

Village Neighbors  
April 20, 2017 Meeting Notes

In attendance:

David Dann (S), Maggie Houghton (W), Nancy Spittle (W), Genie Casey (NS), MaryAnn Palmieri (NS), Jim Ewen (NS), Linda Seidman (S), Susan Rice (S), Carla Palmer (S), Paula Lyons (S), Nina Compagnon (S), Gary Hirshfield (S), David Wheeler (S), Sally Fairfield (S)

Susan Rice gave a brief history of the group for the benefit of the prospective members from New Salem.

In the spring of 2016, there was a Valley read (including both large and small towns in the Pioneer Valley) of the book Being Mortal, by Atul Gawande which was the catalyst for finding out more about the national Village to Village (VtV) organization. Susan contacted Monadnock at Home in Peterborough, NH, the closest VtV group. In May 2016, we invited Rick from Monadnock at Home to come to Shutesbury and make a presentation. Individuals from Shutesbury, Leverett and Pelham attended. Rick urged us to become opportunity members of VtV to become familiar with the resources membership provides, including access to the start-up toolbox. During the summer of 2016 Nina Compagnon visited Nausett Neighbors, a VtV group located on Cape Cod in Wellfleet, MA .

The group committed to meeting on the third Thursday of every month and began strengthening connections with the surrounding towns of New Salem and Wendell as well as Pelham and Leverett. In the fall visits were made to interested people to let them know about the program and to find out what their needs might be. In December 2016 the group settled on the name **Village Neighbors**.

In March, 2017, Village Neighbors was invited by LifePath, our Franklin County link to the MA Dept. of Housing & Human Development (DHCD) to apply for a Community Services Special Projects grant to support the development of a senior village that will serve low-income seniors in Shutesbury and the surrounding four towns. At the same meeting a Steering Committee was established with one representative from the surrounding towns and two from Shutesbury, including Gary Hirshfield who acts as organizational consultant to the group. Gary explained the role of a steering committee. The committee is strategic, giving the larger group direction on how to proceed and expedites decisions made by the Village Neighbors Board of Directors.

The discussion moved on to the importance of finding out the number of households in each of the five towns with someone over the age of 55. Twenty-five households that need services is the threshold for beginning to provide services.

Jim Ewen, New Salem, says they are ready to begin preparing to provide Med. Rides. It was pointed out that VtV and the Med. Ride Program are not connected in anyway. Med. Rides are a service provided by the individual towns' Council on Aging.

As transportation for shopping, non-medical appts. and social events are likely to be the biggest need, there was discussion if each town will be responsible for driving their town members. Sharing the driving among and between the towns will likely happen. We will be able to figure that out with the help of Club Express or similar software.

A motion was made by Sally Fairfield that the service area of Village Neighbors will include the five contiguous towns of Shutesbury, Pelham, Leverett, Wendell and New Salem. This was seconded and passed unanimously.

The next question was: Do we need an office? As the group is looking at an all-volunteer organization and that we will have web-based software that can be accessed by anyone with a computer and a telephone, it was moved by Nancy Spittle that we need not fund nor staff a standing office (ie. a location that volunteers would go to), but that we will have a P.O. box. This also was seconded and passed unanimously.

David Dann updated the group on the status of the Community Service Block Grant, that we are waiting to hear from LifePath. He reminded everyone that the next meeting of the Board will be May 18th from 12:15 - 1:30 PM.

[On April 25, 2017 David received the news that we were awarded a grant in the amount of \$15,000 to continue the work we have already started.]

Notes taken by Sally Fairfield and David Wheeler.