

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

Monday, January 15, 2018

Council Chambers
3 Kirkland Street
Kirkland Lake, ON

Planning Intern, Brook-Lynn Rozon opened by stating that this was to be the last meeting to discuss the eight (8) “dimensions” of Age-Friendly communities. There is a final meeting scheduled for February to summarize the findings to the committee and discuss the next steps involved with creating the plan.

Brook-Lynn introduced the topic of “Respect and Social Inclusion”. She explained that this topic can be difficult to discuss as it is not something as tangible as health services and transportation. The topic relates to how a community views seniors and what a community can do to assist seniors. She explained what other communities are doing such as providing Age-Friendly checklists for businesses, offering workshops for seniors and creating videos of seniors telling stories of their experience in the workplace in order to prepare high school students for after graduation. Findings from the Temiskaming Shores plan indicated that seniors are happy, but they find youth can be disrespectful, though this may not necessarily be towards seniors only. Older adults also indicated that they feel they are not consulted when decisions relate directly to them. The committee stated that the survey is a great example of how we are consulting with seniors. It was explained that Temiskaming Shores found that in this section of their survey people avoided answering “Always” or “Never”, and so the “Sometimes” option had a proportionately higher amount of responses than the two others. Therefore, Kirkland Lake’s survey opted to use “Usually” rather than “Always”, in hopes that the data would better reflect actual opinions.

Possible solutions discussed to assist with the issues and barriers surrounding this topic are offering programs to identify at-risk seniors and connecting them with the right service or volunteer group, as well as offering classes to educate about topics such as elder abuse and telephone scams.

The committee then discussed barriers affecting our seniors today and how the future may scare seniors. Advancements in technology, such as banking machines instead of tellers or the internet

replacing telephone services, can be difficult to keep up with for many seniors. Other issues identified were the decline in volunteer numbers at clubs and service groups. This can lead to a lack of community events being held, as seniors tend to be the only people volunteering to run these events. The group also expressed fears that without weekly outings for seniors (eg. going to church, paying bills at the bank, attending a community event), there may be more instances of isolation among seniors. Although there are many education programs offered for seniors, many do not wish to leave their homes often, even when they do know about the event. When people are not aware of events, it may be because some groups cannot afford traditional advertising and simply use social media despite the fact that not all seniors are on social media. When this occurs, they can be missing a large group of potential attendees. The committee agreed that technology needs to be brought to seniors to keep them from becoming more isolated. One member advised about a technology class through NEOnet, which instructs older adults on how to use mobile devices. The future is technology driven and we need to educate our seniors to prepare for the future.

Members asked, “What can we do today to increase volunteers at various groups?” One member stated that groups or committee may need to change the way they think in order to recruit new members; such as what the Kirkland Lake Rotary Club has done. This group was once a men’s only club, however expanded to include women, and the club has seen an increase in membership and community support. Clubs need to accept a new demographic or they may simply fizzle out.

Before wrapping up the committee discussed some past topics, such as why seniors are moving out of the community, as well as transportation and road safety. The committee feels that there needs to be more incentive to keep newly retired people in town, such as creating a more affordable lifestyle. It was agreed that many people move away to be closer to family or to health services. They also discussed that many seniors perceive the Town of Kirkland Lake’s road system as worrisome, not only for those driving but also the pedestrians walking. They felt that the addition of a four-way stop at the intersection of Taylor Avenue and Lebel Avenue was great and has increased the safety in this area. The committee was hoping that the municipality would consider putting up more four-way stops, especially in high traffic areas and in community safety zones (eg. Tweedsmuir Road). They also requested that additional winter maintenance should occur in these high traffic areas, as maintenance seems to focus on the main arterial roads. Brook-Lynn advised that the Age-Friendly Community Improvement Plan could recommend that a traffic study is done to identify areas of safety concern. The committee also mentioned that our crosswalks with traffic lights should be updated to include a chiming noise for pedestrian crossings.

Brook-Lynn advised that the next steps for the Age Friendly Community Plan is: to finalize entering all survey data, write up a report identifying areas of need, create an action plan to

identify what can be done from a municipal standpoint and how to encourage other groups and businesses to engage in Age-Friendly practices. Another meeting will be held in February to discuss review survey data and discuss the next steps required to complete the Community Improvement Plan*.

*February's meeting has since been booked for Monday, February 26, 2018 from 1:30pm to 3:00pm. The location of the meeting has been changed to Heritage North, 400 Government Road West.