**Committee Members Present**: Maureen Booth, Ann Hartzler, Mary Kelley, Karen Mayo, Grace McCarthy, Barbara Rollins and Deb Smith

**Absent**: Peggy Muir

**Staff**: Jason Lamoreau

**Guest**: Kathryn Harnish, Lifelong Community Fellow

**I CALL TO ORDER**

Maureen established a quorum.

**II APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Agenda was approved as distributed.

**III APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the April 10, 2023 meeting were approved as distributed.

**IV LIFELONG COMMUNITY FELLOWS PROGRAM**

Kathryn Harinish, a Fellow assigned to Bowdoinham for a nine month period to help advance age friendly activities, joined the meeting via zoom to reflect on her work with the Committee which ends in May.

*Goal of the Fellowship:* The focus of Kathryn’s engagement was to help the Committee build a coalition of local organizations to help support at-risk residents and those who are socially isolated. Kathryn reminded the Committee of her initial assignment which was to convene a series of listening sessions among organizations whose work brings them into close contact with at risk residents, such as the food pantry, fire & rescue, churches, school and others. Findings from those sessions highlighted the lack of general awareness about local services and the work of the age friendly committee. To heighten awareness among residents and to increase the committee’s visibility among community based organizations, a project was conceived to distribute winter kits to clients of the food pantry, the RideShare program, Fire & Rescue and age friendly programs such as Tax Prep Day. Using existing channels of distribution familiar to residents, the project gained immediate legitimacy and connection. The project also demonstrated the concept of coalition among local agencies – the concept of working together for a common purpose.

*Community Assets:*

* A strong leadership team, committee a staff
* An engaged and supportive community
* Strong local partnerships
* Dedicated Town resources, especially the enviable staff position of a Coordinator.

*Lessons Learned:* From her perspective, Kathryn identified several lessons learned during her fellowship with Bowdoinham:

* When trying to make connections with at-risk residents, there is value in working with existing channels of connection to increase program legitimacy.
* When working with community partners and residents, the Committee demonstrated the importance of cultivating a reciprocal relationship. The Committee maintained contact with organizations which participated in the listening sessions and were kept informed on how their recommendations were being implemented. “Ownership” of the winter kit project was shared with other organizations to enhance their client relationships. Similarly, as part of the distribution process, residents were encouraged to provide feedback on how the kits could be improved in the future.

*Opportunities and Barriers:*

* Publicity around the winter kit project expanded the reach of the project beyond the original organizations and communities, bringing with it future opportunities to work together.
* A “specific ask” rather than a general request for participation was a more successful strategy. For example, Fire & Rescue was asked if they could donate carbon monoxide detectors for the winter kits and Home Depot was asked for emergency lights.
* The Committee was unable to get several critical organizations to participate such as the Area Agency on Aging (Spectrum Generations) or Kennebec Valley Community Action Program. More effort is needed to better understand how to build successful partnerships with them.
* The lack of local essential health, mental health and in-home support services often limits the types of solutions to improve the lives of at-risk residents.

*Next Steps:* Kathryn thanked the Committee for the opportunity to work on this important issue and regretted that her fellowship ends before a meeting of coalition partners takes place. In turn, Committee members expressed gratitude for Kathryn’s guidance throughout this project. It was agreed that we would remain in touch as issues emerge or an outside perspective is needed. Jason and Kathryn will represent the project on June 8 during which there will be a poster session outlining each Fellow’s project following the same format Kathryn used in her presentation.

**VI Staff Report**

Jason commented that it has been a very busy time at the Town Office given significant re-design of offices and general clean out of old files.

The positions of Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) and assessor have both been filled. At least one public works position and the position of Assistant Town Clerk remain open.

Jason reported having attended a meeting with Lifelong Community Fellows and their assigned communities to share experiences and network on issues. Jason, the only Town-employed age friendly representative, indicated that there was a lot of interest in Bowdoinham’s winter kit project.

The first responder training program was attended by 16 individuals and was considered one of the best ever offered due to the quality of the presentations and equipment. Jason noted that the issue of hosting a first responder training focused on the special challenges of dementia was raised at the Fellows Meeting.

Jason cautioned members about the 2023/2024 Town budget which will come up for a vote at the June Annual Meeting. The budget represents a significant increase that, if approved, would mean a sizable increase to property taxes over the current tax levy limit. Included in the budget is the recommendation that Jason’s position be made full time. If the proposed budget is not approved, there will be a significant reduction in Town staff and services, including the loss of staffing for recreation and age-friendly. In response to Committee concern that many residents may not understand the implications of their vote, Deb indicated that the Select Board will be discussing the preparation of a simple Fact Sheet to distribute in advance of the meeting.

Follow-up Actions:

1. Jason will follow up with Patricia Oh to discuss the feasibility of hosting a first responder training program that is dementia inclusive.
2. Maureen and Jason encouraged all committee members to convey the word about the importance of Jason’s position to neighbors and friends.

**VII Status of Coalition Meeting**

Maureen reported that there has been much discussion among Kathryn, Peggy, Jason and herself regarding the timing and focus of an in-person meeting with coalition partners, many of whom participated in the Listening Sessions (food pantry, library, fire & rescue, Select Board, churches, etc). Maureen acknowledged her own reservations about hosting a meeting without a specific focus or anticipated product. She offered an alternative approach to invite Al Huntington, Deputy Sagadahoc County Sheriff, to present two of their programs which to date have had limited local participation: a program to help track wanderers and a registry to identify those wishing to be contacted on a regular basis or in an emergency.

The concept of how to design an initial coalition meeting was opened for discussion. Three options emerged:

*Combine with a Luncheon*: Karen suggested inviting Deputy Sheriff Huntington to present at a luncheon to which coalition partners would also be invited. This arrangement would allow everyone to become informed about the programs and how to access them.

*Meet and Learn about Partner Organizations*: As an alternative to #1, Karen suggested that an initial separate meeting with coalition members could focus on learning about what each organization does and possible opportunities for working together.

*Meet and Learn about Sheriff Office progra*ms: Invite Deputy Sheriff and coalition partners to meet to learn about the Sherriff’s programs and, as a group, decide how to build local awareness and use.

Members suggested that Peggy, Jason, Maureen and possibly Kathryn meet to discuss the options and make a recommendation at the June meeting.

Follow up Actions:

Peggy, Jason and Maureen will meet to develop a recommendation for engaging coalition partners in an initial meeting.

**VIII Updates**

1. **Feedback on Winter Kits:** Grace reported findings from a very limited sample of residents receiving the winter kits. Foremost, feedback indicated that there was limited use of the kit by residents given the lack of any significant power outages this winter. Other findings included: most already had carbon monoxide detectors and sufficient blankets at home; many did not recognize the full functionality of the radio; hats and gloves were VERY welcomed; lite sticks were not helpful; there were some issues of sizing and breakage with toe cleats; protein bars may be a good addition. Despite the mixed reviews, recipients appreciated the effort and the opportunity to provide their feedback.
2. **Trail Cleanup:** Maureen noted that age friendly received a anonymous donation and that we were awaiting word about a small grant to fund efforts to make the trails accessible to everyone, including those using wheelchairs, walkers, pushing strollers or just needing a flat surface for balance. Plans are to engage a wheelchair-bound consultant who advises towns on the accessibility of their trails and options for improving access.
3. **Resource Flyer and Directory:** Mary reported that the Directory is close to completion and that a double-sided flyer was complete except for a final check on the numbers.
4. **Bowdoinham Estates:** This item was tabled until next meeting when Peggy is present.
5. **Luncheons:** Barbara reported that all was set for the May 11 luncheon, along with a guess speaker from Matter of Balance. Brochures will also be available for attendees. Jason reported that the Bean Supper was a successful first time effort and brought in $236 (minus $50 in expenses).
6. **Handbook on Universal Design:** Maureen indicated that the announcement on our application to AARP to support the development of a handbook on universal design should be made no later than May 15. Fingers crossed.
7. **Listening Session:** Mary reminded members that a Listening Session was planned for this evening to provide an opportunity for residents to process and speak to the horrific shooting events earlier this month. The session is scheduled for 6pm at Merrymeeting Hall.
8. **Age Friendly Supper at August 13 Concert:** George Oliver has agreed to oversee the planning and preparation of a supper to be available at the summer concert on August 13. More details will be sent out for signing up to help.

Follow-up Actions:

1. Mary, Ann and Maureen will make every effort to finalize the Resource Directory prior to the June meeting.
2. Jason will have Resource Flyers printed once phone numbers are checked
3. Maureen will contact George Oliver to figure out next steps for the concert supper which Age Friendly is sponsoring.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for June 12.

| **Approved by:** |  |  |
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| Peggy Muir, Co-Chair |  | Date |
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Maureen Booth, Co-Chair Date

| Jason Lamoreau, Age-Friendly Coordinator |  | Date |
| --- | --- | --- |