

TOWN OF KIRKLAND LAKE
AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLANNING
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Monday, December 18th, 2017

Council Chambers
3 Kirkland Street
Kirkland Lake, ON

Planning Intern, Brook-Lynn Rozon opened the meeting by introducing the topic of “Social Participation”. She began the conversation by describing examples of what other communities are doing. The Temiskaming Shores Age Friendly survey identified that people may not be aware of various programs running or, if they are aware, they may not always be able to make it out to the programs. Darlene Gibbons from Teck Pioneer Residence (TPR) in Kirkland Lake advised the group of some programs that are offered at the facility. She mentioned that there are exercise classes such as tai chi, and a physiotherapist assistant is present at the classes to assist. Although there are many programs, some residents of TPR refuse when asked if they would like to participate, but then tell others that they have nothing to do. This may be due to residents being comfortable with their routines and it was recommended that people need to find better ways to encourage these seniors into participating.

Though data input is not complete, trends from the Age-Friendly survey show that most people want to see more opportunities to go to movies, for indoor walking and for shopping trips. Currently the Town Recreation Facility and the Diabetes program have teamed up to create a “Walking in the Halls” indoor walking program on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at the local high school. Currently the museum offers films for children to watch on weekend afternoon. Members present suggested that the museum or library offer opportunities for seniors to come watch older films. Many seniors also enjoy watching sports or youth organized activities, this is apparent from the senior building on Fifth Street, where senior residents will walk across the street to observe soccer games. While this is a great opportunity for seniors to get out, winter makes it more difficult as some seniors are not able to walk to the complex, or the weather discourages them from leaving their homes. Seating areas in the arena are also slightly difficult to access due to the steps. For those seniors who do not want to leave their home or building, they need access to a communal space for activities, which would allow them to socialize. Many apartment buildings do not have a communal space, or a space large enough to hold events. This can isolate older adults who do not like to leave their building often, and who would need much more convincing from family or friends to try existing activities.

Major issues and barriers identified are: transportation to and from activities, lack of programs or diversity of programs, lack of information relating to programs; and seniors not wanting to try the activity. The group discussed various ideas relating to intergenerational programs.

It was suggested that a program should be created for social experiences such as having seniors teach cooking classes in the schools through home economics and small shop classes. Many seniors have experience with various skills such as cooking, sewing, wood crafts, and many students are lacking in these skills. Seniors typically want to give back to their community and a program such as discussed would be beneficial to both youth and senior. In addition to teaching these skills, it would provide an opportunity for seniors to be social and share stories and experiences from their past. Although, a program such as this would require a communal space and extensive planning in order to start up.

Back in September there was an “Elder Abuse Task Force” meeting held on a weekday in the afternoon. The meeting was very well advertised and transportation was offered, however the session was poorly attended. Members once again stated that it may be due to seniors not wanting to try new things. Some also believe that it may be due to the stigma around Heritage North, as many local seniors do not like it there. Brook-Lynn mentioned that our survey results do show that seniors may not know about events until after they have happened, or they received incorrect details about an event or program, as most of what they hear is from word of mouth. Members reminisced about the old “Lang TV” station, a local television channel which shared all community events. Some mentioned that things may not be attended due to accessibility needs, or lack of mobility. Some seniors have difficulty climbing stairs and certain venues could hinder their attendance as even one step is an issue for some. Additionally, some older adults may not be actively seeking information about programs, as they do not want to go out of their home/regular routine. Members felt that if someone were to actively engage with these seniors and encourage them to participate, there may be more success in getting them out. The idea of “Adopt a grandparent” was mentioned, where a family or person would spend time with a senior and invite them to participate in various activities or community events.

One member expressed his frustration with encouraging more participation from volunteers and organizers of events and groups. This is important as they require someone to lead initiatives in order for events or meetings to continue. He explained that he enjoys organizing activities for seniors, however feels that a motivated senior should be willing to take over the role of organizer once things are in motion. The group questioned what can be done to support the ‘givers’ who organize programs and activities. Volunteers at times can be nervous about insurance, liabilities and potential incidents and accidents. This may deter someone from even starting up an activity.

Keeping on the topic of volunteering, the group discussed students and their requirement to complete forty (40) hours of community service. Many felt that once students have completed their minimum hours, they do not continue with additional volunteering. It was noted that those students who go above the minimum are typically those whose parents also volunteer. The group felt that it would be more beneficial to have students complete more than just a forty hour community service over the course of high school, such as an extracurricular activity.

It was suggested that rather than complete forty hours, they are regularly involved in a volunteer group, like with extracurricular activities. This would teach students why volunteering needs to happen and that not all work needs the reward of a paycheck. The group discussed how people in general simply do not volunteer in the same capacity as they once did. They felt that it is very beneficial to see a variety of age groups within a service group, as it will ensure the groups continues its services in the future.

The committee suggested that groups in the area should coordinate their activities with each other and “share the workload” as well as offer services to the public and not simply to their members. If these groups can remove overlap in types of activities and event, as well as the timing of their events, then more people can benefit from them. Also, if the public can access events and services, they may be more likely to join committees.

The next meeting will be held January 15th, 2018 in Council Chambers at Town Hall from 1:30pm to 3:00pm, and the topic will be “Respect and Social Inclusion”