

# Brookline Community Aging Network

## *Livable Community Advocacy Committee*

October 7, 2019

### **Notes**

Attendance: Pat Ahlin, Roger Blood, Lou Crimmins, Susan Granoff, John Harris, David Lescohier, Carol Seibert, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, Nancy White, & Frank Caro. Guest: Gordon Szerlip and Paul Warren

Review of warrant articles of special interest to seniors

- a. Article 3 Budget amendment on use of Transportation Networking Funds for subsidized senior transportation. Frank provided background information. The Town has received over \$200,000 in revenue from fees charged to Uber & Lyft in 2018. Each ride that begins in Brookline yields \$.10 for the Town. This year the Transportation Board made recommendations for the use of the funds. The Transportation Board has recommended that \$77,000 be allocated to the Council on Aging with some of that money financing the TRIPPS program and the other portion financing subsidized transportation for low-income seniors. Of the subsidy money, some may go to the BETS program and the rest will go to support use of Uber & Lyft. In November, Town Meeting will act on the Transportation Board recommendation. LCAC unanimously supports the Transportation Board recommendation that the Town allocate \$77,000 of the Transportation Networking revenues to the Senior Center for TRIPPS and subsidized senior transportation.
- b. Article 19. Accessory dwelling unit bylaw. Roger Blood gave a brief overview of the proposal. (He made a longer presentation on the proposal at our September meeting.) Roger reviewed the multiple ways in which older people can benefit from Accessory Dwelling Units. These benefits include: caregiving, household chores, and/or property maintenance provided by the occupant of one of the units to one or more occupants of the other unit, income from the rent paid by the occupant of one of the units, mutual aid coupled with privacy when the home is shared by relatives. Roger explained how accessory dwelling units are different from other forms of home sharing such as rental of rooms to unrelated individuals. Roger also gave a brief overview of provisions of the bylaw that protect against abuse of the bylaw to create multi-family homes in single family neighborhoods. He also explained the role of the Building Commissioner to regulate the implementation of an accessory dwelling unit program. In response to a

question from Pat Ahlin, Roger explained that the current proposal applies only to single-family homes. In the future, the bylaw might be expanded to include buildings that already have two units. The committee voted unanimously to support the proposal.

- c. Article 16 concerned with electric scooters. Paul Warren, the co-petitioner, provided background information about the electric scooter trial and explained the proposal. The resolution calls for a postponement of further scooter rental trials or adoption of a permanent rental program until Brookline has regulations in place governing the operation of scooters. Brookline would establish its regulations after the State Legislature established regulations governing electric scooters. The resolution identifies the Transportation Board as the entity with responsibility for establishing regulations for operation of electric scooters in the Town. The resolution also asks the Legislature to establish a regulatory framework that permits municipalities to adopt their own regulations concerning the operation of electric scooters on sidewalks. Local control of use on sidewalks is important since some proposals call for scooters to be regulated on sidewalks in the same way that bicycles are regulated on sidewalks. (Operation of bicycles on sidewalks is allowed by state law except in commercial areas.) We had a broad discussion about the electric scooter trial; some of the discussion was focused on provisions of Article 16; other aspects of the discussion concerned electric scooters more generally. John Harris expressed disappointment with the scooter companies for failing to offer scooters with seats that might interest seniors. John also expressed disappointment that the resolution did not include language pointing to the potential energy-saving consequences of using electric scooters when they substitute for more energy-intensive modes of transportation. With John abstaining, the committee voted unanimously to support the resolution. Frank agreed to inform Representative Tommy Vitolo of the committee's support for the provision calling for the Legislature to permit municipalities to retain control of decisions regarding operation of scooters on sidewalks.

Carol Seibert, Lou Crimmins, and Melissa Trevvett volunteered to track the proposals on electric scooters that are being considered by the Massachusetts legislature. They will report at our November meeting and continue to keep the committee informed until legislation is in place.

- d. Article 8, an act authorizing the town of Brookline to offer a senior discount program for water and sewer rates. David Lescohier provided an explanation of the proposal. The proposal comes from Town Counsel, Joslyn Murphy, who is concerned that the Town lacks authorization for the few discounts that are currently offered to senior homeowners. The article asks the Legislature to authorize the Town to establish a program to provide discounts to low-income senior homeowners on water and sewer rates. There is some risk that the Town will have to suspend its current program while it waits for action by the Legislature. David explained that he has been working with

various local officials to encourage the Town to provide more meaningful discounts to some worthy senior homeowners. Susan Granoff would like a program that benefits seniors who live in multi-family buildings with a single water meter. We did not take a position on the current proposal.

- e. ARTICLE 9, a real estate transfer tax with Town's appropriation of funds into the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund. As one of the petitioners, David Lescohier provided an explanation. The proposal stems from a need to provide more affordable housing. The metropolitan area has a great need for an expanded supply of affordable housing. The proposal would generate substantial funds for the Town's Housing Advisory Board to subsidize affordable housing. Some of that housing is likely to be for seniors. Revenue would be generated by a tax of up to 2 percent on real estate transactions. The transfer tax would be applied only to portions of transactions that exceed \$500,000. Some transactions would be exempt. David informed us that other municipalities are asking the Legislature for authorization to finance affordable housing programs through real estate transfer taxes. If approved by the Legislature, Brookline would need approval of voters before a program could be implemented. We had wide ranging discussion of the proposal. Some of the questions concerned the manner in which the revenue would be used. Other questions focused on seniors who would be taxed when they sold their properties. We ran out of time before all of our questions were answered. David Lescohier promised to come to our next meeting to continue the discussion.
- 2. Next meeting: Monday, November 4 at 3 PM.
  - 3. Topics for next meeting:
    - a. Continued consideration of Article 9
    - b. Review of other warrant articles of special interest
      - i. Article 31 Sustainability as a goal for the Town (BrooklineCAN support has been requested by the petitioners). We will be discussing sustainability and livability as alternate goals for the Town.
      - ii. Special Town Meeting on regulation of marijuana retailers. The proposal arises from neighborhood concerns about potential adverse impact of the presence of retailers. We will be examining the proposals from a senior perspective. Paul Warren will lead the discussion.