BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee (LCAC)
Meeting Notes for September 13, 2021

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair), John Seay (Co-Host), Ruthann Dobek (Guest Speaker), Carol Seibert (note-taker), Janet Gelbart, Elaine Bakal, Paula Friedman, Judith Kidd, Yolanda Rodriguez, Carol Caro, Henry Winkelman, David Trevvett, Marsha Frankel, Ruth Seidman, Melissa Trevvett, Susan Cohen, Marion Freedman-Gurspan

The Council on Aging's Future Needs, Goals, Challenges, & Wish List
Guest Presenter: Ruthann Dobek, Director, Brookline Council on Aging; Director, Brookline Senior Center; BrooklineCAN Co-Chair.

1.Council on Aging Current Fiscal Year (FY22) Budget
The Town funds 70% of COA expenses, with the remainder supplied by private donations or grants. A proposed 10% cut in the COA budget would have meant significant cuts in personnel or hours worked, since those account for the majority of the budget. Thanks to vigorous advocacy, the final budget restored the proposed loss of $94,000. It also allowed the additional custodial hours requested. This request had been a long-time need for the Council on Aging and became exacerbated by COVID-related needs.

2. ARPA and COVID funding
The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will result in about 42 million dollars in financial aid to Brookline from the federal and county governments. The aid is limited to specific eligible categories addressing negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and must be spent by the end of 2026. It is not a sustained source of income for the Town. Brookline officials are building a tool to facilitate funding requests and will provide opportunities for public input. Ruthann Dobek reports that the Council on Aging, representing at least 20% of Brookline's population, will focus its funding requests on the following specific areas and would welcome advocacy as they work for funding:
Mental Health Services: There is a need for an additional part-time Social Work position to help with COVID-related stress and isolation, as well as responding to the issue of clutter/hoarding (which has worsened during COVID isolation times.)

<u>Transportation</u>: Much of the TRIPPS program funding comes from a MA 10% surcharge on Uber and Lyft rides which have seen a huge drop-off in rides, likely a direct COVID impact. ARPA funds would help support rides for seniors to obtain medical care, groceries, and other essentials.

<u>Capital Projects</u>: potentially including newer vehicles, some of which could be electric.

<u>Job Loss</u>: to restore part-time jobs for seniors at Brookline Senior Center of 5-10 hours a week which provided important services and gave seniors needed income and a sense of pride.

<u>Home Care</u>: Establish a new temporary program to improve training of home care workers and provide increased wages.

<u>IT Support</u>: During the pandemic, remote opportunities for meetings and other activities have been invaluable, allowing work to proceed and essential contacts to be maintained. New laptop computers and IT infrastructure are high priorities.

<u>Food Insecurity</u>: The Council on Aging supports multiple efforts designed to reduce hunger in Brookline. Additional funding for services to shop, pay for, and deliver food will help address unmet need in the community.

As mechanisms for citizen input are put in place, John Seay will create a call-for-action section in the BrooklineCAN website to notify viewers of senior issues that need their advocacy and ways to advocate. Carol Caro will push for advocacy in the BrooklineCAN newsletter.

3. Longer Term Goals and Budgetary Issues for the COA.
Ruthann Dobek focused on three specific critical needs:

- The Council on Aging requires funding for <u>strategic planning</u>. The year 2030 is expected to bring a dual tsunami. That is the year when the oldest baby boomers will be over age 85, and the youngest will turn 65. Moreover, projected needs for older adults will not end with the baby boomer generation. Looking ahead, their children represent an even larger demographic cohort. It will be necessary to seek consultation on best practices to meet these challenges.
- The Council on Aging has been constrained by piece-meal funding for its essential <u>transportation</u> functions. Now is the time for Brookline to fund a solid senior transportation policy. Currently, grants, private donations, and tax on Uber and Lyft provide some of the income stream to support senior transportation options. Newton, by comparison, has dramatically

increased its transportation budget and now provides that a subsidized ride is available to all older adults.

- Urgent attention is needed now to address the limited capacity of the Brookline Senior Center. The current building is seriously over-utilized and ill-equipped to handle the needs of the growing population of older adults. It took 12 years from conception to open the doors at 93 Winchester St. Brookline must start now to develop a plan for its needed satellite senior center. Newbury College has been discussed as a possible site, but nothing concrete is in place. South Brookline has a particular interest in a more accessible center given the difficulty of driving to and parking near Winchester St.

Stimulating discussion followed this well-received presentation. Susan Granoff plans to invite members of the Select Board to attend upcoming LCAC meetings, and ensure that these goals are brought to attention.

Preview of November Town Meeting Warrant and Changes in Key Town Personnel
Presenter: Susan Granoff, LCAC Chair

There are many recent, current and forthcoming changes in key Town government personnel including: The Town Administrator, Director of the Department of Health and Human Services, Director of the Department of Planning and Community Development, Director of the Finance Department/Treasurer/Tax Collector, Town Counsel, Chief of Police, School Superintendent, and the Chief Assessor.

The Warrant for the upcoming Fall Town Meeting has closed. Susan Granoff outlined a number of Articles that might be of particular interest to LCAC.

Update on 32 Marion St (Colonel Floyd): ZBA Advocacy Opportunity

How many parking spaces to require at the Colonel Floyd redevelopment project is the subject of much debate. It will be featured at the Zoom meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals on Wednesday, September 22, at 7:00 pm. Susan Granoff, the presenter of this topic, noted that adding a requirement for

substantially more parking spaces than the 25 requested by the Brookline Housing Authority for the 115 100% affordable apartments being planned could result in many fewer apartments being built and doesn't take into account the actual transportation needs of low-income seniors living only two blocks from Coolidge Corner. Those interested can weigh in by attending or by submitting email written testimony to *vpanak@brooklinema.gov*.   Anyone wishing to get more information on this issue, please contact Susan Granoff at *susangranoff@msn.com*.

Discussion on Transitioning LCAC from Remote to Hybrid Meetings

John Seay has succeeded in making hybrid meetings possible in the Brookline Senior Center. It was decided to continue meeting remotely on Zoom at this time, but to re-evaluate in the Spring.

Other Business:

Carol Caro reports that there will be another hearing on the Center Communities of Brookline plans for 108 Centre St, which abuts the Senior Center. This project appears to be moving forward.

Susan Granoff reports that the Coolidge Corner Theater plans to suspend all weekday daytime movie showings as well as its special Wednesday bargain matinees for seniors for at least one year due to construction work. Since many seniors have physical issues that make it difficult to attend movies after dark and many low-income seniors will not be able to afford to see movies regularly without the bargain $7 movies on Wednesday afternoons, this policy is likely to be a loss to the Brookline senior community.

Next Meeting of LCAC: Monday, October 4, 2021 at 3:00 pm on Zoom. Please email Susan Granoff at susangranoff@msn.com with suggestions for future programming.