



AD HOC FALMOUTH SENIOR CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

UPDATED REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FALMOUTH SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICES

September 2016

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SUMMARY

The Town of Falmouth, Maine, is more than a municipality. It is a community. Its leaders and stakeholders actively promote the welfare of its residents. They have long advocated for green spaces, public safety, good roads, excellent schools, diversity in housing and a thriving local business area. The Town's residents volunteer at its food pantry for those in need (a third of whom are senior citizens). They support environmental responsibility through recycling initiatives, conserved land and biking lanes. The annual Habitat for Humanity walkathon on Foreside Road is one of the most attended events in Town. Each October, hundreds of residents gather for an annual free roast turkey community supper held by the Town's churches and faith communities.

In advocating for the welfare of our neighbors in need, the Falmouth community promotes the welfare of us all. As more of our residents become senior citizens, it is natural for us to consider ways in which we can appropriately provide services.

As we age, our needs change. When we can no longer drive, we need help with transportation. We may become isolated – and so need a place to socialize. We also need information about where to find help with home maintenance and personal care. With fixed incomes, we may need help controlling our expenses (including property tax relief).

Although our municipal government is not a care provider, small municipal expenditures can provide great benefits to our seniors. Such a commitment recognizes that, just as seniors have long supported our youth with good schools and playgrounds, and recreating families with conserved land, and businesses with business district renewal and roads, so, too, do they deserve some municipal support for their needs that inevitably arise with aging.

The members of this Senior Citizen Advisory Committee therefore appreciate the Town Council having established the Committee in 2015 with the charge to determine what role the Town should have in offering and facilitating the delivery of services and assistance to its senior citizens.

In 2015 the Committee submitted a Report to the Council describing the research it had done since it first met in March, 2015, including meeting with senior services providers and similar committees in other towns, visiting senior centers, reviewing studies and other materials, conducting a senior citizen services survey of Falmouth's residents, and hosting a stakeholders' advisory meeting.

Based on that information, the Committee proposed, in the 2015 Report's Recommendations Section, five recommendations for implementation, summarized below:

1. Create an hospitable Senior Center in the Mason-Motz Activity Center, with a kitchenette, and connecting outdoor park with walkway, tables, benches and shade trees;
2. Provide seniors programs at the Senior Center;

3. Support the development of a volunteer transportation network;
4. Hire a Senior Services Coordinator;
5. Extend the term of this Committee to September 1, 2016 so that it may complete further Research, make further recommendations, and assist in the implementation of those senior services initiatives that may be approved by the Town Council.

In response, the Council allocated \$70,000 in the 2016-17 budget toward the design and construction of a Senior Center at the Mason-Motz Activity Center and, through the Town Manager, it has moved forward with an architect's design of the Center, with the goal to begin construction for completion this winter.

This 2016 Report is a pared down and updated version of the Committee's 2015 Report, confirming and updating its 2015 Recommendations.

Falmouth's Demographic Profile

The Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee Draft Study, April 2015, states:

Page 7: At 47.8 years old, Falmouth residents are older, on average, compared to those in Cumberland County, Maine, and the United States. These age characteristics have implications for the workforce as residents retire or look to transition into a more flexible time in their career with a home-based business or small, one-person consulting firms.

Falmouth's Comprehensive Plan states:

Pages 27-28: Household Changes. Household size has dropped significantly in the last few decades. While in 1980 it was 2.72 persons per household, in 2000 it was 2.56 persons per household. It may have leveled out as it was 2.54 persons per household in 2010. This decrease is a reflection of an increase in single-person households, a tendency toward small households among the baby boomers, the increased longevity and independence of seniors living alone, and increased divorce rates.

Smaller households mean that more (and different) housing units are needed to accommodate the growing population. The group facilities population (primarily residents of nursing home and eldercare facilities) increased from 84 people in 1990 to 217 people in 2000, but dropped to 178 people in 2010.

Page 28: Age Distribution: Falmouth's population appears to be moving in two different directions. On one hand, many young families are moving into the community driving up school enrollments. On the other, Falmouth's population has been getting older.

Falmouth has the highest percentage of residents over the age of 75 in Southern Maine. Its median age increased by more than 5 years over the last 20 years.

Age of Falmouth’s Population

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
less than 5 years	7.2%	4.6%	6.2%	6.9%	4.6%
5 – 24 years	34.2%	29.1%	21.5%	22.4%	25.7%
25 – 44 years	24.2%	25.8%	31.5%	28.0%	19.3%
45 – 64 years	23.9%	25.6%	22.1%	25.4%	33.7%
65 plus years	10.4%	14.9%	18.7%	16.2%	16.8%

Total Population

1970: 6,291
 1980: 6,853
 1990: 7,610
 2010: 10,310
 2011: 11,185

Page 29: The number of senior citizens is growing, creating a different set of demands on the community.

Page 38: Senior Housing: For the purposes of this chapter, LPAC considered a “senior citizen” to be a person 65 years of age or older.

With regard to housing, Falmouth has a number of condominium developments which tend to appeal primarily to seniors, with only one, (Applegate) requiring residents to be 55 or older. [Note: Blackstone, an apartment complex, limits rentals to age 62 and older, as does part of Foreside Estates.] Additionally, there are several compact housing developments that, while not limited to seniors, generally have greater appeal. Additionally, there are several compact housing developments that, while not limited to seniors, generally have greater appeal to an older, retired population. Also, there are three eldercare developments: OceanView at Falmouth, Falmouth by the Sea, and Sedgewood Commons (an Alzheimer’s care facility). The existence of other housing arrangements for seniors, such as alternative home-sharing programs, is less well documented.

Consideration of senior housing should be afforded some measure of urgency by the Town. As reported to LPAC by the Executive Director of the Southern Maine Agency on Aging, the population of people aged 65 and older is expected to grow by 58% in Cumberland County between 2008 and 2020, which will mean that a significant portion of Falmouth residents will be over age 65 by the end of this decade. While OceanView at Falmouth is scheduled to expand its facility over the next few years, that alone does not ensure that the housing needs of Falmouth’s senior citizens, of varying economic status, will be met in the future.

See Comprehensive Plan at: [http://www.falmouthme.org/long-range-planning-advisory-committee/pages/2013-comprehensive-plan,Vol II](http://www.falmouthme.org/long-range-planning-advisory-committee/pages/2013-comprehensive-plan,Vol%20II); FEIC Dev’ment Strategy at 7, <http://www.falmouthme.org/economic-improvement-committee/pages/economic-development-strategy>.

2000 Comprehensive Plan Goal to Study Need for a Senior Center (updated in 2013)

Falmouth's 2000 Comprehensive Plan states at its Vol. II (2000), p. 77 that:

“It is the Comprehensive Plan’s policy and action recommendation to “study the need for a senior center to meet the social and recreational needs of the community’s growing elderly population.”

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan update reports that a community center was under consideration [since established as the Activity Center, that opened in 2015], that could “also serve senior citizens”. Vol. II (2013), Implementation Status, p. 7. Page 19 of the Plan states:

“Enhanced services or programs viewed by the largest percentage of respondents as a priority include community and recreational programming and facilities (45%), cultural or social programs (39%), open space acquisition (38%), elderly services (33%), and a swimming pool (33%).”

Page 40 of Volume II of the Plan states: Suggested Action: 1. The Town should seek public input from seniors and explore the development of housing that is attractive to an age 65 and older population, including alternative senior housing programs, such as home sharing programs, accessory apartments, adult family care homes and congregate housing, and sliding scale development.

Results of Committee’s Senior Services Survey of Falmouth Residents

In June, 2015, the SCAC conducted a Senior Citizens Services Survey, posted on the Town’s web site, and distributed in hard-copy, which was included in its 2015 Report to the Council. Among the Survey’s 14 questions were those asking what senior citizen issues were important to the responding resident; what new programs or services the resident wanted the Town to support or provide; and whether the resident wanted the Town to support expanded transportation services; provide for a senior citizen services coordinator; and to establish a senior community center. The SCAC received 189 responses, 82 per cent of which were from residents aged 60 or more.

Many respondents made specific requests in the comments section, such as the following:

Comments by Respondents to the Committee’s Senior Services Survey:

Senior Center

- *A senior center would provide a cost-effective way to keep seniors active and social which is key to their wellness*
- *Please provide a senior center*
- *A place where seniors can get together and be with others their own age—activities and food would be a bonus*
- *Programs for seniors and caregivers would be great at a senior center*
- *A place for seniors to meet, converse, have activities, trips and lunch*

Activities/Programs

- *Programs to make music, learn a skill, such as stained glass, woodwork, play Bingo and take trips*
- *More guided walks and exercise programs*
- *Wellness activities*
- *Seniors exercise programs*
- *Exercise programs specifically for older folks*
- *Basic computer classes*
- *Technical help with computers*
- *Discussions and lectures*
- *Access to a pool*
- *Mah Jong*
- *Social get-togethers with themes—authors, lectures and movies*
- *Book groups*
- *Crafts*
- *Speakers, crafts*
- *Shopping services for food*
- *Serve hot food at senior center*

Transportation Assistance

- *Provide transportation to medical needs*
- *Transportation to shopping, library, medical*
- *Volunteer transportation coordination*
- *Help getting to medical visits*
- *Transportation to grocery stores*
- *Seniors transportation*
- *Transport for seniors who do not drive*

Information/Referrals

- *Provide some system to refer seniors who need help with food or mental/physical care*
- *Manage a volunteer network to provide senior citizen services*
- *Provide lists of available help with yard work, etc.*
- *Provide information about service programs, medicine, etc.*
- *Educate public about available resources*
- *Help with shoveling roofs and driveways in winter (coordinate volunteer force?)*
- *Help finding carpenter to help with home repair work*

A few Survey respondents commented that the Town should not be providing any special services for seniors, principally because of concerns about the impact on their taxes. Several stated that a way to support senior residents would be to reduce their property taxes.

2016 UPDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee Recommendations to the Council

This 2016 Updated Report reaffirms and updates its 2015 Recommendations to the Council.

1. Implement the Senior Center Plan designed by Port City Architecture in the Mason-Motz Activity Center.

The Committee appreciates the Council's response to its 2015 recommendation that the Town create a senior center in the Mason-Motz Activity Center, and its budgeting \$70,000 for the design and construction of the Center. It met with representatives of Port City Architecture this summer to review interior sketch plans for the renovated space, and made suggestions to the representatives as to the kitchen, lighting, flooring, furniture, artwork, and colors. The Committee approves and supports Port City Architecture's final design, and requests the Council fully fund the project for construction this fall and winter.

2. Install a walkway, benches, landscaping and signage on the Town Green next to the Senior Center.

Next to the Activity Center building is the Town Green. The Committee renews its proposal that the Green be developed with shade trees, benches, tables, as well as a walkway for seniors, and a "Town Green" sign to inform residents that the Green is a public area. An accessible park extension of the Senior Center would enable seniors to enjoy outdoor socializing and programs.

Port City Architecture's design for the Senior Center provides for a back entrance opening to what could be a path to the Green.

As the proposed shade trees, benches, tables and walkway are consistent with the kinds of amenities that OceanView offered and agreed to construct and maintain at its expense in its 2012 Agreement with the Town, these park amenities should be able to be implemented at no or minimal cost to the Town.

2. Build on the Town's Parks and Community Programs Department's evolving programs for seniors.

Most Survey respondents indicated they would like a senior center that provides programs. Seventy-six percent of the respondents were interested in educational lunch and learn programs; 45 percent in socializing; 48 per cent in entertainment and music; and 37 percent in card and board games.

Consistent with the Survey answers, the Committee recommended in its 2015 Report that seniors programs be provided at the Senior Center, with first priority being educational lunch and learn programs, while also providing opportunities for card and board games, musical entertainment, and coffee socials. Since the Committee 2015 Report, the Town's Parks and Community

Programs Department has been expanding and developing such opportunities as can be made available within the current budget.

The Committee also continues to recommend that the Senior Center space be available for other community groups and uses when there are no seniors programs, and that the room and the accessible outdoor park extension not exclude other demographic groups. One of the benefits of having the Senior Center in the Town Activity Center, and the accessible Town Green next to it and the playground is that it would provide an opportunity for inter-generational interaction.

3. Support the Development of a Volunteer Transportation Network for Seniors

The Committee recommends that the Town assist in the development of a volunteer transportation network for residents who need transport to medical appointments, food shopping, and other basic needs, which effort could be facilitated by a Town Senior Services Coordinator.

4. Hire a part-time Senior Services Coordinator

The Committee recommends that the Town hire a part-time senior services coordinator to perform such functions as:

- Advocate for seniors
- Be a services and programs information resource for seniors
- Help seniors navigate among services and programs
- Assist with Senior Center programming
- Coordinate Town senior citizen services, including volunteer transportation and assistance networks
- Research grant opportunities and help prepare grant applications
- Solicit contributions from the community

The Committee has worked with Lucky D'Ascanio, Director, of Parks and Community Programs on a job description for the Senior Services Coordinator and recommends the Town advertise for and hire the Coordinator to be in place in time for planning the opening of the Senior Center.

5. Extend Term of the Committee to September 2017

In October 2015 the Town Council extended the term of this Committee for another year, to September 1, 2016, to complete such tasks as the following:

- Advise on the implementation of Committee Recommendations that may be approved and funded by the Town Council;
- Help develop a senior citizen volunteer network, including outreach to the Town's churches and social service organizations;
- Conduct further research on other Falmouth senior resident concerns;
- Make further recommendations to the Council on such other and longer term issues and initiatives as, for example, proposed amendments to Falmouth's Zoning Ordinance to allow more flexible senior apartment and aging-in-place living opportunities.

Since September 2015, in addition to its focus on the Senior Center construction and the Senior Services Coordinator's job description, the Committee has done further research into senior citizen concerns, and drafted a proposed amendment to Falmouth's Zoning Ordinance to allow for more flexible and affordable senior apartment housing opportunities (which draft turned out to be so similar to a draft that the Council's consultant proposed at the same time as part of a broader Ordinance review, that the Committee deferred to and supported that consultant's version).

The Committee proposes that the Council extend the term of the Committee an additional year, until September 2017, to undertake the following:

- Advise on the implementation of the Senior Center construction and related programming;
- Develop a recommendation to the Council for a permanent senior citizen advisory committee or commission to succeed this ad hoc committee;
- Help develop a senior citizen volunteer network;
- Research and make recommendations as to other senior resident concerns, such as:
 - regionalized services;
 - public-private partnerships;
 - tax relief measures for seniors;
 - fuel and meals assistance for seniors; and,
 - affordable senior housing.

The Committee appreciates the Council having budgeted for and proceeded with planning, through the Town Manager, to convert of the proposed space in the Mason-Motz Activity Center into a Senior Center. It urges the Council now to fund the construction of the Senior Center as designed by Port City Architecture, and to adopt the Committee's other four recommendations.

As noted in its 2015 Report to the Council, the Committee's five recommendations:

- are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan;
- are consistent with the Committee's 2015 Survey;
- are consistent with senior services studies; and,
- were unanimously endorsed by Town stakeholders at the August 2015 Stakeholders' meeting.

CONCLUSION

Many of our seniors have lived here for all or most of their lives. They have served our Town as volunteers, attended and worked in our churches, library, as firefighters, in our schools, and in many other ways. They have been the foundation of our community. Their devotion to our community is what has helped make our Town become the town we are happy to live in. Many still give of their time and talent even as they grow older.

When they reach their senior years, they often need assistance to make their last years happier and more enjoyable. Loss is a large part of their older years: of friends, family, spouse, health, independence, and on and on.

Falmouth has a wonderful school system and we are proud of it. However, Falmouth does not spend a great deal on the other end of the life cycle. With the growth in the number of seniors in our community, that time has come.

We need to honor and lend assistance to those for whom life is often lonely and difficult. We need to continue to explore ways to help those who need the help.

What a good future we can see for our older population that continues to grow as we as a Town commit resources that acknowledge the contribution they have made to our community, and help make the end of their lives happier and more fulfilling.