. Less than 30% of the rides are being requested by seniors; the commuter service took off! Jayne is monitoring the budget.

NewCAL and Interim Space

During the summer, the NewCAL site plan and funding were approved, as well as the ARPA funds for the purchase of the residence on Walnut Place. Jayne shared a two-page handout on our interim space plan, which highlights important dates, addresses, and programming information. The Senior

Center will be getting the word out regarding our move both in print and electronically, through all avenues. The Center is developing a local Newton Highlands street map as well.

Some specifics: The art programs will be paused until January 1. We anticipate the art programs, when resumed, will be held at the Brigham House with the exception of ceramics. TRIO has space for community use on the third floor of their building. We may have some pop-up programs ideas there; the Senior Citizens' Fund will be offering such programs to increase awareness of the Fund as they prepare for a grand opening campaign. The Newton Highlands Area Council uses the Brigham House to meet, so there will be others using the House during our time there. Staff will be at the Brigham House except for Elizabeth Lund who will be staying at 345 Walnut Street through December 7 and then moving to the Newton Free Library in support of our SHINE and tax programs. The Hyde Center has a lobby, which will probably be the only place available for general socializing. The Senior Center staff are discussing socializing as well as creating a designated drop-off spaces at the Brigham House and the Hyde Community Center. The city will be raising toilets and installing automatic door openers at the Hyde. Springwell's home delivery service has been located outside the current Senior Center, under the tent, for the last several months. This Springwell service will stay with us at NewCAL. Jayne is finding an interim space for Springwell for the next two years, working with the Parks and Recreation Department.

Space suggestions made included the Allen Center and the Taiwanese consulate in West Newton. The Senior Center has not pursued these locations because our goal was to have everything as close as possible and because we are looking primarily at city-owned sites. Additional suggestions are welcomed.

There are many moving parts in this process; things are constantly changing and progressing as we build toward the future. There will be more information forthcoming, starting next week.

Newsletter Refresh

We will be redoing our print newsletter! Design development is occurring between now and the winter. We will be returning to a 16-page newsletter, with programs and opportunities listed more specifically, as before, along with topical issues and educational articles. The first edition will be out in January 2023 and be printed every other month. We must have advertisers to fund the newsletter; LPI Publishing secures the ads for us. Please send articles of interest to Elizabeth Lund (elund@newtonma.gov).

Village Zoning

The City is embarking on a project to update village center zoning regulations with the goal of revitalizing our villages. The last time the zoning regulations were reviewed was in the 1950s. Joan Belle Isle sent information to the COA Board today with information and links. The City is seeking feedback from residents. The link from Deb Crossley is the most informative; it is a video that overviews the project. <https://lwvnewton.org/2022/05/the-league-presents-zoning-redesign-part-1/> COA members could advocate for mixed use development, which will help seniors as well as others. It would be good to have buildings big enough to have elevators, with smaller units, and within walking distance to resources. Ground floor units might be reserved for older adults. Courtyards would lend to building community. Consider where we will be in 50 years. How will our fossil fuel use have changed? Will there be fewer cars on the road and fewer parking spaces needed?

Board members inquired about presenting before the Zoning Board or City Councilors on what would make for an age-friendly village center. There may be an opportunity later on to present to the zoning board or city councilors.

Updates

Accessory Apartments Ordinance

Regarding detached accessory apartments: Currently the City Council has to approve such apartments. The idea is to allow some detached units by right, with only a permit needed. A public hearing will be held at a future date; Joan Belle Isle will keep her eyes open.

Springwell

Laura Shaw reported that Springwell is involved in merging with Baypath. Currently, Springwell covers 22 towns; with the merger, they would cover 36. Springwell has grown from 150 to 250 employees. Their work is focused on integrating boards, services, and staff. Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is federal money that organizations request via grants for services for older adults. The paperwork is daunting, and not enough grants are being written. Springwell is working on making the paperwork easier.

Isolation Task Force

The Isolation Task Force broke for the summer; the first meeting of 2022-2023 will be on October 17 at 11 AM. The committee welcomes new members! Laura Shaw proposed establishing a group that might be interested in isolation of the elderly.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM. Laura Shaw made the motion; Sandra Davidow seconded.