

COMMITTEE ON AGING

2023 SENIOR CITIZENS SURVEY REPORT

The Board of Selectmen instituted the Committee on Aging on February 13, 2023 with the charge to study the conditions and needs among our senior residents as they relate to housing, economics, employment, health, and recreational matters. The Committee immediately identified priorities to pursue including: Identification of Needs of Seniors, Communication Issues, Health, Recreational Resources and Programs, Housing, Economics, Employment, and a Senior Center. Seniors identified as age 60 and above comprise nearly 50% of registered voters.

The Committee on Aging recognized identifying the needs of seniors as being the highest priority. Those priorities would drive the development and implementation plan to meet those needs. As a result, a survey was developed and distributed in the fall of 2023. The survey consisted of 13 questions and an opportunity for comments. Surveys were available through an online site provided by RiverCog and paper copies which were distributed at the Town Hall and Beechwood.

The Committee on Aging Killingworth Senior Citizens Survey 2023 recorded 317 online and 87 printed surveys for a total of 404 responses which were reviewed and analyzed. This report lists the 13 questions in a prioritized manner, identifies concerns from the comments taken from the survey for a number of the questions, and provides the Committee on Aging's action plans.

However, not all responders provided comments, their concerns were indicated in the yes/no answers. Additionally, paper responses from Beechwood were submitted after the deadline. These responses were reviewed and are in line with the results presented in this report.

Thank you for your participation and your concern for the quality of life for Killingworth seniors.

Priority 1: Housing Costs/Taxes - 86%

Concerns identified in comments:

Housing Costs Concerns: Need affordable housing for seniors, leaving Killingworth due to lack of smaller properties and affordable housing, need affordable rent.

Other: Need condos and smaller houses, zoning regulations for minimum acreage and cluster zoning.

Taxes Concerns: Taxes are too high, residents leaving Killingworth due to high taxes, freeze taxes or reduce taxes for sixty-five and older residents, consider rebate tax payments, need to decrease spending both in Killingworth and Board of Education budgets, concern for taxes increasing due to Board of Education Master Plan.

Other: Suggestion to consider jobs for seniors in exchange for lower taxes, reintroduce item in Town budget for seniors

Priority 2: Health/Safety - 84%

Concerns identified in comments:

Health Concerns: Accurate assessment of water we drink, help needed for seniors trapped in their homes during storms, need social worker, concern for elder abuse and associated law enforcement, need bus to go to other senior centers with programs, danger in waiting on road for River Valley Transit buses, senior issues such as loneliness, money for medication, help with dementia and Alzheimer's, need psychological group sessions for widows living alone.

Safety Concerns: Speeding, emergency police response time, paramedics contacted and dispatched separately and lack of local police department, police protection for burglaries, stolen vehicles, etc.

Other: Need reliable electric supply, need for seniors who can't afford leaf management which could be a safety issue.

Priority 3: Recreation/Activities - 66%

Concerns identified in comments: Need outdoor and indoor pickleball courts and nets, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, pickleball league, need for recreation and opportunities in Killingworth rather than driving to senior centers/programs in other towns .

Other: Walking track, Newcomers Club, adult education, opportunities to learn, not aware of Wednesday senior lunches, workshop on taking care of our car, Volunteer Day to identify volunteer opportunities, encourage senior trail walks, Include to other residents in Beechwood events and activities that are only available to Beechwood residents.

NOTE REGARDING PICKLEBALL: Per the Park and Recreation Commission, there are pickleball ball courts at Sheldon Field.

Priority 4: Senior Center/Community Center - 61%

Concerns identified in comments: Need senior/community center in Killingworth rather than having to other towns, need a place to meet and socialize, gym.

Other: Expand hours for Municipal Agent for the Elderly with responsibilities clearly defined and made known to town citizenry, organized programs connecting seniors with school children.

Priority 5: Nutrition/Food - 57%

Priority 6: Socialization/Loneliness - 46%

Concerns identified in comments: Increase Killingworth Library hours - Library is a great place to socialize, need other socialization/loneliness avenues to meet and socialize, concern for shut-ins needing a frequent phone call and monthly visits.

Priority 7: Fuel Assistance/Rent Rebate - 43%

Priority 8: Employment Opportunities - 15%

Priority 8: Need Assistance Navigating Medicare/Medicaid - 15%

Priority 9: Help with Smartphones, Computers, Communicating with Others - 14%

Concerns identified in comments: Need technical help with FaceTime and Skype, find alternative and less expensive Internet service.

Priority 10: Transportation to Doctors and Shopping - 10%

Concerns identified in comments: Need ride to doctor appointments, affordable transportation for those unable to drive, do not have a car nor driver's license, provide ride services for driving to market, delivery services, snow and leaf removal, dance and yoga.

General concerns identified in comments:

Lack of Town resources for seniors not living in Beechwood, need newspaper/ newsletter, need information and support for seniors needing help with transportation and care of their home, need list of vendors, list reasonably priced handymen, information for newcomers about Town resources, senior discounts at surrounding towns.

Beechwood Specific concerns identified in comments:

Increase in lot control fees and rental increases, continued annual increases, need rent control, need cap on Sun rents, need sidewalks, need better cell service in lower Beechwood, SUN not cutting shrubs nor stumps below ground level so seniors won't fall.

Committee on Aging Action Plan:

Meet with Board of Selectmen, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Finance, District 17 Regional Board of Education, Haddam/Killingworth Recreation Department, Youth and Family Services, River Valley Transit and the Beechwood Community to present and discuss the results of the Survey.

Based on the needs identified, the Committee is in the process of developing action plans to seek solutions to improve the quality of life for Killingworth seniors. The Committee has recognized that communication is a significant issue in Killingworth. Consequently, the Committee is currently developing a comprehensive communication plan to reach seniors in the Town in general and the Beechwood community.