

BROOKLINE COMMUNITY AGING NETWORK
Livable Community Advocacy Committee
September 9, 2024

Attending: Susan Granoff (Chair), Janet Gelbart (Notetaker), Roger Blood (Guest Presenter), Carol Caro (Presenter) John Seay (Presenter), Emily DeHoog, Ewana Lindo-Smith, Susan Cohen, Regina Frawley, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Katie Hope, Carol MacBain, Maureen Mayotte, Diana McClure, Fran Perler, Yolanda Rodriguez, Ruth Seidman, David Trevvett

I. A Conversation with Roger Blood about Affordable Housing

Guest Presenter: Roger Blood (Housing Advisory Board Chair)

Housing Advisory Board Chair Roger Blood gave a presentation on the role of the Housing Advisory Board (HAB) in promoting housing that is affordable to low-, moderate-, and upper moderate-income households. Established under the Town's bylaws in 1987, the HAB makes recommendations to the Planning Board regarding zoning; to the Select Board regarding use of the Town's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, federal HOME funds, and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); and to Town Meeting regarding affordable housing-related warrant articles. It is a ten-member board of which seven are appointed by the Select Board and three by other boards and commissions. As required under the bylaw, members have targeted knowledge in finance, law, planning, and development and include affordable housing tenants.

Under Inclusionary Zoning, 15% of new developments with more than 10 units are required to be affordable. Developers of smaller properties (4-10 units) may opt to contribute to the Affordable Housing Trust instead. On larger developments, the Town can negotiate alternative developer contributions to achieve the best possible outcome. To date, Inclusionary Zoning has resulted in over 100 affordable units in over 20 developments with 15 additional projects currently in the pipeline that are expected to contribute about \$8 million to the Housing Trust.

Through its oversight of the Affordable Housing Trust, the HAB provides predevelopment funds which complement private, state and federal sources. Each affordable unit in Brookline requires over \$500,00 in combined subsidies. The Trust is supported by contributions from developers under the Inclusionary Zoning Law, "Free Cash" in the annual budgeting process and interest earned on the Trust's investments. The Trust is also eligible to receive funds under the Community Preservation Act.

Eligibility for affordable units is determined after an extensive application process. Qualified applicants are chosen by lottery from two applicant pools: the first, for residents only and the second for residents not chosen in round one plus non-residents. For purposes of Brookline's lottery drawing, Metco families and BHA tenants are considered residents of the Town. In 2020, Brookline reduced the local preference to cover only 25% of the available units instead of 70% as other municipalities still require. This was done to increase the diversity of the applicant pool. [Note: The Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) is not part of Town government and is not subject to the Town's lottery policies and procedures. The BHA operates under a separate lottery system that is applicable to public housing authorities.]

Most of the questions related to how the lottery works. There is concern that long-term Brookline residents, especially seniors, are disadvantaged because other communities have retained their residential preference at 70%. Mr. Blood was asked how many Brookline residents were accepted by the lottery since the change was made as compared to before 2020, and whether the change achieved the desired increase in diversity.

Mr. Blood explained that the local preference applies only to new construction, not to units that turn over. Since the rules have changed, there has been only one lottery for the 54 supportive rental housing units about to be completed at 108 Centre Street. Consequently, there is insufficient data for evaluating the change.

When a new development nears completion, a lottery for the affordable units is advertised in Brookline, Boston, and minority communities. Applicants are screened to determine income level (low or moderate), family size, unit size, and whether or not they are seniors. Residents who fit the criteria for that specific project go into a pool from which random numbers are drawn until 25% of the available units have been awarded to Brookline residents. Names of residents not chosen remain for a second drawing along with non-residents.

Mr. Blood was asked to consider reverting to the former residential preference level for seniors since the waiting time for housing may exceed 10 years. He suggested that the LCAC request that consideration of a change be put on the HAB agenda, but pointed out that the decision to lower the local preference was made after considerable research and public discussion. The Town does not maintain waiting lists for properties it helps to fund, but it does maintain an extensive email list of prior lottery applicants and others who request notification of future scheduled lotteries.

In closing, Mr. Blood suggested that Accessory Dwelling Units offer an alternative source of housing for seniors who may wish to downsize but earn too much to qualify for income-restricted affordable units under Inclusionary Zoning or senior housing built by non-profit sponsors. He admitted that ADUs are a very limited solution to a huge and complex affordable housing crisis.

II. A Presentation on the Age-Friendly Cities Committee

Guest Presenters: Committee Members Carol Caro and John Seay

In 2012, the Town created the Age-Friendly Cities Committee to coordinate Brookline's Age-Friendly initiative, keep the Select Board informed about issues concerning seniors and make recommendations for the Town to maintain its age-friendly designation. The Committee consists of six citizen members appointed by the Select Board and representatives from the Council on Aging, Recreation Department, Health and Human Services Department, Commission on Disability, and the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Community Relations.

The Committee works collaboratively with Town Departments to enhance the life of seniors and encourage their participation in the community. It alerts town officials to consider how their policies and initiatives specifically impact seniors. As a part of the Town's government

structure, its role is to raise awareness of senior concerns rather than to advocate for specific outcomes.

The Committee hosts four to six Age-Friendly Cities TV interviews each year with Town officials and other community members. The shows are available on BIG and the BrooklineCAN website (<https://www.brooklinecan.org/tv.php>).

Brookline was the first municipality in New England to receive the World Health Organization's age-friendly designation, and was recognized as age-friendly by AARP in 2023. Through AARP, the Town has gained access to resources and information about best practices in other communities.

III. Town's Plan for Hiring New Director of Brookline's Council on Aging/Senior Center

Presenter: Susan Granoff

The Town has created a working group under Town Administrator Chas Carey to conduct the search and make recommendations for hiring a new Director for the Council on Aging/Senior Center. The members are Bernard Greene (Select Board), Yolanda Rodriguez (COA), Betsy Pollack (Senior Center Foundation), Susan Granoff (Advisory Committee), Ruth Seidman (BrooklineCAN), and Richard Benka (TMM 14). A tentative timeline anticipates recommendations to the Select Board in mid-November for a final decision in December.

IV. Announcements/New Business

The Select Board is scheduled to approve the warrant for the November Town Meeting on September 10. The list consists of 20 articles, ten of which relate to land use and zoning. It does not appear that there are any items of specific interest to seniors.

V. Date of Next Meeting: TBD

The Livable Community Advocacy Committee is one of several BrooklineCAN committees. Everyone is welcome to attend, but if you do so regularly, we invite you to support BrooklineCAN with your membership. You can join using PayPal, credit card or by check. Instructions are on the right hand sidebar on the front page of [brooklinecan.org](https://www.brooklinecan.org)
Thank you.