

Machias Revitalization Committee
Minutes – May 10, 2019 – 8:00 AM
Sunrise County Economic Council Building

Present: Angela Fochesato, Jim Jackson, Bill Kitchen, Gail Peters, Joshua Rolfe, and Christina Therrien, Ann Ball, Maine Downtown Center, Patricia Oh, Age-Friendly Maine

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Zoom Meeting: A zoom meeting was held with Patricia Oh from AARP and Anne Ball from Maine Downtown Center/ ME Development Foundation.

Anne Ball reported a Webinar was held last Friday, May 3rd from 8:00 to 8:45. It was part of a first Friday of the month webinar series. We did not receive any information about this event. Angela will ensure Anne has our e-mail addresses. (All agreed to having their e-mail addresses forwarded.) The session last Friday was recorded; so, we are able to view the program. The subject of the program was the necessity of keeping close track of volunteer hours to be included in the end of the year report. The Maine Downtown Center has a Facebook page as does the Maine Development Foundation. Christina requested Anne re-send her thee-mail with information about angle parking.

Patricia Oh of the Age Friendly Maine/AARP conducted the review of the process of making communities age friendly. (See various pages of information provided by Patricia.) There are currently 64 members of the effort to create age friendly communities in Maine. It is free to join this program. There are five questions which need to be answered on the application. A letter of commitment by the highest elected official in the town and/or all Selectmen is part of the application process. Patricia pointed out that each age friendly communities Is unique as they each choose their own definition of age friendly. Review of the eight domains of livability. Patricia mentioned during her last visit to Machias she noticed some businesses had handicap ramps.

Review of the process: The community needs to be committed to making changes. This is best done by a group which is committed to be advisors to the town on identified issues. This group can help move the changes forward. The process includes surveying the community for recommendations. It would be necessary to hold listening sessions which include discussions on 1)what is happening now, 2)what would members of the community like to see happen to be age friendly, and 3)how would the change happen.

In the paperwork provided prior to the meeting, Anne presented the Age Friendly Action Plan. Question as to existing outline of survey for town's people. Anne has a model survey and surveys from other towns involved in this process. Patricia will send the application form and the six pages of documents she used for today's meeting.

Question: Will Machias Revitalization Committee by the Advisory Committee for the Age Friendly project or should a separate group with members in common be organized for this purpose. Anne Ball felt the Maine Downtown Center and the Age Friendly program are compatible. Currently, Angela is on the board in Eastport which has a

Thriving in Place grant. Angela is seeking to collaborate with the other towns in Washington County. She sees the age friendly project as a common goal for the Revitalization Committee which could unify the committee and help it move forward. Anne Ball asked us to remember the Downtown Main Street purpose and suggested we ask for additional people on the Machias Revitalization Committee whose focus is the age friendly project. The Main Street projects are focused on economic development. The Age Friendly and Downtown Main Street efforts are compatible but do not have exactly the same purposes. Patricia Oh will send the committee an economic study showing the relationship between age friendly efforts and economic growth. This study covers more than the results in Maine.

What do we need?: This can be difficult to determine unless a survey is conducted to seek input from the community. Current ideas include the River Walk, Edible Garden, Reenactors, Complete Streets, Thriving in Place. MRC saw the age friendly efforts and the Maine Downtown Center goals as hand in glove. The committee suggested we consider age friendly as also youth friendly. Any definition would be presented to the Machias Board of Selectmen. Patricia Oh reminded us there is no age verification system if a bench is placed to give an older person a place to sit a young person can use it, too.

Age friendly transformational project: per Anne Ball the goals of the Maine Downtown Center are as follows 1) design 2) promotion 3) organization 4) economic vitality. An age friendly plan could meet the criteria of a downtown plan.

Our commitment: Christina cautioned it is difficult to find people who will commit to even attending the webinars. People need to join and then follow through to get a project going. It is important to identify people who are committed. Moving forward, the Machias Ten -Year Plan needs to be redone. This is good timing for any ideas and efforts regarding improvements to the town. Discussion sessions will be conducted for the new Ten-Year Plan which could also included discussion of age friendly ideas. Angela felt a specific focus for the MRC might attract new members to the committee as some people have left due to inaction. Anne believes that a focus and actionable items will generate new volunteers as people see progress.

Patricia Oh suggested we have an age friendly call to decide the next issue. Not everyone needs to attend in real time as the discussions are recorded for later listening. She can help us network with other communities which are attempting similar projects. We do not need to reinvent the process. Peer to peer sharing is a mandatory part of the age friendly program.

The AARP National Rural Livability Workshop Conference will be from June 18th to 21st in Portland, ME. Patricia will send us information on the event. There are free accommodations available if we wish to participate. There will also be an AARP Conference in Lewiston, ME free tickets are available.

The group adjourned at 9:09am.