

AGE FRIENDLY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Members: Romaine Turyn (Chair), Marianne Perry, Ann Mitchell, Ed Dodge, Maggie Edmundson, Elaine Katz

Others Attending: Holly Rahmlow, Neighbors Driving Neighbors Co-Director Joe Austin, NDN Board President Harald Bredesen

Romaine called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. at the Town Office.

She announced that there is another new member, Ed Sims, who was not in attendance.

The committee was asked about comments on the minutes. Elaine noted that Romaine will actually be staying through June, not May. Holly said she would fix that error and send the minutes to the town clerk.

Elaine has agreed to go to the state meeting on June 3 for Age Friendly in Bangor and to be the committee's liaison for the Comprehensive Plan Committee, but said she is not yet ready to take on the role of chair. No one else on the committee expressed interest either.

Ann and Maggie's terms on the committee are expiring in June. Ann said at her age she does not feel up to another three years. Maggie plans to re-up. The role of chair remains unfilled.

Romaine referred to the bylaws regarding the committee's functioning. She said they were submitted to the Select Board, but there has been no response to the draft. Romaine will follow up.

There was general discussion about resources for Age Friendly committees. Ann mentioned ITNAmerica, which also arranges transportation utilizing volunteers, who earn credits for future services.

We talked about Handy Helpers and how we might re-brand them so anyone who needs help with something, not just seniors or those with disabilities. Romaine suggested that HH is "designed for projects you can't do yourself" and that we might rebrand it as such.

Getting people to ask for help is a challenge. But, for some reason, at last year's Community Service Day requests for help exceeded available student volunteers. Perhaps there is a way to coordinate with the schools to hire young people for physical chores.

Neighbors Driving Neighbors

At 9:30 two members of Neighbors Driving Neighbors joined the committee for further discussion about Readfield's prospects for joining.

The first question asked was how Readfield would work with NDN and if the Age Friendly Committee would have a role, or would we back off. It is unclear at the moment. The NDN board discussed adding Readfield at its board meeting the night before, but NDN has never expanded to a new town before, so first a procedure must be established. This is a new process for them.

Romaine asked Holly to summarize the results of her survey of those who had volunteered to help others at the beginning of the pandemic (synopsis at the end of the minutes).

Harald said that it was helpful to know that we already had potential drivers and riders. He suggested that having liaisons to the town would be helpful. Elaine has volunteered to attend the orientation for new drivers NDN is holding in May. Bruce Bourgoine told Eric he would consider joining the NDN board. Romaine said she would follow up with him.

After the NDN members left Elaine brought up some issues that are concerning her, including the potential costs of the recreation area proposed for the Fairgrounds and the new broadband accessibility proposal to those living on fixed incomes.

Romaine said Age Friendly was asked to participate in the Recreation Committee's planning, but no committee members volunteered to be the liaison. She attended one meeting and offered comments. There is information on the town website about the plans and additional meetings will be held. We were also asked to participate in broadband discussions, but we did not have a volunteer to do so.

Elaine also asked about the possibility of a trail at the beach to allow those in wheelchairs to get to the beach from the parking lot. Holly, who is on the Trails Committee, said she would inquire about that.

Elaine said Librarian Melissa Small would like to start some programs for seniors/housebound individuals using volunteers. They sound like excellent ideas, but Age Friendly doesn't have the person power. Romaine suggested library volunteers should take on those tasks.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Survey synopsis from Holly Rahmlow

I started with the list of about 30 names. I emailed them and explained what I was doing and asked them to email me with a convenient time to speak. The response rate was less than 50%, I'm sorry to say.

Two emailed that they no longer had time.

One email was returned (a person from KHS no longer there)

Another said she didn't have time now but was interested in the project and asked to be kept informed.

One woman said she'd call me but never did.

Of the six people I spoke to, all said they would be willing to participate in NDN.

We talked about several other things as well. Several people said they were willing to help but had limited time or were unable or unwilling to do more physical chores, such as raking and shoveling. We talked about the difficulty in finding someone to do those kinds of chores and how the town might in some way sponsor that service, perhaps through the schools.

We talked about the need for more intense short-term help when someone is having a procedure such as a knee or a hip replacement.

Some of them are currently helping two residents who are pretty much housebound who would be possible candidates for NDN.

Most of the people I spoke to are older themselves, and we talked about the need to recruit younger volunteers.

It's possible I may hear back from others, but it's been almost a week so unlikely.

If the town does join NDN, a Messenger article might bring out more volunteers. BTW, I had one conversation about how people who might most need senior services may never see the Messenger, as they don't use computers or don't get out much. Perhaps the Census will give us an idea of how many people are over, say, 80 and might benefit from a monthly visit with the Messenger in hand.