

Town of Freeport Membership Application to AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities

Section 1:

Community Details

Name of Community: Freeport Town Hall

State: Maine

Population size: 8,250

Percentage of residents above the age of 60: 17.7% over the age of 65

Name and title of the elected official signing the official commitment: Sarah Tracy, Scott Gleason, Tawni Whitney, Eric Horne, John Egan, Henry Lawrence and Doug Reighley, Freeport Town Councilors

Address of the signer: 30 Main Street, Freeport, Maine 04032

Section 2:

Community contact for the AARP Network of age-friendly communities

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

The Freeport Town Council is committed to working towards making Freeport an age-friendly town.

Tawni Whitney will serve on the Age-Friendly Steering Committee and conduct further outreach to connect with elders through the churches in Town, Freeport Friends and the bird feeder program.

Tegan Milligan-Barber, FCS VISTA, will coordinate the work of Freeport Community Services to bring together the entire community in a collaborative effort to make Freeport more age-friendly.

Section 3:

Community Activities, engagements and Collaborations

1.) 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 2016, Freeport Community Services partnered with Freeport Housing Trust to conduct a needs assessment for the towns of Freeport and Pownal. The needs assessment highlighted six

key areas of need within our community: keeping seniors home, transportation, food insecurity, affordable housing, health care, and money for emergencies.

- Two community nights have been held since the needs assessment was shared with the greater community and at the first meeting, residents reflected upon the assessment and the key themes that emerged. At the second meeting, community members shared their ideas of what it takes to age in place and what they think they will need to age safely in their homes.
- Freeport Community Services currently offers many services such as: transportation, fuel assistance, a food pantry with home deliveries for those who are homebound, participates in the Commodities Senior Assistance Food Program, medical loan closet, offers a free lunch every 3rd Friday of the month, provides countless volunteer opportunities for folks of all ages, runs a popular thrift shop, and is the home of the Freeport Elders Association.
- Tegan, FCS VISTA, has developed and is guiding a Steering Committee tasked with identifying the needs of Freeport and Pownal residents as they look to live in age-friendly communities. She is building key relationships with area resources and collaborating with other agencies and our local governments to secure the engagement and commitment to the community.
- The bird feeder program outreaches older adults and others living in isolation and gives them a bird-feeder while pairing them with a member of the Freeport community who will help maintain the feeder, providing social interactions in the process.

2.) How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming age friendly?

- Through the process of creating a Steering Committee, FCS hosted an aging-in-place kick off breakfast, which brought a large group of concerned community members together, including many older adults, to hear Patricia Oh speak about the AARP age-friendly community initiative. Tegan Milligan-Barber, FCS VISTA, also shared the next step efforts of forming and implementing an Age-Friendly Steering Committee in Freeport and Pownal. At this meeting, community members signed up to be on the Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee is made up of a variety of community members, resource providers and business owners that all have a vested interest, both personal and for the greater good, in making our communities age-friendly. The first task of this committee is to identify the local resources that already exist and serve our area to ensure that any new efforts that arise out of the Steering Committee do not duplicate existing efforts, but to identify opportunities to create new relationships and initiatives.
- Next step efforts of the Steering Committee will include conducting focus groups in both Freeport and Pownal to hear from residents what they think they and their neighbors need to age in place safely and what they hope to have in their age-friendly town.

3) 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.

- There is already a strong relationship between the Town of Freeport and Freeport Community Services. The Steering Committee as well is a host of collaborating partners including the Freeport Housing Trust, Preservation Management, Freeport Veterinary Hospital, RSU5, the American Legion, and many of our local churches to name a few. Existing collaborations will be essential as we outreach additional community resources. Relationships that committee members have with others will only help to shed more light on this community effort and help to engage others to become involved.

Section 4.

Network Membership

How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

- We will contribute by making Freeport an even better place for people to live and visit from ages one to one hundred and four.
- With so many communities already being age-friendly, we are excited to be able to model aspects of what will make Freeport age-friendly after much of what already exists. We hope that we can be a resource down the road for other communities looking to take on this initiative.

5. What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

- FCS became motivated to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities through the outcomes of the 2016 needs assessment. The number one need identified through that effort was keeping seniors home, something echoed time and time again from residents of our community. Staff and volunteers began looking at our neighboring towns to see what efforts had been made by those communities to address this need and further researched initiatives throughout the entire state and began attending trainings and summits on the subject.
- While campaigning Tawni Whitney had the privilege of going to many homes in Freeport. Tawni heard from numerous people how much they would like to be able to stay in Freeport. For some, staying in Freeport meant downsizing from their large family home to a smaller condo. For others, it meant better curbside paths in the winter season and for others it meant being able to remain in their home after their spouse passed away. However, the most powerful thing that Tawni heard while campaigning is this, "when you get older you start to feel invisible"! It was that statement that fueled Tawni to work passionately to make sure Freeport is an age-friendly town.
- AARP's great reputation for working with seniors and communities spurred Tawni to reach out to AARP. As a result of that initial connection, Patricia Oh has educated and encouraged key

stake holders in the Town of Freeport to envision how the community can take the next steps in making our town more age-friendly. This process has inspired the Town to seek to become a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.