

MACHIAS REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE MINUTES
November 15, 2019
8:00 at Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) Building

Present: Ann Ball Development Foundation Maine via Zoom, Bill Burke, Co-Chair, Christina Therrien, Machias Town Manager, Jim Jackson, member of the Re-enactors and the Historical Society, Sandi Malagara business owner, Gail Peters from Sunrise Senior College

Public Comment: There was no public comment

Chair Announcements: None we made.

Meeting was conducted as a Zoom conference with Anne Ball.

Christina began by saying the two major concerns she has currently are the combined Town Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan. The two plans will be worked on simultaneously to save time and manpower. The Washington County Council of Governments has been hired to develop these plans. Christina shared the news that Judy East is leaving WCCG. She has been a wonderful asset for our area. The goal is to have the plan completed by April 2021.

The AARP/Application for the Age Friendly Community has not been filed. Christina asked whether there is a deadline for filling. Not sure. It was decided to focus our zoom meeting on the application. Anne had a docx. copy she showed us on-line. There was also a paper copy available. Anne recorded our comments on-line.

Angela who is currently out of the area has worked on this application and solicited comments from committee members. Today's effort was not only to complete the application but also refresh our memories regarding current services for seniors and future aspirations. Sections One and Two were contact information for two co-chairs Angela Fochesato and Bill Burke, in addition there were questions about population numbers and number of seniors. These numbers were taken from the 2010 census figures. It was anticipated that the 2020 census numbers will show more seniors living in the area.

Section Three asked for community activities, engagements and collaborations already existing in our area. We were able to list several organizations and institutions that welcome senior's participation. These groups include 350 Downeast in conjunction with the Window Dressers, Sunrise Senior College At UMM, Sunrise Bus Service, Bluebird restaurant monthly luncheons, Down East Community Hospital a Matter of Balance program, daytime fitness programs at the Reynolds Center at UMM, the Caring Community Collaborative and seniors parenting grandchildren.....

Anne asked if we had done an accessibility audit/walking audit. This is an assessment provided by the State of Maine. (Anne will get us the contact information.) The audit includes people in wheelchairs, with canes and sight issues. This sounded like a worthwhile effort for Machias.

The questions two and three under Section Three asked how the community will engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly place. The discussion focused on the need for better communication and availability of information. We also considered Downeast Community

Partners (formerly WHCA) and director Mark Green as a source of information and statistics that might help us focus on the target population.

It was clear transportation and accesses issues are an important part of the Town Plan and Downtown Plan. Anne reminded us the issue of isolation is important especially rural areas like ours. Christina commented on the area's terrain i.e. Dublin Hill and Court Street as features that hamper mobility.

Jim Jackson suggested we have a column in the Machias Valley News Observer which highlights the availability of age-friendly programs. That column should include telephone numbers for providing feedback to the town. Jim will meet with Sara Dedham in hopes the respected reporter Ruth Leubecker might take this on. Anne mentioned that other towns have senior newsletters. Christina reiterated that the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan will have a senior lense.

The meeting turned to members of the community who should be on the Machias Revitalization Committee as we tackle age-friendly issues. It was suggested that a representative from DCP, nursing home representatives, and one representative from the Veteran's Home and DECH. Sunrise Senior College and UMM should also be represented.

Section Four of the application had questions about network membership. We will be able to share our best practices with a senior and rural focus. Because of our isolation it is necessary to link our population with resources available on-line. How to access those resources would be a part of helping the senior community reach out beyond its local doors. Emphasis on technology savvy and remote learning would be helpful.

The next question asked what motivated us to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. It is evident due to our population of elders locally and statewide, we have a true vested interest in ensuring the oldest state in the nation is age friendly. It is particularly important for Machias to attain this status because the town is the service center for the surrounding area which includes medical facilities, grocery shopping, the college facilities, library, social events, and learning opportunities. The timing of the new Comprehensive Town Plan and the goals of an age friendly community are in sync.

The town needs to send in the application and a letter of intent from Selectman Board Chair Josh Rolfe. Anne asked what information could we use prior to the next meeting. Anne will check her e-mail addresses to be sure she is able to contact all participants. She will send the document we completed to Angela for further review. She will also research if there is a deadline date for the application. She will provide us the contact information for the accessibility audit.

Meeting adjourned at 9:11.

Respectfully,

Gail J. Peters