

CONWAY HOUSING COMMITTEE

Affordable Senior Housing Survey Results

A Needs Assessment For The
Community

Pixie Holbrook Chair,
Ed Lareau, Pat Lynch(COA), Woody Papparazzo
5/10/2011

In order to obtain the sense of the community on the topic of affordable senior housing, a representative sample of 97 residents age 55 or older were interviewed by telephone during the period April through December, 2010. A sufficient number of residents responded positively to the concept to justify further exploration of the topic. This report can be used as a basis for exploring the next phase of the project: "How to implement plans for providing affordable senior housing in Conway".

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
Background.....	2
Survey Results	3
Appendix A Methodology.....	8
Table I Thoughts on Future Housing.....	9
Table II Interest in Two Bed Room Unit.....	10
Table III Reasons for Interest in Unit.....	10
Table IV How Far from Center of Town.....	11
Table V What to Include in Project.....	11
Table VI Rating of Project Components.....	12
Table VII Additional Comments.....	12

CONWAY HOUSING COMMITTEE

SURVEY RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

The Conway Housing Committee came into being on April 19, 2006 and held its first meeting on May 22, 2006. The initial members were Gary Fentin, Pixie Holbrook, Ed Lareau, and Woody Papparazzo. Pixie Holbrook was selected as chairperson. Over the intervening years the committee held meetings once a month, typically on Monday or Tuesday evenings.

The committee defined and described its mission as:

The purpose of the Housing Committee is to investigate and/or facilitate the creation and support of affordable housing, which would include affordable senior housing.

BACKGROUND

The committee met with representatives of many other public agencies and with other Conway Town Committees. The highlights of these meetings are as follows:

- Met with 10 established town organizations to discuss their interest in and ideas about senior housing in Conway.
- Met with Paul Douglas of the Franklin County Housing Authority (FCHA) to discuss past projects and what our future responsibilities would be.
- Met several times with Selectman Jack Lockhead, to discuss available town property, and their restrictions.
- Met with FCHA member, Joannie Berstein, to discuss our project.
- Had a presentation by town resident Peter Jeswald, who provided sketches of a 6 unit complex sited on "Land Swap" (Shelburne Falls Road) land.
- Met with representatives of the Kendall Corporation (Lathrop senior housing in Northampton and Easthampton) to discuss process and issues regarding this type of complex.

- Attended the Town of Leverett Housing Committee meeting to share ideas and process.
- Requested, at the 2008 Conway Town Meeting, monies for the purpose of a feasibility study.
- Obtained and reviewed a topographical drawing of the Shelburne Falls land from resident Sterling Hubbard.
- Met with architects Bill Austin and Joan Rockwood to discuss preliminary planning for the Shelburne Falls Road land.
- Reviewed Joan's drawings of placement on the Shelburne Falls Road land.

During the fall/winter of 2009/2010, the committee decided that the best way to obtain a sense of the community on the issue of public housing for the elderly was to conduct a survey of a representative sample of Conway residents over the age of 55. From a list of town residents, sorted by date of birth, we determined that there were a total of 628 residents over the age of 55.

The 2008 Conway Town Meeting approved Housing Committee funds for a feasibility study. The committee decided to use a portion of these funds conduct a telephone survey. Three telephone interviewers conducted the survey from April through December, 2010. A total of ninety-seven people were interviewed during this time. Committee members tallied and analyzed the survey responses, as described in Appendix A, Methodology.

SURVEY RESULTS

In this section, each survey question is presented followed by a summary of the answers and additional comments/interpretations.

Question 1 Are you over 55?

We only interviewed those over 55. This question was an introductory "ice breaker". Ninety-seven individuals agreed to do the interview.

Comments/Interpretations

Because the interviewers were working off lists that listed individuals by birth date, they had no way of knowing if the person being interviewed was married or if married, whether the spouse was over age 55. In a few cases, the person being

interviewed volunteered that they were married and that their spouse would more or less agree with their responses. The interviewers only tallied responses that they received directly from any person being interviewed. We ended up interviewing approximately 15% of the population of interest. There were 628 names of people 55 and older on the town list.

Question 2 Do you live in a single or multiple unit?

Of the 97 responses to this question, 93 of the responders stated that they lived in a single home and 4 responders stated that they lived in multiple-unit housing.

Comments/Interpretations

An overwhelming majority of residents over age 55 live in private homes, as would be expected in a small rural town, such as Conway. Leaving a private home would be a major change for residents. Some might find this a relief (less expense and less maintenance) and some might find it a hardship (loss of privacy and independence).

Question 3 Do you own or rent?

There were no renters among the respondents.

Comments/Interpretations

This result would be expected in a small rural town, such as Conway.

Question 4 Any thoughts on your future housing needs?

This open ended question resulted in answers falling into the 8 categories, as presented in TABLE I.

Comments/Interpretations

It would appear that, based on our sample, approximately 38% (See Table I Part A, categories 3 and 5) of Conway residents have addressed at some level, the realization that a local residential move is somewhere in their future. A quarter of our population (23%; category 7) over age 55 have enough resources in place (e.g., money or support) and the desire or intent to be able to stay in their respective homes.

In the 2nd part of TABLE I, categories 3 & 5 contain the populations that our overall committee work is designed to serve. The committee is not working to meet the needs of all seniors, but rather aims to provide one of many options; namely an affordable housing option for the elderly in town.

Question 5 How interested or not interested would you be in a 900sf, 2 bedroom unit?

See TABLE II for a tally of responses.

Comments/Interpretations

This question was a concept question and referred to a typical apartment or condominium. Approximately 45% (categories 1 and 2) of residents over the age of 55 expressed such an interest in living in a 900 square foot, 2 bed room home. A slight majority, approximately 56% (categories 3 and 4), of people over the age of 55 in Conway are not interested in living in a 900 square foot, 2 bed room home. The reasons for the respondents' answers to this question are presented in item #6 below.

Question 6 Why do you feel this way? (interested or not interested)

See Table III for a tally of responses.

This open ended question resulted in answers being classified by the committee into 9 categories, as presented in TABLE III.

Comments/Interpretations

As previously mentioned, the committee is not working to meet the needs of all seniors, but rather aims to provide one of many options; namely affordable housing for the elderly in town. The project being considered initially by the committee should be considered an exploratory model only for discussion purposes with a reference point of 6 living units.

Question 7 How far from the center of town would you prefer to be?

See TABLE IV for a tally of responses.

Comments/Interpretations:

There is a strong preference for being near the center of town; notably, approximately 80% of the respondents would prefer to live within one mile of the center.

Question 8 What would you like as part of this project?

See TABLE V for a tally of responses.

Comments/Interpretations

This question was asked so that the committee could get an idea of what elements would contribute to the character of any elderly housing project that would be planned.

Question 9 How important are the following to you, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being most important:

See TABLE VI, for a tally of responses presented in rank order.

Comments/Interpretations:

Although 80% of the respondents to question 7 expressed a preference for living within one mile of the center of town, closeness to town ranked last in this question. Transportation was ranked number one in this question. There is a difference between closeness to town (isolation) and need for a particular type of transportation. Transportation is the biggest concern throughout the survey. Clearly, only drivers or those with drivers nearby would feel more comfortable living away from the center of town. Van transport could be considered, but is not that desirable for independent people. The project being considered initially by the committee would be residential for independent seniors, or for those who can rely on others nearby. Seniors are driving later into their lives. Many in their 80's-90's are still driving.

Questions 10/11 Do you want services to stay in own home and why?

We stopped asking these questions because we wanted to concentrate on the concept of a small senior housing complex, not services to the elderly in their homes. However, the answers

we did receive generated a lot of passion about staying in their homes and the services that they would and do want. This should be shared with the Council on Aging (COA).

Question 12 Do you know any senior who has had to leave Conway?

Fourteen out of 97 respondents indicated that they knew of anyone who had to leave town.

Comments/Interpretations:

Many can stay in their homes because of ample finances; there are younger relatives nearby; or their homes are well-suited to their needs. Many are aging in place in Conway. They leave Conway for their final home in assisted living, with relatives or convalescent care.

Question 13 Do you know any elderly that want to move to Conway?

Only 4 out of 97 knew of anyone interested in moving to Conway.

Comments/Interpretations:

Conway is not seen as being advantageous to seniors. One can deduce that it is too far from services or that there is no affordable housing. A few commented that they had relatives that they would like closer to them, so they could assist with their elder needs or be closer to grandchildren

Question 14 Anything to add

See TABLE VII for a tally of responses.

Comments/Interpretations:

This will get town support, even if there are not a lot of people who will opt for this choice. We could consider being a place for seniors and physically-challenged residents. We should visit other towns with similar projects, like Westhampton.

APPENDIX A

Methodology

The committee members met several times September through December to review the survey responses for each question. Tallies for the direct response questions were fairly straight forward. It should be noted that not all questions were answered by all responders through each interview report. The open ended response questions required the most review. Each committee member reviewed the responses to each question and independently tried to place each response in to no more than one of nine categories that each member defined independently. When all members of the committee had finished the review of each question's responses, they discussed the categories that each had defined. Further discussion led to no more than eight categories, into which all responses could be placed. There is a subjective nature to interpreting responses to open ended questions, and the method of group discussion can reduce the subjectivity of the analysis chosen. In most cases, similar wording allowed the committee members to place each response into a specific category. In fact, many responses repeated themselves and fell into specific sets.

Early on, it was decided to have the interviewers stop asking questions 10 and 11, because these two questions concerned elder services. The focus of the committee is on public housing for the elderly, not elder services, at this point. Generally people were very open and responsive with the interviewers.

TABLE I

Question 4. Any thoughts on your future housing needs?

This open ended question resulted in answers falling into the 8 categories listed below.

The methodology for determining the 8 categories is explained in the Introduction section above. The 8 categories are mutually exclusive and exhaustive.

Part A

1. I'm not ready yet and haven't even thought about it.	21% (20/97)
2. I already have specific plans for leaving Conway when I am older.	3% (3/97)
3. I know I have to move but have no specific location.	5% (5/97)
4. I plan to live near/ with a younger relative in Conway or elsewhere.	5% (5/97)
5. I know I need to downsize (for less maintenance, less expensive or better accessibility) and I would prefer Conway.	33% (32/97)
6. I want to live in a warmer climate.	4% (4/97)
7. I will never move. I'll make modifications to my home.	23% (22/97)
8. Other	6% (6/97)
TOTAL	100% 97/97

Part B

An alternative way to aggregate the data would be:

Have definite plans (categories 2, 4, 6, 7)	36% (35/97)
Aware of need to plan (categories 3 & 5)	38% (38/97)
Not there yet (category 1)	21% (20/97)
Other (category 8)	6% (6/97)
TOTAL	100% (97/97)

TABLE II

Question 5. How interested or not interested would you be in a 900sf, 2 bedroom unit?

1. Very interested	17% (12/61)
2. Somewhat interested	28% (17/61)
3. Somewhat not interested	30% (18/61)
4. Not at all interested	26% (16/61)
TOTAL	101% (61/61)

Percentages may not add up to 100%, due to rounding errors.

TABLE III

Question 6. Why do you feel this way? (interested or not interested)

This open ended question resulted in answers being classified by the committee into the following 9 categories:

1. Interested: more energy efficient, better accessibility, easier to maintain, less expensive	28%
2. Interested: I'll never leave Conway	16%
3. Interested: want to be closer to town/near other seniors/not be alone	15%
4. Not interested: no need to move (enough money, adequate house for later years, don't want to leave home)	12%
5. Not interested: plan to go to warmer climate	5%
6. Not interested: will be with or near younger relatives	6%
7. Not interested: concerned about transportation and lack of services nearby	21%
8. Not interested: want independence, land and privacy, home ownership (not rent)	12%
9. Not interested: don't need it yet, can't imagine the need	6%

Total interested for various reasons 59%

Total not interested for various reasons 62%

(Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because people were free to answer the question in several ways.)

TABLE IV

Question 7. How far from the center of town would you prefer to be?

1. 0-.5 miles	56(30/54)
2. up to 1 mile	24(13/54)
3. up to 2 miles	6% 3/54)
4. up to 5 miles	15 %8/54)
TOTALS	101(54/54)

Percentages may not add up to 100%, due to rounding errors.

TABLE V

Question 8. What would you like as part of this project?

- ability to walk around outside/nature 3
- garden space/open space 9
- children space 2
- inconspicuous parking 1
- indoor parking 4
- outdoor parking 3
- solar/off the grid/green 4
- look like country architecture/village effect/entry porch 2
- affordability/based on income 2
- privacy/soundproofing 5
- transportation 6
- layout with central hub
- nurse aide services 6
- recreation/community room/group eating/library/movies/communal kitchen 11
- lawn service/make life easier 4
- swimming pool 3/exercise 6
- pets allowed
- one level 2
- sunlight/lots of windows 2
- not near river
- internet 5
- meals/Meals on Wheels 3
- safe
- paved road
- natural burial place
- near woods
- resident driver
- open floor plan
- 2 bedrooms
- AA/social care
- attractive landscaping
- association group/cultural activities
- weekly supervision

TABLE VI

Question 9. How important are the following to you, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being most important:

1. common room:	4.0
2. common garden space	4.3
3. transportation	4.7
4. closeness to town	3.5
5. one floor living	4.5
6. closeness to shopping	3.5

TABLE VII

Question 14. Anything to add

- better closer to other towns, build near Shelburne Falls 3
- great for those who need it, but not necessarily for me 10
- great idea/glad this is being explored 15
- have wheelchair-bound son, is it limited by age?
- Conway center needs groceries, would be more attractive if it did 5
- wants information as this progresses
- want to be near school with kids nearby
- uncomfortable with government intervention
- should be a rental and small
- people with own homes should add on and check in on the senior.
- concerned that other urban residents would come and crowd out Conway residents
- want privacy and independence 2
- this was researched in 1985 but "it didn't fly".
- committee should look at Worthington and Williamsburg
- concern about transportation 6
- thanks for making me think about this 2
- Mrs. Peterson started the idea of a senior center years ago. Wish she had also done senior housing, but there wasn't as much interest before.
- important that this project be affordable with ties to town, improves volunteerism and benefits more than the seniors.
- high land prices may be driving people from Conway
- parents enjoyed senior housing model also
- don't limit us to 6 units, plan for 30 or 40
- Conway has an inviting look that is hard to duplicate
- is worried about rise in property taxes
- hope there are knowledgeable people on this project who know what they are doing and do it well.