

Housing Plan Implementation Committee (HPIC)
May 30, 2019
7:00 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.
Arlington Town Hall, First Floor Conference Room
MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees: Karen Kelleher, Jonathan Nyberg, Syrl Silberman, Elise Selinger, Jenny Raitt, Julie Wayman, Patricia Worden, Erin Zwirko

Guests: Susan Carp, Paul Raia, Jo Anne Preston

After a round of introductions, Jenny introduced Susan Carp, the Director of the Council on Aging, and Paul Raia, a member of the Council on Aging and the Disability Commission, who were invited to the meeting to discuss Arlington's Age Friendly Planning Process. Mr. Raia provided an overview of older adults in the community. He suggested that there needs to be better integration of elders in the community. Ms. Carp noted that there are over 2,000 unique contacts with individuals at the Senior Center.

Ms. Carp provided an overview of the AARP's Age Friendly Community Program. There are 8 domains as part of the frame work, and the Council on Aging intends to focus on 3 to 4 of these items. Arlington started working on the Age Friendly Community process in 2017 as there was building interest in becoming an age friendly community. Around the same time, the Governor named Massachusetts an age friendly community. This month, Arlington kicked off the process with a survey to older adults to understand opinions and perspectives. There will also be focus groups held.

The discussion then focused on Housing as one of the domains of an Age Friendly Community. Ms. Carp provided a list of ideas that she, Mr. Raia and members of the Committee could brainstorm on during the meeting including:

- More affordable units;
- Move a percentage of permit fees to an Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief Fund;
- Allow accessory units for people aged 60 and older;
- Create a program similar to Nesterly, which matches older adults with younger adults;
- Develop the circuit breaker program;
- Focus on the home modification loan program;
- Create local discounts for handyman services;
- Incorporate universal design; and
- Advocate for higher participation of older adults in the community.

Mr. Raia noted that there are also different cohorts: young old and old old. Both populations have different needs.

Karen noted that companionship is important for older adults, and the lack of companionship can be a killer as lives are enriched by relationships. There is a spectrum of intergenerational

living, but Arlington has not yet achieved those housing goals. There is a fear in the community that needs to be addressed first. Given that there is some desire for intergenerational living, why limit the age of occupants in accessory units for example. There is also a lack of space to build new units within the community, yet people want to remain in their community. The group discussed what a community could be. For example, it might be the building where the person begins and ends the day.

The Committee discussed what the fear might be. Mr. Raia suggested that it might be increased density. Patricia also suggested that it might be Air BnB. The Committee recognized that there is not a universal cause of fear to change within the community as it relates to housing choices. However, there needs to be an effort to address fear in order to bring a successful proposal forward.

Thinking about living arrangements, the Committee recognized that it does not just need to intergenerational living arrangements. Jonathan suggested that the living arrangement could be seniors living with seniors. Elise noted that care costs are more expensive than housing costs, and by sharing care costs the finances of older adults can be reduced. Syrl noted the example of the Live Well House that was written about in the New York Times magazine a number of years ago where seniors shared their lives. The concept of naturally occurring retirement communities has been around for a long time and can now be known as cooperatives or cohousing.

Elise noted that homes could be designed to acknowledge universal design and visitability design to ensure that seniors are able to go anywhere they need to go.

Patricia noted that the local universities have enabled successful matching programs between seniors and visiting professors. There might be an opportunity to work with these universities allowing Arlington to take advantage of the pairing network without having to set up our own program.

Karen asked whether there is a desire in the community to downsize. Ms. Carp noted that the Council on Aging hears that the maintenance of a larger home is overwhelming more so than a desire to downsize. Mr. Raia noted that the length of tenure is a factor in downsizing: the longer the tenure, the more unlikely for the homeowner to downsize.

Ms. Carp noted that the planned focus groups will go deeper than the survey. There is an acknowledgement that each proposal is creating something for someone else. We are not sure what everyone might want, so Mr. Raia noted that there needs to be a variety in the programs and policies available. Elise noted that for each individual there may be the right recipe for success: the concept and the price tag. She suggested that it is important to understand the options which then can be used as an educational tool. Jonathan noted that by limiting any of the options discussed or any other option not yet identified, there are unintended consequences for the community.

Mr. Raia recommended that the Committee remain involved in the future conversations. Julie asked Ms. Carp and Mr. Raia how they plan to engage with seniors who are not visiting the Senior Center nor have a relationship with the Council on Aging. Focus groups at the Housing Authority properties and Mill Brook Square will happen throughout the rest of 2019. Mr. Raia also noted that they hope to do focus groups with younger members of the community as well, who might also be caregivers.

The Committee thanked Ms. Carp and Mr. Raia for attending the meeting and discussing the Age Friendly Community planning process with them. Erin indicated that she would circulate Ms. Carp's contact information to the Committee and identify a few members who might want to be more involved in this project.

On the meeting summary from February 27, 2019, Patricia made some clarifying edits regarding her comments at the previous meeting. Elise made a motion to approve the meeting summary as amended. Jonathan seconded the motion. All those in attendance voted to approve the summary, while Karen abstained.

The Committee then discussed the upcoming meeting schedule in order to schedule a regular meeting. Erin would send out a doodle poll to identify a good evening to hold a regular meeting. Building off of that, the Committee discussed some goals for future work including: displacement strategies, creating an Affordable Trust Fund, and aging in place/community. Jenny reminded the Committee that the mission of the Committee is first and foremost the creation of housing: where and what it could look like. There is also a desire to continue the conversation about affordability that came out of Town Meeting.

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