



TOWN OF BELMONT
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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December 10, 2018

State Director Michael Festa
AARP Massachusetts
One Beacon Street, Suite 2301
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Mr. Festa,

On behalf of the Town of Belmont and the Belmont Council on Aging, I am pleased to submit this letter and application requesting membership in the AARP WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Communities.

Belmont is a great place to live, work, play, raise a family and age in place. The town's diversity of age is one of its strengths. Twenty-two per cent of our population is over the age of 60, and ensuring the welfare of seniors is a priority for town government.

The town is proud that it has supported its seniors by building the Beech Street Center, a state of the art facility that serves as a hub for dynamic activities designed to enhance the physical, mental, emotional wellbeing of all participants. The Council on Aging's transportation service is one of the most comprehensive available in the area. It includes 2 vehicles with highly trained drivers which enable seniors to access most of their transportation needs during the business week.

Over this past year the Board of Selectmen has taken action to ease the tax burden on seniors by increasing the size of the senior tax work off program limit from \$1,000 to \$1,500. The Board also successfully advocated for reducing interest on the tax deferral program from 8% to 4.5%, which was overwhelmingly approved by Town Meeting.

In addition to these actions by the Board of Selectmen, the Town is working on other initiatives. Affordable housing shortages for seniors is being addressed by the recently passed zoning overlay for assisted living projects and the recent adoption of a Housing Production Plan by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen.

Even with all this, more can and should be done.

It is appealing to consider addressing improvements using the concept of the 8 domains developed by the Age Friendly framework. Since the COA learned about the network in 2016 it has worked to educate itself and the public about what it means to be Age Friendly through a series of programs. This past spring it completed a needs assessment conducted by the U. Mass. Gerontology Institute, funded through a grant provided by the Tufts Foundation. The report was enthusiastically received by the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting, and interest in joining the Age Friendly network grew strong.

We look forward to becoming part of this wonderful global network. Such participation would enable the Town to look outward and collaborate with others to work on issues that seniors face, such as having fewer housing options, dealing with financial security matters and other needs identified in the recent report. Once membership in the network is approved, an advisory committee will be formed to work on solving problems specific to seniors.

We hope that you will look favorably on our application before you today.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Adam Dash
Board of Selectmen, Chair

AARP Membership Application-Dec. 12, 2018.

What motivated this community to join was the fact that the Council on Aging was focused for decades on bringing the long needed senior center project to fruition. Having succeeded in opening up a new center 9 years ago and subsequently building up programs to a robust level it was time to look outward to the other needs of older adults in the community. The Council on Aging has long been aware that seniors face issues of few housing options, financial security and few opportunities for seniors to be engaged in the civic life of the town. Learning about the age friendly movement was a welcome framework to begin to address these issues. Once the preliminary report that U. Mass. developed and was followed by the more comprehensive one that Tufts Foundation funded it was clear that these and other issues needed to be addressed by the whole town.

