

Notes from 10/10/23 Focus Group Event

(includes notes from 5 different groups + a “whiteboard” summary of comments from all groups)

Focus Group Summary from Scribe – Gail Biggs

Question #1

1. Need for a Senior Center—a designated location/building
2. **Communication**—Many seniors are unaware of offerings, events, programs
3. Suggestion: compile a database of seniors’ email and send announcements of pertinent information directly
4. Township website: overwhelming amount of information

Question#2

1. Suggest partnering with Morris Museum for some Senior programs
2. Other suggestions: Walking group, Current Events Round Table, senior fitness class
3. Issue: How to attract “younger seniors”?

Question#3

No consensus on need, type of transportation—“Dial-Ride” type or bus? Also, need for medical appointments or food shopping, etc. Because of Morris Township’s geography, it is difficult to service many people who are far out of populated areas.

Question#4

- **Need for a Senior Center so people can meet
 - ****Communications-big issue**--the website has so much information, but it does not get to so many senior people.
- Suggestions: Put a “Notify Me” on website?

Question#5

Suggestions:

1. Publish a list of tradespeople who are “senior-friendly”—handyman, house painters, etc.
2. Engage a High School Community Service Group to help Seniors—snow shoveling, *technology help (computers, phones, etc.)
3. Grandparent surrogates—reading to children, companionship

Editors Note: Because we now live in an age requiring use of technology for everything, especially communication, this is so challenging for seniors. Many seniors are left behind (and isolated) because they can’t even operate a cell phone. The attendees at this forum were at least savvy enough to have gotten information about this meeting. However, so many did not know of the many ways to access senior programs we already have that they would like.

Gail Biggs

Focus Group Summary from Scribe – Pat Collins

Noel, Cathy, Donna,

First, thank you so much all your work setting up the Senior focus group.

Our group expressed not only interest but gratitude to be heard. It was a huge success.

One: Actions, services, progress etc.

- Communication is a MAJOR issue. Many participants (living in Twp 23-60 years) found out about various information only recently via Patch, Morristown Green, Twp senior letter.
- What about seniors without computers. Is there a way to keep them on a separate list and send a mailer?
- One shot mailing to seniors (although costly) outlining ALL senior information. Complaint that information not in ONE PLACE. Most had no idea that it is being worked on.
- How does Twp reach out to other towns to find out about senior services or partner with them.

Two: Strength of Twp activities and recommended improvements

- Pool. Not friendly to seniors. Should be shaded areas designated for seniors.
- Discounts available regardless of income.
- Lectures on art, local history (example: Morris Canal), AI, Morris Museum, Shakespeare
- Computer and smart phone classes.
- Health classes: Partner with Atlantic Health
- Finance: Estate planning

Three: Transportation is a MAJOR issue

A participant had surgery and couldn't drive. She reached out to Twp for help/direction. They said they couldn't help.

- Twp should have some transportation available for seniors. One sees vans from other towns in shopping centers. Why can't we?
- Twp should be able to provide pre-arranged rides to doctors, shopping, evening (Morristown HS performances)
- Partner with Morristown to expand the Colonial Coach for access to Morristown and/or shopping centers. Note: Morris Twp. used to participate but cancelled partnership to save money.
- Contact Montclair to see their model. Each senior in Montclair who registers can use Lyft or Uber within a local radius up to 28 times a month. Twp could limit it to 2-3 times.
- Library access was a consideration. Note: A participant stated library delivers books. No one else knew that.

Four: Additional topics

- Plans for additional senior housing?
- Supply seniors with list of approved contractors. Note: Donna was in attendance and noted that there could be a conflict recommending certain people.
- Sidewalks. Participants divided.
- Expand trips. They are very popular. Some folks just found out about them recently.

Again, a big THANK YOU to the SCAC

Pat Collins - Scribe

Focus Group Notes from Barbara Sebiri – Scribe

Question #1:

Most prevalent response was LACK OF COMMUNICATION

Who enforces hours for landscapers to use their noisy machinery? Are their hours of operation posted?

What does the Senior Group do?

Group activities that are available

“Blockbusting” in certain neighborhoods by realtors? Can anything be done? Snow plowing leaving aprons of driveways blocked

Transportation

Mail out some information 1 x year of resources

Question #2:

Provide some training for computers and smart phones Thanks for pickleball courts

Cybersecurity-scams

Adult education

Programs at libraries

Lectures

Question #3:

50% indicated that they would not be able to stay in home if some kind of transportation doesn't become available

Maybe to coordinate with Morristown? Coach?

Maybe town can look into how LBI shuttle was started if town willing to do something along that line?

Question #4:

Estate planning

Provide some drivers' ed for seniors Lectures

More communication

Focus Group Notes from Mary Voehl - Scribe

1. Think about some factors (services, opportunities, community characteristics) that contribute to a positive quality of life for older adults in our Township. What suggestions do you have for actions, programs or services that would better address the needs and interests of Morris Township's seniors?

- Communication of information appears to be a major problem.
 - Seniors do not have computers or do not know how to navigate the web.
 - Monthly information is only mailed to members of the Senior Club but it should be to all Seniors.
 - Special issue of Parks and Recreation Brochure developed just for Seniors.
 - Special number such as 211 which would provide up to date information for seniors
- Need a centralized senior meeting place and someone to coordinate a:
 - Socializing group just for men
 - Social service volunteer group to visit and call on seniors who do not have family nearby
 - Younger seniors helping older seniors

2. What are the strengths of the social/recreational and educational activities in the Township? What would you suggest be added or changed?

- Reiterated need for senior center
- Develop stronger ties to other communities with centers for resource sharing
- Township very strong in social/recreational and educational activities for youth but not for Seniors.
 - Need a designated area for seniors at town concerts and the pool.
 - Need a township book club just for seniors.
 - Need computer training and help at home when there is a problem with a computer.
 - Desire additional recreation exercise classes.

3. If the Township provided transportation for seniors, for what would you use it? In five years do you see yourself needing transportation to live in Morris Township?

- Transportation needed for all activities: health visits, social activities, shopping
- Definitely felt that a lack of transportation would impede desire and ability to stay in Morris Township.

4. What additional topics would you like to bring to SCAC's attention that better address the needs and interests of Morris Township Seniors?

- Need a list of vetted resources or volunteers for non-medical assistance at home for minor jobs.
- Develop a database of senior residents to determine if there are Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities* within Morris Township which can be targeted for communication and serve as a planning group for senior activities within that NORC*.

*A Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) is a community or building complex that was not originally designed for seniors, but has a large percentage of residents who are older adults. These communities were not initially created to help seniors age in place, but have evolved naturally, and provide a unique and easy way for seniors to live independently.

Focus Group Notes from Janice Wood – Scribe

Question #1.

Think about some factors – services that contribute to a positive quality of life for older adults in our Township What actions, programs, or services that would better address the needs and interests of Morris Townships seniors?

- Don't know how to get Morris Township Messenger. Feels like we need more information but don't know where. No one was aware of the Morris Township website for Senior Citizens.
- The library is a great place to get information.
- The County library has free lessons for computers, iphones, ipads and can just walk in.
 - **Recommendation:** May want to establish a partnership and connect with the county library and coordinate
 - Need someone to coordinate so that information is coming from the township and what they are providing.
 - **Pat Murphy - willing to be the liaison to the library – needed to identify who the liaison at the Township would be.**
- Other suggestions:
- FILL – Fairleigh Dickinson – it is \$250 per semester – 12 to 15 classes – you can take any course for free in the university.
- Hiking opportunities – and trails that are available.

Question #2:

What are the strengths of the social/recreational and educational activities in the Township? What do you suggest being added or changed?

Recommendations to add:

- Recommend a new Book discussion group – Township.
- Mah Jong group – do something here in Morris Township
 - Room is crowded – depends on the activity – senior room is crowded – when have a presentation – have lunch afterwards.
- Form a partnership with Morristown Newcomers & Neighbors – they do Mah Jong and bridge.
- Senior Olympics – a few others participated in it – also had backyard sports and had a lot of fun and did a lot. We knew about it. Want more information on any related activities.
 - Use both online and snail mail for those who cannot use it.
- Set up a buddy system to help with computers for seniors who are not comfortable with it.
- Go to exercise for free – silver sneakers – planet fitness on route 10. It is too far. Is there not a room where you can put 2 treadmills, an elliptical and a bike?
- Electronic calendar would be great on the website for all the things available - Is there a place on a website – here are all the things that you can do – just for seniors – for now that is the topic Educational, sports, recreational – this question – is there a single place that tells you what you can do?
 - Problem – signing onto the website –

Must be easy to use.

Question # 3. If the Township provided transportation for seniors for, what would you use it?

In 5 years to you see yourself needing transportation – would others have ideas?

- **Recommendations:**
 - Hanover Township has dial a ride – doctor appointments, the bank – so perhaps Morris Township can do that.
 - Could people volunteer to drive?
 - A minibus would help to take people to different places and the township would hire someone.

- A free Uber paid for by the Township (residents would get x number of rides per month)
- **Don Sievers volunteered to get more information.**
- Research other towns in terms of what they do

Question #4:

What additional topics would you like to bring SCAC that better addresses?

- **Recommendations:**

- Socially there is a need – people to volunteer and spend time with housebound seniors.
- Need support program for seniors - a social support group – get together to have coffee – one of the Fridays – coffee and social is on the calendar –
- Chatham Seniors has a facilitator to spark discussion groups – can we partner with them or do something similar? Florham Park also has a good senior center.
- Again, can we partner with other towns?
- Provide lunches – check it out.

“Whiteboard” Summary of Comments from ALL Groups – compiled by Donna Guariglia

Question # 1

Communication, Communication, Communication – Dial 211, written documents (not all Seniors use the internet).

Noise control

Senior Club information

Unwanted Realtors/Solicitors in the neighborhood

Junior /Senior Volunteer Squad

Coordination with other towns

Library classes- Morris Township/Morris County – college and university programs

Companionship

Specific database of Seniors

Community Center

Question # 2

Training for computer/phones

Cyber Security sessions

Great Horizons -special discounts

Senior pickleball hours

Senior Book Club, Mahjong Group

Pool areas – shady spots reserved for seniors

Senior specific lecture series

Morris Museum events

Current Events – dedicated on website

Walking Groups

Question # 3

Lack of Transportation for seniors – Colonial Coach, MAPS,shuttlebus options

Volunteer driving Squad - Night driving needs, getting seniors to appointments

Senior bus service where you book an appointment

Some of the challenges are Morris Township is so spread out, coordinating dial-a-ride partnerships with other towns, securing a specific Township bus or shuttle.

Question # 4

Estate Planning lecture

Driver's Ed for seniors

Transfer of death beneficiary for sale of cars

Map of Senior living locations – group to contact seniors without family close by

Additional Senior housing options

Sidewalks

Expand Senior trips

Social support group – townwide collaboration

Senior Center – a larger space for seniors

Senior/High School mentor partnership