

# Ad Hoc Senior Advisory Committee

Report to  
Kennebunkport Board of  
Selectmen  
22 February 2018

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## 1. Vision Statement

Our vision is for Kennebunkport to foster an age-friendly community that allows people, regardless of their age, to stay active and connected, and to thrive while aging in place.

## 2. Selectmen's Charge to the Committee

On January 12, 2017, the Board of Selectmen established an ad-hoc committee – The Senior Advisory Committee – to serve for a one-year period until January 31, 2018 or until their tasks have been completed, whichever is sooner. [On December 28, 2017, the Selectmen approved the extension of the committee's term of service from January 31, 2018 to March 31, 2018.]

## 3. Composition of Committee/Membership Profile

Committee Volunteer Members:

Bill Leffler, Chair

Susan Boak, Vice-Chair

Susan Gesing, Secretary

Dean Auriemma

Penelope Gruen

Loreta McDonnell

The six members of the committee have been residents of Kennebunkport for 3-23 years. They represent a wide age range: 50, 57, 71, 72, 78 and 88 with a median age of 71.5 years.

Their careers and other experiences include nursing, financial planning, systems engineering, teaching, religious scholarship, career consulting, sales management, marketing, entrepreneurship, real estate management, educational consulting, strategic planning, business ownership, business research, emergency medical services and school administration.

## 4. Summary of Committee's Completed Tasks

In the preparation of this report and its recommendations, the committee accomplished the following:

- Convened in March 2017 and met twice a month for most months through February 2018.
- Reviewed the Board of Selectmen's charge for the committee and took the following actions on the categories of the charge, each of which appears below in italics.
  - a. *Establish a liaison with other agencies and town departments, which have relevant concerns.* Committee members met with or interviewed the following:
    - \* Alison Kenneway, Director of Public Health and General Assistance
    - \* Carol Cook, Director of Parks and Rec.

- \* Mary-Lou Boucouvalas, Graves Librarian
  - \* Mary Giknis, Cape Porpoise Librarian
  - \* Kennebunkport Health Council – private group affiliated with town nurse
  - \* Dick Stedman, Fire Administrator, Kennebunkport Fire Department
  - \* Michael Claus, Director of Public Works
  - \* Werner Gilliam, Code Enforcement Officer, Town Planner
- b. *Gather information from seniors and interested entities working on behalf of seniors so that the committee may advise the Board of Selectmen.* In addition to analyzing survey data, we had meetings and/conversations with a number of people.
- \* Conducted a survey of Kennebunkport property owners 65 or older to determine needs/concerns. (See Section 7 of this report and Appendix A.)
  - \* Interviewed Pat Schwebler at the Center at Lower Village.
- \* Communicated with Richard Elkin, founder of Nauset Neighbors, providing transportation to six Cape Cod communities.
- \* Interviewed Mike Sullivan, Director of York Parks and Rec. and Janice Marshall Colby – head of programming for York Senior Center.
  - \* Attended a meeting (four members) of the Tri State Learning Collaborative on Aging Summit.
  - \* Attended (as a team) a Kennebunk Council on Aging meeting featuring Patricia Oh, Maine Age Friendly Communities consultant; subsequently one member conducted a lengthy follow up email conversation with her.
  - \* Communicated with Jess Maurer, Executive Director of the Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging.
  - \* Talked with Alana Nucci, Habitat for Humanity, regarding weatherization and partnering agencies: York County Community Agency (YCCA) and Efficiency Maine.
  - \* Interviewed Maine 211 representative to understand the types of services and referrals offered to Kennebunkport’s older residents.
  - \* Interviewed Debby Paradis, transportation person at York County Community Action Program to understand the limited transportation options available to Kennebunkport residents.
  - \* Talked with Holly Vanderzee and others from Harpswell Aging at Home regarding home heating assistance programs.
  - \* Compiled information on WHO/AARP age-friendly communities.
- c. *Identify resources needed by resident seniors through partnering with other organizations and agencies, such as medical services, home maintenance, recreation, and senior housing.*

This should be a goal of a possible future standing committee.

- d. *Implement an educational effort to inform seniors regarding available services provided by the Town, State, and other agencies.*

This could be a goal of a possible future standing committee.

- e. *Identify senior needs within our community that are currently not addressed by Town or other agency services.*
  - (a) *Needs will be separated into immediate concerns, and potential future issues.*
  - (b) *The committee will also address the difference between services not available, and those for which seniors may need financial assistance.*

See Section 8 of this report for list of Services Not Adequately Addressed by Town or Other Agency Services.

- f. *Development of a volunteer base, which may assist in the delivery of services needed.*  
This should be encouraged by a possible future standing committee.

## 5. Kennebunkport’s Demographic Profile

Kennebunkport is a coastal town in York County Maine. Its population from the 2010 federal census was 3474. Approximately 25% of the population was over the age of 65 although only 2.4% was above the age of 85.

Kennebunkport and the neighboring towns of Kennebunk and Arundel comprise school district RSU21. Kennebunkport is the smallest member of RSU21 by both population and geographic size, as shown in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1 Comparison of Kennebunkport, Kennebunk, Arundel**

<b>Town</b>	<b>Geographic Size (square mi)</b>	<b>Population 2010</b>	<b># older than 65</b>	<b>65-74 Young Old</b>	<b>75-84 Old</b>	<b>85+ Old Old</b>
<b>Kennebunkport</b>	20.5	3474	857 25%	511 14.7%	264 7.6%	82 2.4%
<b>Kennebunk</b>	35	10798	2369 22%	1153 13.7%	753 6.9%	462 4.3%
<b>Arundel</b>	24	4022	489 12%	304 7.6%	140 3.5%	45 1.1%

The following discussion is attributed to Lawrence Frolik, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and an expert on housing options for the aging. In a classic article laying out the parameters affecting housing needs of the aging he points out that younger individuals often look upon retirement as a homogenous age period; that is everyone over sixty-five is about the same. This is inaccurate. Gerontologists like to classify old age into three periods:

- The young old, from 65-74, recently retired and for the most part in good health, tend to be controlled by their desires and interests rather than by physical concerns.
- The old, from 75-84, are more influenced by health, safety and frailty issues.
- The old, old, 85+ are most likely to need assistance to live independently.

Interwoven with the variations in physical need of these three groups are the limitations imposed by dwindling disposable income and the increasing need for community as spouses and friends pass away. As a result of ...[the] special needs of the very old, many who purchase a retirement house when they are in their late sixties, find that in their eighties they may need to move again, this time to congregate housing or an assisted living facility.<sup>1</sup>

For Kennebunkport, our largest groups of retired older adults are in the younger of the two categories and still actively volunteer. We do not like to be categorized, although generalizations are needed for planning purposes. We are a caring, social community and this should be considered as survey needs are addressed.

## **6. Current Community Assets**

- Public Health Department – One full time and one half time nurse for medical assistance and supplies, general assistance, and coordination of services among town departments
- Parks and Recreation Department – Existing programs geared at seniors, possible use of new 2700 square foot facility for senior programs, a micro bus (15 person)
- KEMS – trained in Geriatric Emergency Medical Services (GEMS)
- Fire Department – Assistance to town nurse for safety checks in crises/emergencies
- Police Department – House security checks for people away, welfare visits
- Department of Public Works – Clearing of roads and sidewalks, trash/recycling program, road maintenance and construction
- Active, caring volunteers on town boards and in community organizations
- Many social opportunities for older adults “as social as I want to be” (survey response)
- RSU 21 – Facilities for community use, potential volunteers
- Center at Lower Village – Social and health programs, FISH – driving to medical appointments
- Graves Library – Possible uses of new space, current programs geared towards older adults, new computer/business center, tax preparation support
- Cape Porpoise Library – Book deliveries, to shut ins, informal activities, reading room
- Kennebunkport Conservation Trust – Space and programs
- Kennebunk Residents Association – Communication
- Local churches – Outreach for all ages
- Community Outreach Services – Food pantry, fuel assistance, holiday food baskets
- Kennebunkport Health Council – Stuff the bus, potential programs
- 211 Maine –Toll free service with trained call specialists who can help 24/7

## **7. Summary of Survey**

At one of the committee’s first meetings on April 4, 2017, there was general consensus that as a first step, committee members needed to educate themselves so that they would have a common body of knowledge upon which to base future planning. Areas to research were identified and would include:

- Concerns/needs of Kennebunkport seniors

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<sup>11</sup> Frolik, Lawrence A. “Three Stages of Old Age.” Cooperative Aging, Mar. 2009, [www.cooperativeaging.com/2009/03/three-stages-of-old-age.html](http://www.cooperativeaging.com/2009/03/three-stages-of-old-age.html)

- Demographics on Kennebunkport older adults
- Resources currently available to these residents
- General information about needs and concerns of seniors.

Most members of the committee attended an April forum sponsored by the Kennebunk Council on Aging in which Patricia Oh, a Maine Age-Friendly Communities consultant, spoke. She spoke of the benefits of a survey of older adults needs and concerns as a starting place for town committees focused on seniors. While there was also interest in holding focus groups to determine concerns, the committee agreed that the first priority was to conduct a survey of Kennebunkport homeowners 65 and older.

The age groups were separated into three categories: 65-74, 75-84 and 85+ to be consistent with classifications used by gerontologists. A one-page survey used by another Maine community, and favored by Patricia Oh for its simplicity, was customized to represent the needs of Kennebunkport. The survey was mailed with the tax bills and extra copies were printed for town offices and libraries. It was also available on-line.

The survey focused on six key areas, asking questions to solicit information from residents:

1. ABOUT YOU – basic demographic information including full and part time residence, years in town, male/female, and zone.
2. ABOUT YOUR HOUSING SITUATION – more questions about living arrangements, home maintenance, aging in place, and winter safety.
3. TRANSPORTATION – how do you get around and how do you feel about driving after dark.
4. AT HOME IN YOUR COMMUNITY – seven questions touching on communication, socialization, volunteering, Internet use, and safety using public spaces.
5. HEALTH AND WELLNESS – four questions about using the services of the town nurse, food insecurity and exercise.
6. AS YOU AGE – where do you want to live and how will you get around?

The survey also provided opportunities for residents to add comments and even essays for further feedback.

The committee received 335 completed surveys from a total of about 1000 full time residents – a 33% return. (Number of residents was taken from the 2010 Census updated by deaths to 2015.) Another 100 or so seasonal residents also replied. Over 90% of completed surveys were returned with tax payments.

Committee member, Susan Boak, entered survey results into Excel. She created PowerPoint slides with charts to explain the data.

## **7.1 Survey Highlights**

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** About 77% of the responses were from full time residents. More than half of respondents have lived in town in excess of 21 years. Females outnumbered males slightly: 54% to 46%. The age spread was consistent with Census data. Town zones were well

represented with Village Residential, Cape Porpoise, and Goose Rocks comprising about 70% of the entries.

HOUSING: in Kennebunkport, those 65 and older are predominately homeowners (98%). The most common household size is two; the makeup is shown in the figures below.

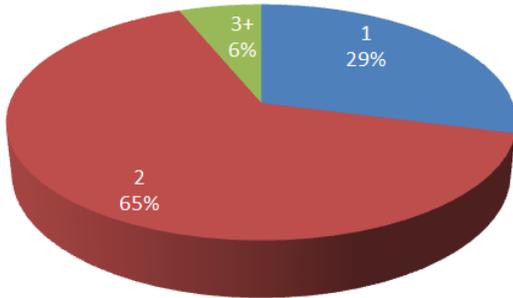


Figure 7-1 Number in Household

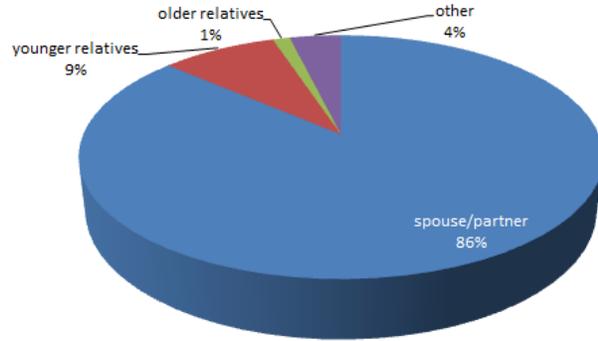


Figure 7-2 Living Arrangements if not Alone

About 9% of respondents report difficulty taking care of home maintenance for the following reasons:

- No longer able to do the work (43%)
- Can't afford to pay for services (38%)
- Difficulty finding service providers (19%)

Residents were familiar with the concept of aging safely in place and 83% felt their home did not need modification, at least at this time. Of the 15% acknowledging the need, first floor living topped the list; see Figure 7-3 below. There seems to be a reluctance to perform modifications ahead of time. One resident opined, *"I will take care of it when I need to."*

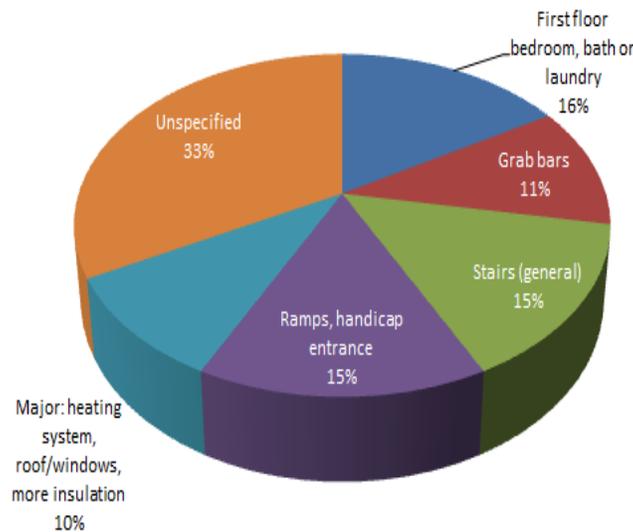


Figure 7-3 Planned modifications for Aging Safely in Place

When asked if their homes were warm and safe enough in winter, about 4% indicated there were some issues with heat, typically a lack of insulation and the high cost of fuel. This was most

common in Cape Porpoise, Farm and Forest, and Village Residential zones which have older homes, mobile homes and reconditioned cottages.

About 6% of residents indicated shoveling their walks and steps was a problem.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Overwhelmingly, 96%, residents report driving their own car. Those who don't, report that family, including spouse, drive them. Once you can't drive, options become much more restricted. The living arrangement for those who can't drive is shown in Figure 7-4; it is shocking to note that over 70% live alone. To continue to age in place, residents need availability of transportation services.

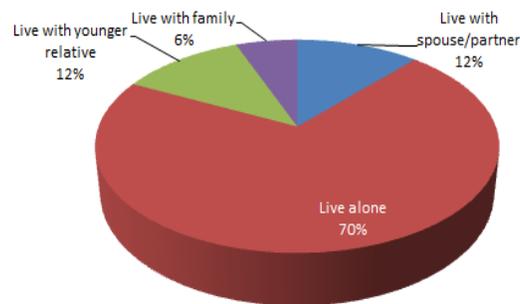


Figure 7-4 Living Arrangement of those who Do Not Drive and are Driven by Spouse/Family

Residents were queried about whether they were comfortable driving at night. About 27% self-reported some qualifications. Of those who reported qualifications, some don't drive at night at all (16%), others prefer to drive in familiar areas (33%), others would drive only as a last resort (41%), and 10% report both familiar areas and last resort.

**AT HOME IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** Most frequently, folks find out what is happening by reading the Newspaper and by talking to family and friends. The ages from 65-74 report the Internet as an information source just behind family and friends; 93% use the Internet daily or several times a week, 5% do not have Internet connection. Internet use falls off with age: from 75-84 about 82% use the Internet daily or several times a week, at 85+, the number falls to 51%.

The most reliable way to reach older adults is through the newspaper. Younger members of this group may also be reached reliably through the Internet. It is hard to quantify the "buzz" created by common knowledge of family and friends.

Kennebunkport is a very social community. Over 80% of residents report getting out of the house at least five times per week if not daily. When asked if as social as you want to be, an incredible 83% responded yes. The biggest reason for not being social was not having anyone to go with.

Volunteering is alive and well in Kennebunkport. The most common response was helping others on my own, followed by service organizations and church. Clearly Kennebunkport is a caring community.

Residents were queried about their use of public spaces and if there was difficulty using them. They were also asked if there were public spaces in town where they did not feel safe walking.

About 10% of residents reported issues with walking safety, naming granite outcroppings, the combination of narrow roads and speeding cars, and lack of sidewalks as contributing factors.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS:** Most of the town, about 70%, seems to be aware we have a town nurse whose services are free to and much lauded by residents. About 37% report having used these services. The town nurse also serves as the general assistance officer and gateway to needed programs for low-income residents.

There does not appear to be much food insecurity in town (only 2 instances, but still too many) and there are existing programs to handle this.

The most common form of exercise for older adults is walking, followed by gardening.

**AS YOU AGE:** It's practically unanimous: 90% wish to age in their current home and the same 90% want to "drive as long as I can".

Full survey data results may be found in appendix A to this report.

## **8. Services Not Adequately Addressed**

(by Town or Other Agency Services—From Section 4-e, page 5)

- \* Transportation for any older adult needs other than medical (provided in a limited way by FISH.) Social and shopping transportation is not available except by family and friends.
- \* Assistance with finding or paying for contractors for home repairs and shoveling
- \* Coordination among Town and community providers of services to older adults.
- \* Communication about existing services for older adults.

## **9. Committee Recommendations to Board of Selectmen**

Based on the survey of older adults and other information gathered, the ad hoc committee recommends the creation of a standing committee (Senior Advisory Committee) to oversee the process of making Kennebunkport more age friendly though engaging the community, continuing to identify needs of older residents and coordinating or initiating programs to help them age successfully in this community.

The following are suggested actions for a standing committee to consider.

- Strengthen relationships, through the Town Manager, with each Town department to discuss survey data as it relates to their departments, suggesting new programs or services and helping in publicizing all programs.
- Give serious consideration to becoming a WHO/AARP age friendly community. Study the eight domains for livability that influence the quality of life of older adults (from The Maine Guide – Building Livable Age-Friendly Communities: [www.who.int/ageing/projects/age-friendly-cities-communities/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/age-friendly-cities-communities/en/)); identify what is going well in each domain, determine areas of concern and how they could be addressed; implement responses.

- Assess, beyond the survey, the qualitative needs of residents. Increase community involvement by holding focus groups, listening sessions, and forums.
- Encourage the options for providing transportation services for older residents, including FISH, volunteer groups and local, county and state programs.
- Understand the ways the town and various town organizations communicate and provide useful information to older residents and also how they promote their programs for older adults. Recommend improvements to increase likelihood that residents are aware of what is offered.
- Respond to the needs of older adults by encouraging other organizations to provide workshops and appropriate programs.
- Encourage formation of a volunteer network to facilitate the aging in place for older adults with tasks associated with home maintenance and seasonal transitions.
- Promote coordination of services for older adults amongst town organizations.

## **10. Conclusion**

The Ad Hoc Senior Advisory Committee has met 21 times since it was organized last year. Our research and discussions around issues impacting older adults in Kennebunkport (about 30% of our population) were wide ranging, varied and in depth. Our work included interviews with a number of Town employees involved with seniors and consultations with representatives of agencies, organizations and facilities serving this demographic in York County and beyond. As a result of this effort, the committee has put together this report, as well as an appendix with supplementary information, to present to the Selectmen.

Our work concludes with eight recommendations. They deal with improving relationships and communication among those offering and providing services, encouraging a volunteer effort to assist seniors when needed, exploring ways to provide transportation services for those who no longer drive, considering affiliation with the WHO/AARP Age Friendly Communities network, and continuously striving to make Kennebunkport an even more age friendly community.

To accomplish these goals, the committee is recommending that the Selectmen establish a permanent Senior Advisory Committee to address these concerns in a formal fashion.