

**Minutes of the Commission On Aging Meeting
Garvey Center – Room 1, Leonardtown, Maryland
Monday, December 20, 2004**

CALL TO ORDER

Start Time: 1:30 p.m.
Location: Garvey Senior Center, Leonardtown, MD
Chaired By: Mary Ruth Horton, Chairperson

PRESENT

COA Members: Mary Ruth Horton, Pat Myers, Kitty Turner, Larry Younger and Sandra Wheeler.

Guests: Daniel Hinz

Department of Aging Staff: Ted Grant and George Donely

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda accepted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Pat Myers and Mary Ruth Horton suggested changes to the November meeting minutes. Sherrie Wooldridge will make the recommended changes, send out corrected copies to COA members and post on St. Mary's County website.

OLD BUSINESS

Senior Tax Credit Status

Pat Myers reported that Senator Dyson had prefiled the Senior Tax Credit Bill. Pat also said a hearing could be scheduled for the end of January or early February, 2005. Sandra Wheeler recommended that they all wear buttons to the United Seniors of Maryland rally on January 25 to show support for tax credit. Discussion concluded that these buttons could say "I support St. Mary's County Senior Tax Credit". The COA members present agreed to these suggestions. Sandra pointed out that legislation is often hard to pass and everything the members can do to show support would be a good idea. Mary Ruth will also check with Ray Cooper whether there will be a fee for these buttons and if he feels he is available to make the buttons.

Pat Myers informed members of a newspaper article from the Maryland Independent that the two similar proposals to freeze property taxes for seniors gained modest interest from elected officials but it was agreed that more analysis was needed to determine whether it would be fiscally wise. Sandra pointed out that there are multiple senior communities available in Charles County as opposed to St. Mary's and that the reasons behind the bill is really quite different. Mary Ruth stated she feels strongly that the legislation should remain a "local issue".

Survey of Senior Service Priorities Update

Several of the surveys were completed at the DoA Christmas party, and all three libraries now have them. Kitty has distributed some at Trinity Church as has Sandra Wheeler to Mr. Zion Methodist Church. These surveys can still be given out until the end of January. Mr. Hinz has passed some out at his church and has provided a box for pick up. Sherrie was asked to provide surveys for the LIFE program participants which should be copied on distinctive colored paper. The question arose whether it would be possible for Susan Stedman to be contacted regarding whether the surveys can be distributed with the Meals On Wheels deliveries. Sherrie will direct

this request to Gene Carter and Jennie Page. Dr. Grant requested some for the VFW meeting he will be attending and his Aging Support Group members. Pat Myers said she would write an article for the Enterprise newspaper with the possibility of also publishing the actual survey. The COA members felt this was a positive way to proceed.

Senior Summit Recommendations

Housing: Mary Ruth said that she and Kitty Turner and Sandra Wheeler attended the St. Mary's County Regional Housing Project meeting, which is concerned about affordable assisted living. She commended Sandra for being largely responsible for encouraging the group to move forward. A question of location still exists and two committees have been formed to look at similar sized facilities and possible management groups. Eleven acres in St. Mary's City are available with land and location, however it will only support an 8 -16 bed affordable assisted living facility. Grant money may exist to allow the operating costs to be more affordable.

Health: No committee report available this month.

Transportation: No report this month; however committee members are planning discussion with George Jarboe when the Northern Senior Center is set to open.

Education: No committee report as they are waiting for results of senior survey.

NEW BUSINESS

Report of the Nominating Committee

Larry Younger, Pat Myers and Ardith Young served on the Nominating Committee for elections that will occur at the January 2005 meeting. The following members were asked to serve in the next term for the three positions included Mary Ruth Horton for Chairperson, Raymond Cooper for Vice-Chairperson and Mary Ann Grusholt continue as Corresponding Secretary. The Bylaws state that members cannot serve more than two consecutive terms, and Mary Ann Grusholt has already served two terms, however if nobody else is willing to take the position it is appropriate for her to continue. Nominations were unanimously approved by the COA members thus concluding the Nominating Committee report.

Outreach to Community: Exploration of Partnerships

Mary Ruth attended a meeting with the new director of the county library system to discuss how seniors could best utilize the library. They only have a part-time position to do outreach work. Only limited time can be provided to seniors; however they hope to expand if the need is requested and funds are available for staff. The question of sending books and materials to seniors through the Meals On Wheels program was discussed. Mary Ruth explained the complications involved with that possibility: mainly limited time to spend at each house due to keeping the meals at proper delivery temperatures and limited space in the volunteer vehicles. Sandra Wheeler runs a weekly literature group at Charlotte Hall Veteran's Home and is provided with requested materials by the library. Pat Myers said that the Charlotte Hall library provides books for the Northern Center Book Club. George Donely offered the suggestion of high school students receiving community service hours by locating and delivering requested materials and books to senior's homes. A discussion of the issues involved with this suggestion followed including gas costs, insurance, safety, etc. Mary Ruth will pass on these ideas to the librarian.

Kitty Turner continues to have concerns regarding the environmental issue of the careless actions of people who smoke. She feels that action needs to be taken to eliminate the cigarette butts that littering outside of buildings. Pat Myers questioned whether that is a senior issue. Sandra Wheeler said that there is only so much legislation that can be initiated to prevent littering, and perhaps a more appropriate approach is to enforce the current laws already in place.

Sandra suggested that Kitty write a letter to the editor of the local newspapers and Pat Myers suggested putting an article in the DoA New Beginning newsletter.

DEPARTMENT OF AGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Gene Carter was not available for a report. The COA requested that he write up a current report and have Sherrie send out to members. Sandra asked about the current status of the DoA website.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Northern Senior Center: Pat Myers reported that she was told construction seems to be on schedule. The walls have been painted, insulation is in ceiling, and the range hood installed. Pat Myers is working with Jennie Page on the interior decorating. The building has been painted yellow, not the requested color which was almond, but Pat was advised it will have to remain yellow. There is also one part of the building that juts out that is painted white, which Pat feels needs to be addressed but was told it will remain that way; why she doesn't know.

RSVP: George Donely reports that RSVP has been busy with two volunteer recognition luncheons. Daniel Hinz agreed that the meals at the Tech Center are wonderful and the service very good. The other luncheon was at Historic St. Mary's City.

MADS: Julie Van Orden was not available but provided the following report which was read by Mary Ruth:

1. We are deficient in our grant days attendance FY to date by approximately 200 days. We have been accepting new grant clients in order to increase attendance and make up the deficit.
2. We have increased enrollment (both centers, combined) from last month which was 57 to this month at 63 (6 new clients). Capacity is 98, combined.
3. Our average daily attendance has increased from 39 (October) to 44 in November. Up by 5 days.
4. There is still talk that combining the two centers could eventually become a reality if we cannot move the bottom from "red" to "black".

Sandra Wheeler is chairperson of the advisory council for the MADS program which helps with publicity and funding sources. She reported that a new chairperson, Melody Mason, will be taking over the group in January 2005. Also, Mr. Mac McKay (Sr.) has joined the advisory council. The group will be applying for United Way funding for Adult Day Care to assist with the financial situation. The real issue is attendance as the programs have never reached the 98 capacity, which she feels might be an unrealistic number in a county the size of St. Mary's. Kitty Turner asked for the parameters and requirements for participation in the MADS program. The county has been supportive of keeping both programs going but it always seems to be that participants come in a "crisis mode" rather than as early as would be beneficial to avoid being sent directly to a nursing home. The SMILE group will also be creating a power point presentation to show to the Chamber of Commerce.

UNITED SENIORS OF MARYLAND: Mary Ruth was not able to attend the meeting because the COA meeting was rescheduled to the same day due to the holiday. The Legislative Rally is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 25th or with the snow date on Feb. 1st. Kitty asked about arranging car pools at the COA meeting which is the day prior to the rally. Sandra suggested this be put on the January COA agenda. Tickets are available from Mary Ruth. Those planning to attend are Kitty, Mary Ruth, Larry, Daniel, Pat, Sandra, Clancy Lyall, and Rachel Harmon (DOA staff).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Board of County Commissioners make appointments for new COA members twice a year (December and June). Mary Ruth has now officially requested, in writing, to have new appointments included on the next BOCC agenda. Reappointments of current members with staggered terms may occur at a later time. Mary Ruth will follow up on this situation.

Sandra Wheeler presented an article from the Washington Post newspaper which is about the issue of privatization of Social Security. She pointed out that, even as a senior, she has concerns for her children and grandchildren on this issue.

Kitty Turner shared some information regarding the last election.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 24, 2005 at 1:30 p.m. @ Garvey, Room 1.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Pat Myers to adjourn which was seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sherrie Wooldridge

Senior Administrative Coordinator, St. Mary's County Department of Aging