

Council on Aging Minutes for Special Virtual Meeting on November 3, 2021. Approved at Meeting of 12/1/21

The purpose of the special meeting was to hear from and ask questions of Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, the Program Manager of LifePath's Aging- and Dementia-Friendly Communities program. Shutesbury has recently become a member of the program.

The meeting began informally when almost everyone expected had assembled, at approximately 5:35 p.m. Present: JoAnn Bernhard (who came later), Susan Gomberg, Janis Gray, Susan Millinger, and Linda Avis Scott. Absent: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil. Guest: Tracy McNaughton.

After a brief period of introductions, Nour presented slides, which can be viewed here

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox?projector=1>

Nour expanded on the contents of his slides from time to time. Here is the gist of these expansions.

Nour pointed out that this is not a direct service, as most of LifePath's work is.

The Unprecedented Demographic change, the rapidly growing share of senior Americans in the population, is especially visible In Franklin County, as the slide shows. Already, 22% of the population here is 65 or over, compared with 18% under 18. The country's institutions were not shaped by these demographics, and it will take time and attention to enable these institutions to reflect the new demographic reality. Seniors are an underused resource in our society. The Age-Friendly Communities program is intended to help meet the gap between the new (and increasing) demographic changes and the focus of existing institutions, by encouraging towns both to become more age-friendly and to make more use of the resource of their seniors.

In addition to the four stages of the program shown on the slide, there is a fifth stage, an on-going one: Review, Analysis and Recommitment.

The "Eight Domains of Livability" provide the framework for the program's work. Nour commented that some communities focus on a few domains while others add others (as LifePath has added Dementia-Friendly, integrating the program of Dementia-Friendly America with Age-Friendly Communities. It saves resources to work on both programs at the same time.

Needed support:

- It is hard in our region to diversify an organization. Any help that Shutesbury can provide would be appreciated.

-Suggestions about the draft Needs Assessment Survey are welcome.

-Responses to the Survey should be gathered as widely as possible, and by as many means as are necessary. Nour offered to come to Shutesbury to help collect responses.

Re Workshops: Nour asked if we would like one held in Shutesbury. In addition to the Dementia-Friendly ones LifePath has been giving, another possible workshop is the Reframing Aging workshop mentioned on the slide.

Questions asked of Nour:

For big or small (copy editing) comments, email to Nour is the best communication method. (nelkhatabystrauch@lifepath.org). For those who want to bring their comments about the survey to a group, there is a virtual meeting on November 18 from 1-2.

Scott and Gomberg both commented on being pleased they were to see many of the questions we were planning to ask on our survey being asked on the Needs Assessment survey.

Community Education (whether virtual or in-person but masked) about the Dementia Issues seems important to our town. A lot of people have expressed interest in learning more about the subject. The COA would like to become acquainted with more resources on Dementia.

Tracy McNaughton wanted to know more about home-sharing, which she finds an intriguing possibility. Nour said LifePath is starting to work on it.

Tracy also commented about diversity: that there are other kinds of diversity (beside the involvement of POC). For example, there is diversity of people's abilities as well as gender diversity. Nour commented that a member of Rainbow Elders is a on the Steering Committee.

The surveys: Further on contacting residents with the survey: some issues will need in-person contact. Some towns will hold listening sessions; if they do, they will complement the survey itself, not replace it. Distribution of the surveys: Nour suggested that we make a plan; whether for example on paper or online. LifePath might be able to help with postage if that were needed. Nour offered his services as a resource for distribution.

After receiving our thanks, Nour left us to join his family in Morocco. The COA and its guest had a brief discussion. Points discussed follow.

Gray asked us to think about what we could say about the program in a small space on the COA webpage, as space is limited.

Scott commented on takeaways:

What else do we need to offer our community? Listening sessions? Community education?

Do we want to make individual and/or a collective response to the draft survey? Each of us needs to look at the survey. Gray plans to look at our survey and theirs to see what we might want to suggest be added to the program's.

Gomberg asked whether the Aging- and Dementia-Friendly Survey would replace ours.

McNaughton asked about emailing the survey; our lack of most senior's email addresses was explained.

Bernhard pointed out that we are dealing with an older population divided by possession or lack of digital skills. COA cannot ask to borrow addresses from Village Neighbors because of the issue of confidentiality. Street addresses are not private; digital ones are.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved by roll call vote by Bernhard, Gomberg, Gray, Millinger and Scott. In keeping with the informal nature of this meeting, the secretary forgot to record the time at which the meeting ended.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Millinger, secretary

Next Meeting: Wed., November 10th at 5:30.

