

MEETING MINUTES
ST. MARY'S COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING
September 22, 2014
1:00 p.m.
Garvey Senior Activity Center

CALL TO ORDER: The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. (This is a recorded meeting).

ROLL CALL: Members present were Norma Pipkin, Chair, Juanita Nether, Gail Murdock, Linda Fry, Cindy Williams, Deb Johnstone, Diane Harding and Bettie Broadhurst. Department of Aging & Human Services staff members present were Lori Jennings-Harris, Director and Beth Sandberg, Senior Administrative Coordinator.

ABSENT: Janet Kellam was excused.

Ms. Pipkin asked all meeting attendees to introduce themselves.

Ms. Pipkin stated the Commission on Aging hears from St. Mary's County citizens that transportation is a major issue for them and especially our senior citizens. The Commission has tried to address the issues, but they thought it would be best to hear from all of the County's transportation providers to get a better understanding of what is available in order help educate our citizens.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

St. Mary's County Transit System - Mary Ann Blankenship, STS Transportation Manager:

St. Mary's Transit System (STS) offers public transportation routes throughout the county from Ridge to Charlotte Hall. STS connects with the Charles County Van Go transit system and the Calvert County transit system in Solomons. STS is an ADA paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA program is available to all persons with disabilities whose origin to destination is within ¾ mile of the fixed routes. ADA routes operate Monday through Sunday, in conjunction with the public transit routes, days and hours of operation. A paratransit application must be completed to qualify.

Mr. Murdock inquired about transportation to the 7th District. Ms. Blankenship indicated this is an area where transportation is inadequate under the statewide assistance program. STS tries to help people in that area. Ms. Blankenship indicated all of the buses are ADA accessible and have a wheelchair lift on all their buses. Ms. Reuteschle, Victory Woods Manager, asked what the difference is between regular public transportation routes and ADA paratransit service? Ms. Blankenship said paratransit service and ADA will provide riders with an origin to destination trip. If riders need help getting in the door, they will need advance notice. Ms. Blankenship discussed the fee and program structure.

The SSTAP (Special Statewide Transportation Assistance Program) program is available to all senior citizens and persons with disabilities outside the STS Public Transportation Routes. Once qualified, riders may be transported within St. Mary's County for medical appointments, shopping visits, etc. This program operates on a "first come, first served" basis, with preference given to medical appointments.

Health Enterprise Zone - June Castro, Program Coordinator:

The Health Enterprise Zone (HEZ) awarded a grant to St. Mary's County, which is one of five counties that won the Lt. Governor's proposal to work on health disparities in rural areas. The pilot program areas include Lexington Park, Park Hall, and Great Mills. At this time, the HEZ is bound to that route. If riders cannot afford the 3 month shuttle pass (\$20.00), they have a program that could help with the cost. The consumer may complete an application to apply for a free pass if qualifications are met. The shuttle runs the transportation route loop. Riders travel to grocery stores, pharmacies, and doctor visits within the zone. The shuttle is available to anyone, as long as they are within the zone. Two transfer stations within the zone are at Lexwood Drive and Tulagi Place. If riders are out of the zone and can get to those transfer stations, they can use the HEZ shuttle and the HEZ shuttle driver will honor STS passes or tickets.

Department of Aging & Human Services - Debbie Barker, Senior Information & Assistance Manager:

Senior Rides helps to fill transportation gaps within the county. The Senior Rides Program has been operating since 2007 with funding from the County Commissioners and the Maryland Transit Administration. Senior Rides tries to serve all county residents who cannot use ADA or public buses, as well as people who need to get out of the county. The program is operated by a core group of volunteer drivers and it is through their efforts that the program works so well. Eligibility criteria for the program are mandated. Riders must be 60 years of age or older, income is self-attesting, riders will need to operate independently, and the program is not equipped to provide transportation to people in wheelchairs. The turnaround time for requested rides is approximately one week. An application and waiver will need to be completed. The drivers are provided with mileage reimbursement, which is supported by riders' fees. If the ride is less than 15 miles there is a \$10.00 fee. All volunteers go through an MVA and background check. At the end of each trip, the rider and driver are required to complete a questionnaire. The Senior Rides Program provides personalized service to St. Mary's County residents. There are twenty four (24) volunteers currently on the roster. The program is serving 40-50 people.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion to approve the August 25, 2014 minutes was made by Mr. Murdock and seconded by Ms. Williams; the motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Outreach Committee - Ms. Bettie Broadhurst

Plans are developing for the Ridge area outreach event. Ms. Nether touched base with the St. Peter Claver Catholic Church contact and it was suggested to do it at the Global Village (Boys & Girls Club) - October 28th from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. The promotional flyer should include the exact name and address of the venue, using the flyer from the first outreach event as a template. The event should be advertised at other churches as well. Jennifer Stone, Community Programs & Outreach Manager with the Department of Aging & Human Services, can assist with the promotion.

- Legislative Committee - Mr. Gail Murdock

Commission on Aging members were encouraged to get the word out to vote. There will be at least a 33% turnover in the House and 28% turnover in the Senate.

DISCUSSION OF OLD BUSINESS:

- Update on Garvey replacement activities - Debrief of July 14, 2014 meeting
Ms. Forrest, a member of the “Grow Garvey Group”, indicated the petition now has 712 signatures and more signatures are coming. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done. By November 20th, the goal is to have 3,000 signatures. For the upcoming events, volunteers are still needed to tend to the tables. At the Health Fair, can someone from the Garvey Group ask Health Fair attendees to sign the petition? A new meeting date has not been set yet.
- Transportation - Ms. Williams inquired about using school buses during off hours. Ms. Williams spoke to Mary Ann Blankenship and Ms. Blankenship indicated insurance would be the problem. What Ms. Blankenship would like to see is one transportation company for the County. A community has to consolidate resources and she is seeing more and more piggybacking. Ms. Jennings-Harris stated the County used to have a mobility coordinator, who was in the position to try to coordinate as much as possible for transportation options in the county. The Health Department would provide transportation to people who have Medical Assistance and they can satisfy one segment of the population, STS has SSTAP and ADA, which will satisfy another segment. Even though it seems compartmentalized, we are getting to more people than we realize. The criteria to apply for funds are very specific.

DISCUSSION OF NEW BUSINESS:

- Ms. Pipkin read in the Enterprise that the County Commissioners were asking for input for State legislators to consider during the General Assembly. What legislation you would like the County Commissioners to put forth to the General Assembly. Are there any issues the Commission on Aging wants them to take to the General Assembly? Ms. Williams suggested more awareness of seniors. Senior numbers exceed the amount of children in school.
 1. More housing choices.
 2. Taxes are too high for seniors.
 3. Improve public transportation.
 4. Secondary health insurance options.
- Ms. Broadhurst mentioned she heard a sizeable complaint about an assisted living facility in Leonardtown. She was directed to speak to the Home & Community-Based Services Division Manager.
- Ms. Pipkin asked for meeting location suggestions for the remainder of 2014.
- The November COA meeting will be held on Monday, November 17th at the Garvey Senior Activity Center.
- On Tuesday, December 16th the Commission on Aging members will meet for lunch.
- The December Commission on Aging meeting will be canceled.
- Ms. Pipkin has indicated elections will occur in January and the Commission will need a nominating committee.
- In 2015, the Commission would like to visit additional sites and a few suggestions are Newtowne Village, St. Mary’s County Medical Adult Day Care (aka the Ripple Center), Cedar Lane, Victory Woods, Pegg Road Apartments, and St. Mary’s Nursing Care Center. Ms. Pipkin believes it is important to visit the Ripple Center and would like to see that location on the agenda.
- The Annual Report will be part of the November meeting discussion. Ms. Williams believes what the COA sees as important should be on the front page and what the Commission has accomplished should be at the end of the report.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- Prepared our Area Plan Update for FY2015. The Area Plan is our road map for FY2015. The next update of the plan will be for 4-5 years. We are continuing to ramp up Maryland Access Point (MAP). The Center for Independent Living co-locates with us one day per week and looking to possibly have another agency to co-locate with us.
- We have received word our state funded MAP application for FY15 has been approved by the Maryland Department of Aging.
- A Commissioners' public forum will be held on Tuesday, October 7th at 6:30 p.m. at the Bay District Fire Hall.
- The Department is planning a Homeless Resource Day on November 7th, Lexington Park United Methodist Church. We are not the lead agency, but we will have a table at the event.
- Citizens' Academy, which was developed by the County Administrator's Office, provides residents an opportunity to visit and learn about County Departments. It is a series of 7 weeks, incorporated into 3 hours for each session, and is limited to 24-25 citizens. Last Tuesday, our Department hosted the Citizens' Academy at the Northern Senior Activity Center. The outcome and feedback were positive.
- Staff changes - vacant position at the Northern Senior Activity Center was filled for the Office Specialist and there is a current vacancy for our AIM Database Specialist.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Regional COA Officers' Meeting Northern Senior Activity Center
Monday, October 20, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.
- Health Fair Friday, October 24, 2014

NEXT MEETING: Garvey Senior Activity Center, Leonardtown
October 27, 2014 - 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 p.m. and Ms. Johnstone seconded; the motion passed.

The purpose of the Commission on Aging is to provide the Board of County Commissioners of St. Mary's County with advice and assistance concerning the administration and financing of county programs designed for the elderly residents of St. Mary's, the operations and general performance of the St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services, the achievement of goals set for the elderly population and how best to work with the community in developing awareness and understanding of problems and concerns of the elderly population.