



Town of Bowdoinham

13 School St • Bowdoinham, ME 04008

Phone 666-5531 • Fax 666-5532

www.bowdoinham.com

William S. Post, Town Manager

April 14, 2015

Lori Parham
State Director, AARP Maine
1685 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04102

Dear Ms. Parham;

The Town of Bowdoinham would like to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

Bowdoinham is a small, rural community with a significant older population. Despite its rural location and lack of “big-city” resources, the town has a long history of supporting community development and of providing the activities and services its citizens need to attain the highest possible quality of life.

Since 2012, the municipality has worked diligently to increase Bowdoinham’s age-friendliness. The effort has been spear-headed by citizen volunteers appointed by the Select Board to serve on the Advisory Committee on Aging (ACOA). In the past two years, ACOA has established a senior center, increased recreational opportunities available to older residents, and has increased access by citizens of all ages and abilities to town-wide events and public spaces.

In 2014, Bowdoinham became the first municipality in Maine to join the World Health Organization’s Global Network of Age Friendly Communities. The decision to join the WHO-GNAFCC was a reflection of the community’s dedication to make Bowdoinham an even better place for all of its residents to grow up and to grow old. Since joining WHO-GNAFCC Bowdoinham has been able to gain from the experiences of other communities in the network and to share some of its successes by participating in the global exchange of information among participating municipalities.

Bowdoinham would like to participate in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities to take advantage of the technical support offered to participating communities by AARP and to participate in the exchange of information with other communities in Maine and in the United States. Although Bowdoinham has accomplished many of the needs identified in the 2012 report, *Aging in Bowdoinham*, there is still significant work to be done.

The Town of Bowdoinham looks forward to joining the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. The program will provide valuable assistance as the Town of Bowdoinham and Advisory Committee on Aging work to develop the programs, supports, and infrastructure that will support the desire of its older residents to age in the community safely and as fully participating citizens in the social, civic, and economic life of Bowdoinham.

If you have any questions, please contact Town Manager William Post at wpost@bowdoinham.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Wendy Cunningham
Chair, Select Board



Membership Application

To join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: [Click here to enter a date.](#)

April 15, 2015

1) COMMUNITY DETAILS

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: Bowdoinham

STATE: Maine

POPULATION SIZE: 2889

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 18.2%

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Wendy Cunningham,
Chair, Select Board

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: 13 School Street, Bowdoinham, Maine

2) COMMUNITY CONTACT* FOR THE AARP NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

** The community contact is the local staff member or volunteer who is primarily responsible for carrying out the community-level work — it is not the responsible AARP staff member.*

NAME: Patricia Oh

POSITION: Coordinator of Older Adult Services

EMAIL ADDRESS: p.oh@bowdoinham.com

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 207-666-5531, ext. 110

Please describe the named person's role in the city or community's age-friendly initiative:

Patricia is the Coordinator of Older Adult Services for the Town of Bowdoinham. In that capacity, she is the staff person assigned to Bowdoinham's Advisory Committee on Aging. The mission of the Advisory Committee on Aging (COA) is to provide services and advocacy that enable older residents of Bowdoinham to live in their homes for as long as possible as well as to provide programs geared to keeping older adults active and engaged in the community.

(You can add an additional sheet of paper if needed.)

3) THE COMMUNITY'S AGE-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES TO DATE

Please provide a brief summary of the community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people and how the community plans to become more age-friendly.

In 2012, as part of the comprehensive planning process, the Town of Bowdoinham completed an assessment of services and supports needed for older residents to age optimally in the community (<http://www.bowdoinham.com/needs-assessment-aging-bowdoinham>). The assessment identified five key areas for improvement: (1) information about community activities and how to access services; (2) coordinated leadership and advocacy for Bowdoinham's older residents; (3) transportation alternatives for residents who are no longer comfortable driving; (4) supportive housing for older adults and availability of affordable home repair and home modification services; and, (5) central place where older adults and other community members can gather for activities. In response to the needs assessment, the Town of Bowdoinham Select Board appointed the Advisory Committee on Aging (COA) to address issues and concerns of older residents. Bowdoinham became the first community in Maine to be accepted as part of the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities in 2014 (<http://agefriendlyworld.org/en/property/bowdoinham/>). COA has two primary functions: (1) advocating for the inclusion of older residents in town life; and, (2) sponsoring programs to enhance the lives of older residents at all levels of physical and cognitive ability. In its role as an advocate for older residents, COA has focused on the need for increased accessibility to town buildings and town-sponsored events. COA brings the concerns residents share with the committee to town employees who can make a desired change. When an issue requires the intervention of the Select Board, the Town Manager brings COA requests and recommendations to the bi-monthly meeting of the Select Board. For example, participants in a fall prevention class sponsored by COA completed a safety and accessibility assessment of the Town office. Class participants presented their findings to COA. COA brought the recommendations to the Town Manager who made many of the requested changes (e.g. adding brighter lighting and replacing existing door knobs with lever handles). Several residents brought COA their concerns about accessibility for the Town's annual festival, Celebrate Bowdoinham, held at the Maily Waterfront Park. At COA's request, Celebrate organizers added sitting areas, signage for handicapped parking, and a drop-off area closer to activities. Without fail, the Town has responded positively to the requests and recommendations made by COA to increase the age friendliness of town wide events. Beyond COA's primary role as an advisor to the Select Board, COA members, collectively, provide more than 1,200 hours each year in direct service to older residents so that all activities and events sponsored by COA can be offered free of charge or for a nominal cost. COA members and community volunteers facilitate the Shipmates Senior Club, offer ongoing exercise opportunities (e.g. tai chi and line dancing) and special classes (e.g. kayaking, geo-caching, mushroom walks), provide social opportunities (e.g. bridge, cribbage, movie afternoons), and organize trips. In 2014, COA organized its first annual Wellness Fair that featured free flu shots, balance assessments, and blood pressure checks. One of the COA members provided healthy snacks with nutrition information and recipes that were very popular with attendees. Although Bowdoinham has accomplished a lot in the past two years, its plan to increase age friendliness is not complete. Current goals for the Advisory committee on Aging are: (1) Increasing accessibility to town services, public spaces, and other buildings open to the public by residents with mobility limitations that require the use of a wheelchair or walker; (2) providing support and information for care partners; (3) provide opportunities for alternative transportation to meet the needs of residents who are no longer able to drive or who choose not to drive; (4) Increase awareness of the availability of housing options for residents who want to age in the community but are no longer able to maintain their own home; and (5) providing information and connections for residents who need help with chores and with basic home maintenance.

4) COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly?

The community has two methods in place to engage and involve older residents. 1. The Advisory Committee on Aging consists of older residents of the community with expertise in aging issues. COA's meetings are publicized and are open to the public. 2. ACOA sponsors the Shipmates Seniot Club. The Shipmates planning committee meets monthly to discuss the programs and activities they would like to see available in the community.

5) CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

Briefly describe the mechanisms the community has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments.

The Town of Bowdoinham has hired a staff person, the Coordinator of Older Adult Services, to, in part, facilitate cross-sector collaboration. The Coordinator works closely with the Recreation Department to create opportunities for physical activity. ACOA is also working with the Merrymeeting Arts Center and the Bowodinhams Public Library to co-sponsor activities.