

BREWSTER COUNCIL ON AGING COMMUNITY FORUM MAY 30, 2018

A. PURPOSE

A Community Forum was held at the Brewster Baptist Church to present the COA's Five-Year Age Friendly Action Plan and to solicit input from Brewster residents regarding proposed programs and activities.

This Action Plan will be implemented starting in July 2018. The Plan is in direct response to the findings of the needs assessment study "The Future of Aging in the Town of Brewster" commissioned by the Town and COA and conducted by the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging in the UMASS-Boston Gerontology Institute. This Plan is also in line with the Age-Friendly Town Initiative currently undertaken by more than 100 agencies and organizations across Massachusetts, including Cape Cod. Check the COA page of the Town website for a link to the Plan.

The Forum was attended by about 70 residents, including COA Staff and Board members. Attendees were involved in two activities described below.

B. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Following a presentation of the Age-Friendly Action Plan, attendees were asked to participate in a 30-minute discussion about one of the program areas identified in the Plan. With a facilitator/recorder for discussion of each program area, attendees were asked to consider the following questions:

- * What are you most interested in?
- * Have we missed anything?
- * Have we proposed anything of low or no interest?
- * What will bring you to a community center?
- * What are the best ways to communicate about our programs?

Discussions are summarized for each program area below.

1. Exercise and Fitness Programs

Interests:

- Walking – a safe walking path for vigorous interval walking in groups and alone, with groups organized and supervised; it was noted that the bike trail is not safe due to high-speed cyclists; Drummer Boy Park might be an option
- Local hikes
- Yoga
- Qi Gong and Tai Chi
- Aerobic exercise – more rigorous than current programs
- Balance exercises
- Pickle Ball, indoor and outdoor
- Ping pong and table tennis
- Badminton
- Bocce – perhaps a court at Drummer Boy Park

Suggestions:

- Improved coordination with the Town Recreation Department
- Earlier classes (e.g. starting at 8:00am) and late afternoon and early evening programs

2. Social, Recreational and Group Activities

Interests:

- Movie night with current movies
- Book groups
- Sailing groups
- Trips, especially in the winter; e.g., Quincy Market, seal cruises, Canal cruise, Sesuit Harbor cruise, as well as trips to Boston or other off-Cape attractions
- Gardening
- Pot luck dinners
- Teas with music
- Social dances, perhaps jointly sponsored; the Cape Cod Ballroom Dancers Association might be a marketing resource
- Games such as Mah Jong, dominoes (e.g., Mexican Train), board games, and cards
- Simple cooking classes (e.g., crock pot cooking that might interest men)
- Arts and Crafts, creative activities including pottery and clay work, painting classes, knitting and needlepoint,
- Woodworking

3. Education and Life-Long Learning

Interests:

- Lifelong Learning Center in town
- Discussion Groups
- Workshops and Seminars (e.g., financial planning, how to downsize a home, other instructional sessions)
- Use of cable TV for in-home programs, e.g., seminars such as financial planning, computer instruction, exercise programs
- More collaboration with other COAs/Towns and joint sponsorship of programs

4. Housing Maintenance, Choices, Aging in Place

The following points were made:

- Affordable, year-round rentals are scarce. Brewster Housing Partnership and the Housing Trust are working on increasing subsidized rental units, for seniors and low-income families, and encouraging private investment in non-subsidized housing for older adults. Northside Village in Dennis is an example of the latter. The Housing Partnership is also looking at accessory housing
- Assisted living and independent living facilities are available but not affordable for many.
- The number of subsidized senior housing units is deficient.
- Condominiums are not always a good option; not always handicap accessible; high monthly fees.

Suggestions:

- Investigate the intergenerational community or cohousing model, as being done by Kraus-Fitch Architects in Amherst, and consider a presentation. Contact: lfitch@krausfitch.com; 413-549-5799
- Accessory dwellings that enable homeowners to continue living in their homes and also as a way to facilitate caregiving
- Consider “small houses”
- Repurpose public buildings for housing; e.g., Union Point In Weymouth/Rockland area

5. Wellness, Health Promotion, Disease Prevention, and Nutrition Programs

Programs in this area should have a positive orientation, focusing on wellness, lifestyle and prevention, rather than disease. Nutrition was noted as important.

Interests:

- Programs on healthy eating; connection between diet and health
- Classes on health and disease prevention in general
- Naturopathic medicine
- More published articles on health

6. Intergenerational Programs

Interests:

- Community dinners
- Pairing of older adults and children to talk about careers
- Liaison with high schools for technology help from students
- Liaison with elementary schools for participation in their events
- Partner with CC Technical School for cooking programs

7. Caregiver Support and Education

Interests:

- Training programs for caregivers new to the role regarding what to consider, where to find resources and services, housing/building needs
- Programs on caregiving for those with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, vision or hearing impairments, mobility problems, mental health issues
- Information and assistance for long-distance caregivers with personal care services, cleaning services, home maintenance, transportation, and skilled vs volunteer helpers
- Caregiver support groups/programs in collaboration with area non-profit organizations
- VNA/OT audits of homes for caregivers who plan to house aging relatives or to age in place

Suggestions:

- Creation of a Lower Cape or County database of caregiver resources; if one exists (e.g., at ESCCI or LCOC), collaborate with other area COAs to further develop it; assign responsibility for development/maintenance to an individual (Staff/Board)
- Work with All Access Committee and Chamber of Commerce to create accessibility guidelines for local businesses; publish guidelines
- Respite Care – expand regional daycare, no need for a separate facility in Brewster; participate in planning and publicity
- Advertise overnight respite facilities

8. Volunteer Recruitment / Civic Engagement

The importance of communication about volunteer opportunities was emphasized:

- Schedule Town meeting on Saturday mid-morning; improve parking closer to building for older adults; provide more comfortable chairs
- Publicize town-wide volunteer opportunities in *Bayside Chatter*, on bulletin boards in the Library and other Town venues, town website, cable TV (Community Channel), Town and COA emails, *CC Times* and *Cape Codder*
- Set up a volunteer neighbor helping neighbor program in which hours are banked for one service and then used for another, e.g., hours of dog sitting provided in exchange for yard work
- Provide clear descriptions of position responsibilities and time commitments
- People should determine their own level of participation; Volunteers should not replace paid staff positions

- Expand volunteer opportunities and services of Nauset Neighbors in Brewster

9. Transportation

Suggestions:

- Provide more information about available transportation options, e.g., DART, BRTA, Uber
- Increase COA funding for transportation services and expand destinations
- Provide transportation for cultural events, e.g., the Cape Cod Symphony
- Improve street lighting to facilitate night driving

C. IMPROVING COMMUNICATION ABOUT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

All groups were asked about how best to communicate with residents about programs and services.

Suggestions included:

- Facebook
- Separate website for COA, with monitoring of content to ensure that it is current
- Email
- Articles in *Prime Time*
- Cable TV (Community Channel) and Radio announcements
- Email and text messages
- Newspaper and COA Newsletter (*Bayside Chatter*) announcements
- Increased distribution and availability of *Bayside Chatter* at various locations in Town
- Newspaper inserts
- Robo calls for those who request it
- Announcements on electronic sign in front of Fire Station

D. RATINGS OF PROGRAM AREAS

Attendees were also asked to rate each of ten program areas on a scale of 1 (least interest) to 5 (most interest). Ratings were completed by 73 persons and support the discussions summarized above.

PROGRAM AREA	AVERAGE SCORE
Exercise and Fitness Programs	4.1
Social and Group Activities	4.0
Education and Life Long Learning	3.8
Housing Maintenance, Choices, Aging in Place	3.6
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Programs	3.3
Intergenerational Programs	3.2
Caregiver Education and Support	3.2
Long Term Care Planning and Options	3.1
Education and Support Programs for Chronic Illness	3.0
Nutrition Education and Support; MOWs	2.9

E. SUMMARY

Attendees at the Forum provided thoughtful feedback and input regarding proposed programs and services. There was strong interest in a community center, with note of its advantages for socialization, interaction with others, and friendship. Suggestions for a Center included:

- Comfortable chairs
- A gym and exercise equipment

- A community education center
- Arts and crafts area
- Space for socialization and conversation

In order to attract more people especially younger residents, it was noted that the center name should not be the Senior Center or COA. Many participants preferred programs at a central accessible building rather than spread across various venues, although it was recognized that this might be necessary in the immediate future.

The COA Staff and Board are now identifying and planning those programs of greatest interest, especially in the areas of fitness / exercise and social activities, which can be implemented in the coming year.