

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

March 11, 2019

Attendance: Frank Caro, Susan Cohen, Paula Friedman, Susan Granoff, John Harris, Carol Seibert, Ann Stitt, David Trevvett, Melissa Trevvett, and Asaya Zimbov

Guests: Michael Allen, Alberta Lipson, Deidre Waxman

1. Deidre Waxman spoke about the Retirement Engagement Alternative Program (REAP) program. Employment is a major REAP focus. REAP assists Brookline residents who are 60 and over to find employment. The Council on Aging has been offering employment assistance for 24 years. Most of the REAP clients with an employment interest are seeking part-time jobs. Participants receive assistance in preparing their resumes, job searching strategies, and interviewing skills.

REAP also places qualifying Brookline homeowners in the property tax work-off program. Currently, the program has 33 participants. (Two slots are not filled.) The benefit in reduced taxes is now \$1,325. This year, for the first time, the program now has 8 authorized positions in Brookline Schools. The program has had particular success with placement of volunteers in school libraries. Deidre read reports on two particularly successful placements in school libraries. One report was submitted by a volunteer; the other was submitted by a school librarian. Deidre also provided information on other Town departments in which participants are placed.

Participants in the tax work-off program have a volunteer bank to assist participants who get sick. Volunteers put in extra time so that those who get sick receive their full tax abatement.

Deidre and Frank have an appointment with School Superintendent Andrew Bott this week to talk about placement of other senior volunteers in the schools. BrooklineCAN has a long-standing interest in volunteer opportunities for seniors in Brookline schools. BrooklineCAN leadership believes that a good number of Brookline seniors would be interested in volunteer assignments that involve interaction with school children.

Deidre is also responsible for the part-time employment program for renters. Currently the program has 10 slots. All of the slots are filled. No information is available on demand for slots. Most of the participants work at the senior center.

REAP is also administers the Senior Community Service Employment Program for Brookline. This is a federal program that emphasizes job training. Participants work 20 hours per week. The Brookline placements are with the Senior Center. Some participants come from Operation Able of Greater Boston.

Alberta Lipson explained the web-based assistance in finding volunteer opportunities that is provided by BrooklineVolunteers.org. The website is organized around a number of causes that may be of interest to volunteers. The website takes volunteers to the sections of websites of various organizations in the Boston area. In every case, the link is to descriptions of volunteer opportunities. Alberta is updating the website. She is also placing increased emphasis on volunteer opportunities in communities close to Brookline. Alberta is available to work with individuals who are seeking a volunteer opportunity. She will explain how they can make good use of the BrooklineVolunteers website. Alberta also coordinates her activities with the REAP program.

2. Our annual election forum is scheduled for Tuesday, April 30 from 4 to 6 PM. BrooklineCAN and the Brookline Council on Aging will co-sponsor the forum. The forum is open to everyone but attracts many older residents. Michael Allen will serve as moderator. Susan Granoff, Susan Cohen, and Melissa Trevvett will assist on the day of the forum. We will emphasize the candidates for the Select Board. We will also include attention to the Debt Exclusion proposal to pay for school expansion. We will provide speaking opportunities to both proponents and opponents of the proposal. The extent to which we give attention to the School Committee and Library Trustee candidates will depend on whether the races are contested (and the number of Select Board candidates). At a minimum, we will introduce candidates for all Town-wide offices. We will begin the segment on Select Board candidates with at least 3 questions of particular interest to seniors. We will discuss the content of those questions at the next meeting. Michael Allen volunteered to contact the candidates to inform them of the forum.
3. Recognizing benches provided by private buildings. We agreed that we will recognize privately-sponsored benches along sidewalks. Some residential buildings and churches now provide benches along the sidewalks. We will ask our webmaster, John Seay to establish a place on the website to recognize these benches. We will include photos. We hope to inspire others private parties to offer benches for passing pedestrians.
4. The Warrant for the annual Town Meeting will be announced by the Select Board tomorrow. We have a special interest in the resolution on pedestrian-friendly sidewalk lighting. We want to encourage members to show support at the Advisory Committee.

We will notify members about the hearing date and location.

We briefly discussed the proposed Brookline Village Parking Benefit District as an article that we may want to support. The funds might be used to make the district more pedestrian-friendly. The program would be financed by an increase in parking meter fees in the district. Susan Cohen expressed strong opposition on the grounds that parking meter rates are already excessive and having an adverse effect on businesses.

At our next meeting, we will identify the warrant articles on which we might take a position.

5. Our next meeting will be on Monday, April 8.