

LICP2035 Health and Wellness Forum
August 26, 2021

Community members in attendance: Beth Marchak (LICP2035 Health and Wellness committee), Dennis McCann (LICP2035 Health and Wellness committee), Janice Avignon (LICP2035 Chair) Linda Ferguson McCann, Lorinda Valls, Will Hickok, Nancy Berges, Nancy Jordan, Amy Tierney, Beth Limerick, Sue Sesto, Steve Hart, Tim Honey, Betsey Whitman, Mark Greene, Katherine Stewart

The meeting was convened in the Wellness Center in the basement of the library and attendees were given a tour of the new telemedicine equipment by Amy Tierney.

As attendees entered the meeting they were asked to suggest topics for discussion by posting notes on a white board. These topics were used to guide the session and are listed below.

Beth Marchak presented a thorough overview of the demographics projections for the State of Maine as well as the Town of Long Island for the next 15 years. The data she has collected show the following:

1. In spite of the accepted notion that LI's population will grow, state & federal data projects LI's population is actually expected to decline. By 2038, state & federal data shows LI will have 230 full timers compared to 239 right now.
2. Over the same time frame, Cumberland County's growth will essentially be flat and Maine's population will grow by only 2.3% by 2028. We already live in the oldest state in the nation. It is going to get a lot older.
3. No town-level data is available yet, but statewide projections through 2028 show the effects of an aging population. There will be a 27% decrease in the age groups under 65 and a 45% increase in the population 65 and older.

In addition, we have some demographic data from our survey which gives us a picture of who is on the island now. Of the approximately 900 total residents, almost 300 responded and we found

80% are on the island May - Oct
65% have 3 or less in household
38% retired
76% no children
20% under 44 years old
66% over 55 years old
29% 'younger' adults 25 to 55
30% consider LI primary residence

There is the added consideration that our population on the island is aging and most of our older residents do not have family members living in close proximity to care for them as they age.

One attendee expressed concern that he perceives a struggle between the zoning and land-use ordinances and aging-in-place on the island. He described an issue he had with obtaining an easement to allow him to add an addition to his home which would allow him to continue to occupy his cottage safely as he ages. These are things he feels we all need to be thinking about while we are still healthy, and maybe the town needs to review the current ordinances with aging-in-place in mind.

The lack of affordable housing on the island also makes it difficult for extended family to build/buy housing on the island. This is also a health and well-being issue.

Ticks! There have been many cases of tick-borne illness on the island this year. The difficulty with spraying insecticides is the damage to the fisheries that can be caused by certain applications. The prevalence of deer ticks on the island is causing people not to walk in the conservation area any more and not to engage in gardening, both of which promote health and wellness. A lot of good effort has gone into reducing the deer population, but they have been largely ineffective because the herd is much too big. There should be 3-4 deer per square mile and we have 20 or more times that amount. Some proposed solutions were setting up feeding stations which would coat the deer with an anti-tick solution as they feed and coordinating the hunting seasons with the other islands so the deer do not just swim between the islands to avoid the current culling happening on their home island.

Dennis also suggested that residents ask their primary care physicians for a prescription for a single dose of doxycycline to keep at their residence in case an engorged tick is found attached to them.

Some other health and wellness concerns and desires that were raised for discussion at the meeting were:

- Weekly on-island blood draws for lab tests
- Addressing food insecurity on the island
- Informative talks on health-related topics such as alcohol abuse, diabetes, smoking
- Local access to doxycycline for treatment of Lyme Disease
- A fully functioning health center
- A senior living facility
- A senior center which would provide activities and services for seniors as well as possibly respite care and transportation
- Mental health counseling services

A separate forum conducted by Alanna Rich with the teenagers on the island came up with three wishes which would contribute to health and wellness: a swimming pool, an old folks home, and pickleball where we won't get yelled at.

Another idea that was presented was the building of a year-round recreation facility, possibly combining a fire station, town offices, a therapy pool, and a gymnasium. This would require

some rezoning of town-owned land in addition to a very large capital campaign in addition to grants.

The issue of protecting our clean water supply was raised as an important wellness concern.

The desire for addressing transportation to medical appointments, possibly by arranging a network of volunteers and building a culture of service with training and recognition for volunteers.

The session ended with the idea that seniors do not have to limit themselves and we should be promoting a culture of integration and not isolation. Seniors should not be treated as “old folks” and youth should be treated as a valuable resource.