**Municipal Data Across Sectors for Health (M-DASH)**



**Town of Gray**

**Task Force Meeting**

**August 25, 2021 – 11:00a.m.- 1:00p.m.**

**Meeting Recording**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/wKl4wJRSg7cEFFsGgO_JXpougXObroJ0qp424pCmWCFXoJLRmFxJdb0oeU-vXBBi.FPzEjK4daZD_DFv4?startTime=1629904818000>

Attending: Jess Maurer, Effie Rorke, & Anne Schroth (MCOA; Jan Strout (Gray Lifelong Living Committee), Mary Hadlock (Volunteer Services Director, SMAA), Natalie Thomsen (New Gloucester Town Planner), Anthony Dahms (Gray Recreation Director), Josh Tiffany (Gray Library), Nate Rudy (Town Manager), Bob McIntire (Hallowell All Age-Friendly), Sharon Young (Gray Lifelong Living Committee), Deb Fritzen (RTP), Nellie Levier (Gray Childcare Coordinator)

Presenting: Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager, Keene NH; former City Manager, Franklin, NH

**Meeting Notes**

1. **Welcome & Orientation**
   1. This meeting was rescheduled from the originally scheduled 7/21/21 Task Force Meeting.
   2. After the May meeting, where we had multiple organizations review the resources available for Gray residents, this meeting was re-focused on the data point that shows Gray has relatively fewer residents over age 80 than other municipalities and the state as a whole.
   3. The question we are examining is whether Gray should engage in a community planning process, with the focus of aging and livability at all ages.
   4. To inform this question, we invited Elizabeth Dragon, former City Manager of Franklin, NH, to talk about her experiences with the community planning process *Franklin for a Lifetime*.
2. **Presentation of *Franklin for a Lifetime* Planning Model**

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager, Keene, NH; former City manager, Franklin, NH

* 1. See Report, distributed with these meeting notes.
  2. *Franklin for a Lifetime* was created with help from UNH cooperative extension and Plan NH, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and US Dept. of Agriculture Citizens Institute on Rural Design. Brought in diverse team of professionals who walked us through community engagement process.
  3. Franklin Voices – another engagement technique. See Report included at the end of *Franklin for a Lifetime* Final Report.
  4. Goal: To have a community that can support you for your whole life, from birth to passing away.
  5. Also wanted to learn how we might address some of the **economic development** issues that the community was facing and how we might kickstart an initiative. We recognized that we had people in community interested in doing work in the community but we weren’t able to get them all together on the same page. So, we used the *Franklin for a Lifetime* workshop to bring them together.
  6. We used local, nonprofit economic development group to apply for some grants to address issues raised in workshop process. Used funds to hire someone who could build financing packages to improve community infrastructure. All these grants bringing things together piecemeal – got a lot of political attention and built momentum for more economic development in downtown.
  7. **Lesson:** you can pivot from anything. Key to success is making the pivot based on what is unique and important to your community. For Franklin, the unique feature is their river. This whole effort brings us back to the river. Town government is the facilitator, not the “doer” of the economic development.
  8. **Key question**: What is unique for you in your community?
  9. UNH Cooperative Education was really helpful: Worked with town to identify what kinds of speakers we wanted to bring. One thing we needed was somebody else other than me or city employee explaining to people a realistic expectation of what city can and can’t do for you. Also, working with funding agencies to say we need flexibility in how we use funds.
  10. River is Franklin’s key – **what is the key in the town of Gray?** There is something that makes you most unique that you can leverage and there is a way to do it that you can engage people of all ages and empower them to be part of the solution.

1. **Discussion**
   1. Activities for community engagement
      1. Franklin Voices (see report with Final Report of *Franklin for a Lifetime)*
         1. Storytelling groups
         2. 1 on 1 interviews (people who don’t normally come to meetings)
         3. Worked with schools – created posters with ideas from these groups and from the students, themselves
         4. Plastered posters everywhere – very impactful.
      2. More typical charrette – weekend workshop – with Plan NH
         1. Good engagement
         2. Put feedback everywhere
   2. In Gray, a lot of info about what people love and need in town is in Lifelong Living Committee’s survey (better than 30% return rate). Don’t want to lose our focus on meeting need of older population.
      1. Franklin started based on aging in place. Pivoted to realization that nobody is going to age in place without a healthy and vibrant community = economic development. Such severe poverty – had to address that first. But we also kept in all our conversations: if we are going to build it, let’s build it for everyone (including those with mobility issues, older, etc.). So, aging was ultimately not the primary driver because we had basic human needs to address first.
   3. In Franklin, getting community buy-in made it easier to get things done. In order to get a sea change, need everyone moving in the same direction. That is why we started with community engagement.
      1. The following year we did a report out: here’s what we heard and here’s what we have done since then, because people were frustrated with being asked their opinion and nothing happening. So, we had follow-up meetings and asked people to help out, offer expertise, etc.
   4. Gray Village: We’ve been talking about designing revitalization of village to include some people friendly, human-scale elements like sidewalks that work for pedestrians, bike lanes, safe crossings; ways to plan residential spaces, options for older people.
      1. What is unique? That question is yet to be determined….but things like library, town buildings, and housing that we do have can all be joined by town trail system. I would encourage group to consider looking at that and also to develop other partnerships in community with entities on the trail or in Gray Village to get involved in M-DASH (Historical Society, Avesta, businesses in Mall area; folks on Main Street) to see what is possible to reimagine use of some of our buildings or business locations for kind of vital use that Elizabeth is talking about.
      2. Maybe could just convene conversation of stakeholders and see what they need and want and let that guide us.
   5. Another project in Franklin was focused on intergenerational usage to get rec center:
      1. Need + funding source = opportunity.
      2. We had need for rec center. Couldn’t afford new rec center but had abandoned school building. Instead of leaving empty, we re-purposed the building with intergenerational theme: rec center, daycare, and senior center. What happened, we started cross-promoting opportunities and because we did it that way, we could access CDBG grants to renovate sections of building for senior center and daycare.
   6. What makes sense for Gray?
      1. Jess – M-DASH is intended to look at data related to needs of older people and take action. Gray Data Dashboard shows lack of 80+ year olds (true in Gray and 2 towns next to it, but not others). How would a community go about having a conversation about housing, specifically, and housing specific for older people that would be consistent with everything else the community is doing.
         1. Elizabeth: Housing is a problem everywhere, for everyone. One thing we’ve done in Keene is an inventory of all housing stock and looked at where are our gaps; what do we need; what is mix of housing that we currently have. Then, based on the income for our region, is it affordable? Start with data: define your need. For us, for housing for elderly, we work with housing authority – they told us waitlist is 6-7 years. Clear need to build. Once you know what gap is, then learn what challenges to building. We discovered we don’t have the land in our community, so this has to be a regional conversation. We are now planning a county-wide conversation about housing and then commit Keene to a prorated part to housing problem. Harder part will be housing that is affordable.
      2. While it is helpful to make the connection between economic development and aging, there is also smaller, low-hanging fruit where we could engage and be successful.
         1. Home improvement and repair
         2. In Keene – same home repair issues. Did “21 in 21”: rehab 21 houses in 2021
      3. Housing discussion in Maine has taken a new turn with the new Housing Commission. Talking about barriers to affordable housing development around the state and what state can do to change landscape. More information: <http://legislature.maine.gov/legislative-studies-130th-legislature/commission-to-increase-housing-opportunities-in-maine>
      4. Maybe we should focus on continuum of housing needs.
         1. 1st piece of doing a deeper dive on housing or what reasons are that people aren’t staying in housing. (We have survey results to help here.)
         2. Also think about low hanging fruit:
            1. How could we more immediately connect people with door-to-door transportation through RTP?
            2. We’ve explored home repair initiatives in other towns and could bring that information here.
            3. Do deeper dive in zoning when commission report comes out to talk about what might be needed in housing.
2. **Action Planning Tool** 
   1. We began filling out the Action Planning Tool at the meeting. **See draft distributed with these notes.**
   2. Asking **all Task Force members** for comments, additions, edits. Send to Anne at [aschroth@healthypeninsula.org](mailto:aschroth@healthypeninsula.org).
3. ***Resource Education: Dementia-Friendly Communities (Rob Belanger)***

*Rob had a conflict so this topic was postponed.*

1. **Next Steps** 
   1. Return your comments on the Action Planning Tool to Anne at [aschroth@healthypeninsula.org](mailto:aschroth@healthypeninsula.org).
   2. Next Meeting will be in October. We will send a Doodle Poll to find mutually agreeable time.