

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

August 10, 2020

Notes

Attending: Paula Friedman, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Susan Cohen, Susan Granoff, John Harris, Carol Seibert, David Trevvett, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, Henry Winkelman, & Frank Caro

1. **Report and recommendations of Pedestrian Lighting Committee.** Frank made an illustrated presentation outlining the report and recommendations of the Select Board Pedestrian Lighting Committee. Frank reminded the committee that the concern about pedestrian lighting began when Susan Granoff brought the issue to the Livable Community Advocacy committee. An extensive discussion erupted before Frank completed his presentation. The following are some points made by committee members. Paula Friedman recommends that the report more explicit emphasis on pedestrian safety with attention to the ability of pedestrians to see people who might be a threat to their safety. Paula also reported that she has appreciation for light poles themselves such as the ornamental poles in Brookline Village. Susan Granoff suggested that explicit emphasis be placed on some key destinations for pedestrians. In her opinion the major destinations should be the Senior Center, Town Hall, the libraries in North Brookline, and the Brookline High School. (The report currently includes a map showing major walking routes to the high school that are candidates for improved pedestrian-scale lighting.) Both Susan Granoff and Susan Cohen would like more attention given to mature street trees that block street lighting. We discussed the fact that historically there has been no coordination of placement of streetlights and street trees. In the future the planning of placement of street trees and streetlights should be coordinated. (After the meeting, Melissa Trevvett called attention to the fact that the word “coordination” does not appear in the report; in light of the importance of coordination in our discussion, the report should be expanded to include attention to coordination of lighting with other agendas.) Henry Winkelman would like the report

include attention to lighting at the MBTA “D” line stops. Frank emphasized the importance of a board or commission that will take on the lighting agenda on a long-term basis. One possibility is that the Pedestrian Advisory will take on that responsibility. The report has been presented to the Pedestrian Advisory Committee; the committee has expressed interest. Since the Pedestrian Advisory Committee reports to the Transportation Board, the Transportation Board would need to assume responsibility for pedestrian lighting and ask the Pedestrian Advisory Committee to pursue the topic on its behalf.

2. We also talked about the importance of attention to lighting as an aspect of major street improvement projects. The fact that lighting is included in Complete Streets policy increases the likelihood that lighting will get the attention that it needs when significant street improvement projects are done. Lighting projects will be less expensive if they are done as part of major street improvement initiatives. The high cost of lighting will be less conspicuous when lighting is part of a broad street improvement initiative.
3. **Kent-Station Street housing.** Frank reported that 2Life has been selected to develop Kent-Station Street senior housing initiative. No information is available on the approach that 2Life has proposed. Henry Winkelman has no further information and assumes that the initiative will continue to proceed at a very slow pace.
4. **Police reform.** John reported briefly on the appointment of two task forces by the Select Board to re-imagine or reform the Police Department. John recommends that we pay attention to the work of the two task forces. John called attention to the fact that Brookline is attractive to older people because it is a safe place to live.
5. **Returning B.U. students during the pandemic.** John Harris also spoke about public safety concerns associated with the return of Boston University students to Brookline. John reported briefly on measures that B.U. is taking to prevent outbreaks of Covid-19 among its students. John wants to be assured that when in public places in Brookline, students will wear face coverings and maintain social distancing. John wants better signs encouraging safe practices in public places. Frank recommended that John pursue his proposal with Swanee Jett, Director of the Brookline Health Department.
6. **Temporary pedestrian enhancements.** Frank spoke about the need for public attention to temporary pedestrian enhancements put in place during Covid19 pandemic. Without full public review, significant enhancements were put in place on a temporary basis. Greater scrutiny is needed if the practices are to be retained on a permanent basis.
 - a. One initiative in North Brookline eliminates the need to press buttons to get walk signals.
 - b. A second initiative eliminates curbside parking in favor of expanded walking and bicycle lanes. Recently some of these spaces have been allocated for outdoor dining. The expanded pedestrian/dining spaces are most highly concentrated in

Coolidge Corner on both Harvard Street and Beacon Street. David pointed out that allocation for dining space competes with expanded walking space. Brookline may have to decide whether outdoor dining space is more valuable than walking space.

If any of these changes are to be made permanent, a formal review process will be necessary. Frank encourages committee members to be attentive so that they can provide well informed recommendations.

7. **Additional street benches.** Frank reported that more benches have been added at bus stops and on Beacon Street. Four new benches have been placed on Beacon Street. The benches were paid for with funds coming from taxes on Uber & Lyft rides. Todd Kirrane is recommending funding for sidewalk benches from this source in future years.
8. **BrooklineCAN “Living with Covid-19 initiative.”** Frank reported on two upcoming aspects of the Brookline “Living with Covid-19” project.
 - a. The first is a panel discussion August 31 at 3 PM following up on the June panel discussion on the topic. The discussion will use the Zoom platform.
 - b. The second is a survey of Brookline seniors on their experience with living with Covid-19. The survey will be available both on the internet and in a paper copy. The survey is being conducted in conjunction with the Senior Center. Instructions on access to the survey will be in September newsletters. Results will be helpful to Senior Center staff in offering services during the pandemic.
9. **Senior Housing Forum.** BrooklineCAN is sponsoring a virtual forum on expanded supply of senior housing in Brookline. The forum will be held on September 10 at 6 PM. The forum will include a presentation by Jennifer Molinsky of Harvard University on the need for more senior housing. Panelists will talk about Brookline initiatives: 2Life’s Brown family residence on Harvard Street, Center Communities plans for Centre Street (next to 100 Centre Street), the Housing Authority’s plans for replacing and expanding the Col. Floyd development, the Welltower/Balfour senior living residence on Fisher Hill, and the Kent-Station Street proposal. (The forum is something of a substitute for BrooklineCAN’s annual meeting.)
10. **Major topic for next meeting.** Frank is seeking suggestions for the major topic for our next meeting.

Notes prepared by Frank Caro