

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

Notes

January 30, 2017

Attendance: Peter Ames, Frank Caro, Ruthann Dobek, Susan Granoff, Evelyn House, Irving Kurki, Joan McCabe, Mary McShane, Elaine Mountleigh, Vera Sharma, Palma Spunt, Ann Stitt, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, Henry Winkelman, Roberta Winitzer, Jackie Wright, and Kerri Ann Tester (Guest)

Advocacy agenda emerging from the TRIPPS program. Kerri Ann Tester, director of the TRIPPS program, provided an overview of the program, its activities to date, and its plans for the coming year. Information about TRIPPS can be found on the program's web site:

<http://trippsmass.org/>

Kerri Ann emphasized that transportation resources are changing. Other communities have useful resources that could be replicated in Brookline. One of these is faith-based volunteer driver programs. Another is an innovation described on the TRIPPS website: Safr, a ride-hailing service for women. All of the drivers are women; all of the customers are women. The service addresses the fear that some women have of driving with strange men who may have not been carefully vetted.

An issue raised by a TRIPPS client is the difficulty experienced by passengers with mobility limitation in "paying" for transportation on newer Green Line trolleys. The problem occurs when they begin their ride at a street stop and all doors are opened. Passengers are attracted to entering trains in the lower section in the middle of trains. To pay, passengers then have to climb stairs to walk forward in the train to reach the operator. Passengers with mobility limitations often find it difficult to climb the stairs to go to the front of the train. A system is needed that eliminates the necessity for passengers to move within the trolley to "pay" for their ride.

Kerri Ann also reported on an on-demand paratransit pilot program riders who qualify for The RIDE. The MBTA has arranged for these riders to receive heavily subsidized rides on demand with two ride-sharing service companies, Uber and Lyft. Participants can order rides on short notice. The cost to riders may also be less than the cost of the traditional RIDE. Information about the program is available on the MBTA website:

http://www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/accessible_services/default.asp?id=6442456760

We discussed some of the transportation resources available for Brookline seniors who do not drive. One is the Elder Bus that operates on a fixed-route basis offering five loops through Brookline a day. The Elder Bus is not currently operating. The Senior Center Van offers customized transportation Monday through Friday until 3 PM. Ruthann Dobek spoke of the challenge in financing the van service. The operation of the service is privately financed. Riders are asked to make a \$1 donation.

We also discussed the Town's subsidized taxi service, BETS. The subsidies come from multiple sources including the federal community development block grant program. Taxi operators also contribute. Consumers can purchase "tickets" each month for a maximum of \$25. The value of the tickets is \$50 in cab fares. Recently, the Senior Center has permitted BETS participants to purchase \$40 in tickets each month. The ceiling had not been adjusted for many years. The increase was possible because of money raised through the Rotary Clubs Dancing with the Stars fund raising program. The program can be used to finance travel outside of Brookline. However, rides must be in a Brookline cab.

The city of Newton contributes \$250,000 in its own money for its subsidized cab service. However, the funds can only be used for travel within Newton.

Ruthann Dobek provided an overview of Senior Center financing. The Town of Brookline provides public funds that cover 70 percent of the finances of the Center. The Center also receives \$100,000 each year through a formula grant program. The Center's experience is that it is relatively easy to raise money to purchase a van. However, raising money to maintain and operate a van is very difficult.

Frank expects that LCAC will periodically hear from TRIPPS about policy issues that are identified on the basis of problems experienced by its clients.

Educational strategies on addressing climate change. Irving Kurki distributed a work sheet that residents can use to determine their household's carbon dioxide impact. By completing the worksheet, residents can determine how many trees would have to be planted each year to offset their carbon dioxide production. The worksheet was developed by the Cambridge Community Development Department.

Educational program on new trash collection system. LCAC and the Senior Center will co-sponsor an educational program on February 8 on the Town's new pay-to-throw trash collection system. The program will begin this spring. Householders will soon have to choose the size of the toter that they want to use. The program will begin at 1:30 PM and will be held at the Senior Center.

Election forum. LCAC and the Senior Center will co-sponsor a candidate's forum at the Senior Center on April 24. At a minimum, the forum will include the candidates for Board of Selectmen. The annual Town election will take place on May 2.

Educational program on creative use of extra space in housing. The BrooklineCAN education committee will sponsor an educational program on creative use of extra space in homes on June 1 at the Senior Center. The forum will cover topics such as accessory dwelling units, renting rooms to lodgers, and exchanging lodging for assistance with caregiving. Len Fishman will speak.

Matt Weiss announced that the latest Age-Friendly TV show is now available on line with Len Fishman as his guest. The topic is housing. Here is the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC52GsYakR0&feature=youtu.be>

Extended on-street parking in Brookline. Frank reported that he has spoken with Transportation Board member Pam Zelnick about our recent discussion of demand for extended on-street parking in residential areas throughout Brookline. Through Shari Gershenfeld, a former member, we have learned about technology that makes it possible for the Town to monitor the extent of use of parking places throughout the Town. Data could be used to identify low-demand areas that would be candidates for parking for periods greater than two hours.

Babcock Street Improvements. Advocacy in the name of seniors has supported various recommendations for Babcock Street. Senior cyclists want a cycle track or at least bike lanes. Babcock residents want to retain on-street parking. Pedestrian advocates favor raised cross walks that would slow traffic. Advocates for vulnerable seniors support the fire chief in his opposition to raised cross walks because they would slow emergency vehicles.

Next Meeting. Tentative date for next meeting: Monday, March 6