

BrooklineCAN Steering Committee Meeting Minutes December 20, 2023

Attendees: Ruthann Dobek, Janet Gelbart, Susan Granoff, Bea Mikulecky, Yolanda Rodriguez, John Seay, Carol Seibert, Ruth Seidman, David Trevvett, Matt Weiss. Staff: Jessica Milley-Gee

1. Ongoing discussion of BrooklineCAN goals and priorities 2024

- a. Goals for FY24 (see attached at end of minutes)
 - i. Based on previous meeting discussions.
 - ii. Extensive discussion continued re attached goals.
- b. Priorities document (see attached at end of minutes)
 - i. Extensive discussion re attached priorities.
 - ii. Change Washington project to Redesign of Washington St. project – considers competition between safe passage for bicycles and parking for automobiles.
 - iii. Advocating for specific pedestrian issues that arise.
 - iv. Advocate for keeping senior needs in mind as Brookline Parks are redesigned – A list of current park projects can be found here: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1036/Parks-Construction-Renovation-Projects>
 - v. Advocating for housing affordability for older adults/seniors.
 - vi. Advocate for more secure funding for the CoA, with increases as the Town's senior population grows and as needs are identified.
 - vii. Need for South Brookline members of BrooklineCAN and Steering Committee.
 - viii. Brookline Neighborhood Alliance (BNA) – Umbrella organization for the various Brookline Neighborhood Assns. (Dan Saltzman and Stan Spiegel)
 - ix. Need people from Public Housing.
 - x. Digital literacy and loneliness/isolation.
 - xi. Availability/lack of affordable care.
 - xii. Issues raised during the year.
- c. Age-Friendly Cities Committee priorities
 - i. Latest version was attached to meeting invitation.
 - ii. Copy attached at end of minutes)
 - iii. Keep in mind due to overlap.

2. Update on Brookline's AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

- a. Awareness and Perceptions of "Age-Friendly": Analyzing Survey Results from Voices in the United States (article attached)

- i. Receiving good information from AARP.
- ii. Possibly invite a speaker from AARP to Annual Meeting.
- b. Livability index scores by community:
 - <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/>
- c. ReiMAGine Aging podcast spotlights age-friendly Massachusetts work: <https://mahealthyagingcollaborative.org/reimagine-aging/> a new podcast that centers community voices telling community stories launched in October. This is a creative approach to reporting on initiatives in the Commonwealth—from digital equity programs and walk audits to programs promoting purpose and connection, food security, housing, and economic health for older adults.

3. Communication issues

- a. Politically sensitive issues – email on Brookline’s charter as an example
 - i. Discussion of poor wording in charter study article.
 - ii. Newsletter and social media accounts try to be neutral.
 - iii. Steering committee and LCAC are not necessarily neutral.
 - iv. Steering Committee members should not take positions re Town political issues representing Committee role.
- b. BrooklineCAN emails – who gets emails and who responds
 - i. Discuss at next meeting.

4. Review of current property tax programs and participants (see documents attached to agenda for December 20, 2023 meeting)

- a. Tax credit is \$2,600 this year.
- b. More people may qualify and get better return than last year.
- c. Recommended to read agenda attachment before next meeting.

5. JF&CS update

- a. Renee Markus Hodin, Division Director, Services for Older Adults
 - i. Ruthann requested Renee’s attendance at our meetings.
 - ii. Announce in next newsletter.
- b. Sponsorship of Creative Art Programming for Brookline older adults
 - i. Good news - \$5K grant for this program.

6. Treasurers report (John)

- a. Income of \$620 outgo of \$07 (newsletters and stationary)
- b. 12/10 = 205 members 12/20/2023 = 200 members

7. Committee reports

- a. Membership
 - i. Need chair to work with Janet.
 - ii. No volunteers.

- b. Communications
 - i. Newsletter – January (MLK celebration, CoA meeting announcement for 1/10 at 1pm, new series on Podcasts)
 - ii. News Releases – No report.
 - iii. Website – No report.
 - iv. AFC-TV – Sam Mintz (Brookline.News), Paul Warren (MBTA-CA rezoning).
 - v. Social Media – No Threads for BrooklineCAN at this time.
- c. Livable Communities Advocacy Committee
 - i. Meeting on January 8, 2024 at 3PM via Zoom “A Conversation with Brookline School Committee Members”
 - ii. Presenters: Helen Charlupski and Suzanne Federspiel.
 - iii. Discussion took place looking forward to the school committee presentation,
 - iv. Consideration of cost per student versus cost per older adult.
- d. Education
 - i. No report.

8. Old & new business

- a. FYI: new Massachusetts Behavioral Health Hotline

9. Next Steering Committee: January 17, 2024 3pm

Goals for BrooklineCAN –FY24

1. Provide a forum for Brookline’s older adults to meet directly with Brookline’s government officials and candidates for town wide office in both large and small group settings.
2. Be an advocacy voice for the concerns of Brookline’s older adults to Town government decision makers and a recognized source of feedback for Brookline officials and groups seeking to know the views of Brookline’s older residents.
3. Provide volunteer opportunities for Brookline seniors wishing to use their skills and abilities to improve the lives of Brookline seniors and to make Brookline a better place to live.
4. Be a source of useful information about Town of Brookline events, programs, and news of special interest to Brookline older adults to encourage their engagement in the community and to counter social isolation.
5. Serve as a catalyst for the creation of new Town of Brookline governmental entities (such as the Pedestrian Advisory Committee), study committees (such as the Moderator’s Committee for Elderly Tax Relief), and programs.

BrooklineCAN Priorities 2024

(Based on discussion at 11/15/23 Steering Committee Meeting, Ruth Seidman)

Steering Committee

- Build and retain membership to strengthen the organization
 - reactivate the Membership Committee with co-chairs
 - encourage existing members to be more engaged
 - find ways of reaching out to those newly retired
 - continue to reach out to lapsed members
 - possible program or series of programs (maybe at the Library?) on The Many Faces of Retirement, financial planning, etc.
- Set up focus groups, making use of AARP Age-Friendly resources, to learn of community needs and how BrooklineCAN could better meet these. Also a way of getting more people involved.

General for BrooklineCAN

- Identify areas for advocacy of specific Town issues as they arise, e.g.
 - Several; SC members, concerned with economic issues for middle income senior adults—how to address?
 - Washington Street Redesign project: need to keep enough parking for residents and their caregivers; survey needs?
 - Other issues

- Investigate ways to support specific pedestrian safety initiatives.

- Participate in supporting digital literacy of older adults, possibly in cooperation with the Library.

- Help alleviate elder isolation and loneliness.

Age-Friendly Cities Committee Priorities and Goals 2024

1. Available/affordable housing
2. Sidewalk Repairs
3. Street lighting
4. Availability/lack of in-home care
 - a. Extra costs on top of insurance and community charges for life care.
 - b. Issues with agency tracking of personal care workers.
 - c. Many issues with personal care funding.
5. Parking for caregivers
6. Benches
7. Older adult isolation
8. Scams