

Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging

Aging in Action

Mike Festa Esq
AARP MA State Director
One Beacon Street # 2301
Boston, MA 02108

January 29, 2019

Dear Mr. Festa,

On behalf of the Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging, we are excited about the opportunity to lead the efforts of seven rural towns in Western Massachusetts to develop age friendly communities. We also hope to join with AARP Massachusetts and the World Health Organization (WHO) to become a designated region of towns represented in the larger community of age friendly communities

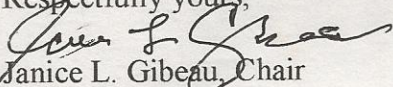
The Consortium has already spearheaded the introduction of this initiative by conducting surveys of everyone 60 years and older using a modification of the instruments developed by WHO and AARP that targeted a mainly rural population. Of the residents participating in the surveys and subsequent community forums, 85% made it clear that they want to stay in their towns and in their own homes.

The Consortium is currently introducing strategies designed to fit each town's unique structure for making the changes identified through both the surveys and community forums. As part of the long range planning, those members participating in the forums constituted a diverse group, including community elected and appointed officials from the police department, library, highway department, finance committee, members of the COA, nonprofit agencies such as the Community Development Corporation, churches, volunteers, and other key stakeholders in each town.

Our next step is to create and implement specific action plans in each town that will address the concerns raised. The Consortium will support the transition of the regional planning model to local groups driving the changes needed. It will also help to find other sources of funding to help communities with limited resources make the changes needed. A Community Facilitator, funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, will assist in forming and developing the community based groups. The Facilitator will strengthen the programs by coordinating actions that may be useful regionally.

Ultimately, it is our hope to make every effort to make each of our towns Age Friendly. With that in mind, the undersigned communities hereby commit to the process and look forward to working with you. We hope you will consider these efforts consistent with your guidelines.

Respectfully yours,



Janice L. Gibeau, Chair

Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging

Select Board Member or Town Administrator

Chesterfield Robert A. Accor

Goshen Angela O. [unclear], selectboard, chair

Plainfield Howard Bronstein, Chair, Select Board

Cummington Russell L. Scarrott

Williamsburg David E. Mathen

Westhampton [unclear] selectboard chair

Worthington Stephen [unclear], selectboard