

Selectboard supports age friendly community effort

By Beth David
Editor

The Fairhaven Selectboard showed support for an effort to make Fairhaven designated an "Age Friendly Community" by AARP. Christine Sullivan from Coastline Elderly, and Fairhaven's Council on Aging Director, Anne Silvia told the Selectboard at its 3/25/19 meeting that several area communities have already received the designation or are working towards it. The designation will allow the town to apply for specific grants.

Being Age Friendly means a community has pledged to work towards becoming a good place to live for people of all ages.

It's about improving conditions for all people, said Ms. Sullivan, noting that efforts to improve conditions for the elderly tend to benefit everyone overall.

The initiative includes eight domains of livability including: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Respect and Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information,

Community and Health Services.

Each area then has specific actions a community can take to make a community friendly for all ages.

Ms. Silvia said that Fairhaven was already working on many of the identified areas.

"We're really close," said Ms. Silvia, adding, "It's quite involved," to get the designation, but "doable."

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She said the COA town already had a bike group, walking groups, and other programs that would help make the designation possible.

A variety of boards would have to coordinate, such as Board of Health, the Wellness Committee, etc.

One of the main goals is to create a community that makes it easy for people to stay in the "homes they love," in Fairhaven, said Ms. Sullivan.

Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Silvia were asking the board for a letter from the town to get the process started.

All three board members supported the effort and agreed to send the letter.

Selectboard member Charles Murphy said that Ms. Silvia was already doing "amazing things" at the COA.

"We really are an age-friendly community," he said.

Some of the suggestions in the written materials include improving accessibility of public areas, such as the picnic tables and ramp at Grimshaw Park at Fort Phoenix; improving health and wellness, such as the exercise station on the bike path, and, of course, the bike path itself.

Generally, age-friendly and livable communities have "walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities," according to the AARP website.

To learn more visit <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>

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