Ontario County officials are looking at ways to deal with an aging population in the county.

CANANDAIGUA — The population of Ontario County is getting older.

The number of its residents age 60 or older is expected to increase from 27% of the total county population in 2019 to 33% in 2030.
From 2010 to 2019, the number of Ontario County residents age 60 to 74 increased by 4,657 and those 75 and over increased by 900.

From 2019 to 2030, the number of county residents age 60 to 74 is expected to increase by 2,960 and those age 75 and older could increase by 6,364, according to the 2010 U.S.Census, the 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates and the New York State Office for the Aging projections.

In an effort to respond to those numbers, county officials are looking to establish an Age-Friendly Ontario Initiative to support the well being of residents from this aging boom.

The county Office for the Aging and Planning Department have conducted two community education workshops and developed a county website of age friendly resources. County officials also say they have already implemented accessibility improvements at parks and buildings and invested in active transportation options. The county also has increased access to vehicle-based mobility options for people of all ages, with an eye toward meeting the needs of vulnerable populations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And there is now an Ad Hoc Age-Friendly Committee comprised of representatives of the OFA, Planning Department, Public Health, Public Works, Purchasing, Social Services, Emergency Management Services, Finance and Grant Administration and the Sheriff’s Office. Other members include town supervisors and community partners. The committee is identifying strategies that will bolster the county’s age-friendly position.

The board’s Planning and Environmental Quality and Health and Human Services committees have voted to approve a resolution to send to the full board for a final vote.
The motion commits the county to the Age-Friendly Initiative and contains these measures:

• Continue to improve accessibility of county facilities and services by such steps as access to buildings and outdoor spaces, easy to understand and well-located signage, appropriate lighting and in buying accommodating furniture and fixtures.

• Pursue funding for age-friendly home modifications and work with municipalities to identify and pursue neighborhood age-friendly modifications.

• Pursue funding for programs to allow older adults and other frail individuals to remain in their homes with such services as vaccine administration, therapy and medical, vision and mental health services.

• Work with municipalities to incorporate age-friendly policies and standards, including a complete street policy, into local comprehensive plans, zoning and design of recreation facilities.

• Add age friendly design as a standard consideration by staff for all county Planning Board reviews it does under General Municipal Law.

• Enhance mobility of older adults and others without access to private transportation.

• Identify and use communication channels available to those without digital access for county communication with the public.

• Support and sponsor age friendly training and educational resources for design professionals, contractors, developers and municipal boards.
• Increase opportunities for inter-generational engagement.

• Better accommodation for the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists into the design of county roads and continue to work to make roads safer for bikers and pedestrians.

• Try to expand older adult use of existing municipal and community spaces for weekday social participation and civic engagement, including removal of insurance hurdles.

In 2017, New York became the first state in the nation to be designated an Age-Friendly state and is offering grants to counties to be used in taking age friendly measures. Ontario County has received such a grant.

The Ad Hoc Age-Friendly Committee would meet at least once a year and make a report to the Supervisors on age friendly activities being implemented and seek funding for activities and make recommendations to support Ontario County's pursuit of certification as an age Friendly community in accordance with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the World Health Organization criteria.