

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

February 26, 2018

Attendance: Alex Beck, Frank Caro, Harvey Cohen, Susan Cohen, Jerry Feuer, Susan Granoff, Carol Seibert, Ann Stitt, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, Roberta Winitzer, Henry Winkelman, Jackie Wright, and Asya Zimbov. Guests: Susan Gittelman, Virginia Bullock, Andy Martineau

Susan Gittelman, Director of B'nai B'rith Housing in Brighton made a presentation entitled: "Facing Brookline's Need for Senior Housing Together: Sharing Approaches and Ideas." Susan began with a video that illustrated her organization's approach to affordable housing. B'nai B'rith has developments in Brighton, Newton, Sudbury, and Swampscott. Susan describes the model as "service enriched." Her organization offers "cultural" services, such as, fine arts, within its buildings. Residents of the immediate neighborhood are welcome at these activities. In Brighton, B'nai B'rith makes its services accessible to a public housing development close by.

Ten years ago, Susan approached the Town of Brookline's Board of Selectmen recommending development of affordable housing on town-owned parking lots. Nothing came of the suggestion.

Susan favors adding housing density where there is already housing density. Housing density promotes walkability, a feature especially valuable for seniors. In Brookline, Susan welcomes new housing developments in Cleveland Circle, Coolidge Corner, and Hancock Village. Susan favors residential buildings with more than 50 units with elevators and modest amounts of covered parking. She does not necessarily favor age-restricted housing. Susan notes that many seniors prefer to live in age-integrated buildings.

Susan characterized Boston as having much high-end, "life-style" development that serves affluent people. She also observes that the Boston area has a good deal of age-restricted assisted living serving affluent people.

The Boston area also has a modest amount of rent-restricted housing for seniors that serves those with incomes below \$50,000. This housing is financed by tax credits. Susan noted the limited availability of tax credits and the slow process through which developers seek to obtain the credits.

Susan has a particular interest in downsizing options for middle income seniors. She is sensitive to those whose assets make them ineligible for subsidized housing but cannot afford luxury housing. The “market” is not producing new housing for that group of seniors.

Susan has an interest in some forms of co-housing and shared housing. She mentioned the “greenhouse” model that began with an innovative model in nursing homes. The underlying idea is that the housing combines some private space with some shared space.

Susan sees three major challenges to senior housing development: high cost (land and construction), neighborhood opposition, and lack of sufficient financial resources.

Given the limited opportunity for new housing, she urges maximum use of existing housing. To that end, she favors accessory dwelling units (ADUs), home sharing, and informal “do-it-yourself” shared residences. Susan also favors service supports for seniors who live independently in scattered housing. She likes low-cost programs that incorporate the “Village” model.

The presentation was followed by an extended discussion. These notes do not reflect the discussion.

Election forum. The committee and the Senior Center will hold their election forum on Thursday, April 26. The forum will feature the three Select Board candidates and the Override proposal.

The Housing Advisory Board will consider an **Accessory Dwelling Unit** zoning bylaw at its February 28. LCAC is prepared to give active support to an ADU zoning bylaw proposal.

Senior property tax relief proposals will be the main focus of our March meeting. Both Susan Granoff and Yolanda Rodriguez are submitting warrant articles calling for new forms of senior property tax relief.

The findings of the **ADA Accessibility Assessment** of Harvard and Beacon Streets conducted by Institute for Human Centered Design are available. We will focus on the findings at a future meeting.

Five members of LCAC are active in the **Age-Friendly Business campaign**, Carol Seibert, Henry Winkelman, Jerry Feuer, Matt Weiss, and Frank Caro. Frank is seeking more volunteers.

Next meeting: Monday, March 26

Notes prepared by Frank Caro