

**Age Friendly Action Committee
Outdoor Spaces Sub Committee**

Meeting Minutes from May 3, 2023, at 10:00 am

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: June 7, 2023
TIME: 2:20 PM

Attendees: Paul Cowing, Tim Flood, Judy Morrison
Meeting called to order 10:05.

Goal – to establish a process for incorporating “Age Friendly” elements in Belmont Outdoor spaces.

Discussion:

Approach/ Process:

- Process for communication and inclusion of these items in town projects was discussed. We considered a 4-prong approach:
 1. **Communicate** the specific Age Friendly elements: with Senior Citizens, town officials, town committees and employees.
 - **Step 1 – Tim** to convert short doc into power point.
 - **Step 2 - set up following meetings:**
 - Recreation Commission – Present Age Friendly elements and options for process to Recreation Commission. **Paul** to set up for Tues June 13th at 5:30.
 - COA board – **Judy** to set up – find out about July meeting
 - Disability and Handicap accessibility – **Tim** to invite representatives to our June 22 meeting.
 - DPW - To be information / advice only meeting – **Paul to connect Judy**
 - CPC – Information / advice meeting with request to have them see if they will ask projects to consult with Age Friendly rep as community involvement. -
 - Community Path – **Judy** to reach out / set up
 - Open Forum at Beech Street Center – **Judy** to connect with
 2. **Incorporate in existing process as possible:**
 - Ask the Recreation Commission to ask each group requesting approval for Phase I (design phase) to include AFAC representative for review and provide requesting group with the Age Friendly elements document.
 - Get the list of current projects underway and add an AFAC representative in their public meetings.
 - At public meeting phase of project – invite them to have their public meeting at the Beech Street Center. (Example – the Community Path project held public meeting at Sr. Center 2/17.)

3. Ask for AFAC representation in groups approving programs –

- Consider an AFAC rep on the CPC group
- Consider AFAC rep on Community Path

4. Sponsoring our own projects:

- Tim suggested making the **sidewalk outside the town field “Age Friendly”**.
 - **Next steps: Share at Beech street public forum**

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, Thursday June 22 10am at 10am.

-----Below is DRAFT COPY of Age Friendly elements for Outdoor spaces-----

Outdoor Spaces

Older persons want to do more than simply continue to reside in their communities—they want to be able to contribute to, and benefit from, community life. Active and involved seniors are less likely to experience social isolation and more likely to feel connected to their communities. These connections are particularly important, given the strong linkages between social isolation and health. While social isolation tends to increase as people age, communities that promote social participation and inclusion are better able protect the health of their citizens, including those who are socially isolated. Research also shows that one of the factors associated with feelings of loneliness is a feeling of lack of respect. Like social isolation, loneliness can have a negative impact on health.

The physical environment is an important determinant of physical and mental health for everyone. Creating supportive environments, including age-friendly outdoor spaces and building design, can enhance physical well-being and quality of life, accommodate individuality and independence, foster social interaction and enable people to conduct their daily activities. Simply said, seniors do better when they are around all age groups, but they need specific things to feel safe and comfortable in parks and other open spaces. If they don't have them, they are far less likely to venture into these places.

Age-friendly features include . . .

- Walkable sidewalks, pathways, and trails
- Good accessibility to and within public buildings (e.g., few stairs, wheelchair ramps that are not too steep, accessible washrooms)
- Along footpaths, accessible washrooms (e.g., wide push-button doors, rails) and rest areas, including benches that are an appropriate height.
- Adjustments and adaptations that help seniors feel safe and secure in the community.
- Provision of services within walking distance of where many seniors live.

Barriers include . . .

- Poor accessibility to and within public buildings
- Lack of and/or poor quality of sidewalks, curbs, and crosswalks
- Crosswalks incorrectly timed.
- Seasonal factors that reduce walkability and "scooter-ability" (e.g., snow, ice)
- Shortage of accessible washrooms and rest areas along walking routes

Suggestions for improving age-friendliness . . .

- Provide intergenerational outdoor activities to foster socialization between younger and older members of the community, and to provide assistance to those with mobility problems.
- Set up indoor walking clubs for periods of poor weather conditions.
- Post signage indicating the location of public restrooms.
- Provide good lighting throughout neighborhoods and on trails.
- Review and Update town wide bylaws to incorporate Age Friendly aspects to all future projects.
- Neighborhood safety audits to identify specific needs in each area.
- Set up a 311 service line to report issues

Checklist of Age-Friendly Features - Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- √ Sidewalks, Pathways and Trails
- √ Sidewalks, pathways and trails are well-maintained, cleared, non-slip and accessible.
- √ Sidewalks are continuous, with low curbs that accommodate wheelchairs and scooters.
- √ Snow removal is prompt and considerate of seniors (e.g., consideration is given to how snow is piled for those who need to get in and out of cars, and that seniors may be in wheelchairs or using scooters).
- √ Parking lots are well-maintained and cleared of snow and ice.
- √ Streets are well-maintained.
- √ Rain shelters are available to support pedestrians.
- √ Public Restrooms and Rest Areas
- √ Public washrooms are accessible and can accommodate people with a variety of disabilities (accommodations include push buttons, wide doors, handrails, locks that are easy for those with arthritis to use) and are located at convenient locations with proper signage.
- √ Accessible benches (the appropriate height for seniors) are located along sidewalks, paths or trails and are spaced at regular intervals.
- √ Safety and Security
- √ Action is taken to lower crime rate.
- √ Neighborhoods and trails are well-lit.
- √ Traffic volumes are low and/or well-controlled.