

**Minutes of the Commission On Aging Meeting
Garvey Center – Leonardtown, Maryland
Monday, April 25, 2005**

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, Ardith Young, Larry Younger, Daniel Hinz, Pat Myers, Kitty Turner, and Mary Ann Grusholt

Guests: Clare Whitbeck, Mark Husmann, Rose Husmann, Kathleen Fean and Eileen Hislop

Department of Aging Staff: Ted Grant, Alice Allen and Julie Van Orden.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda approved and accepted.

APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES

A motion was made by Kitty Turner to approve the minutes of 3.14.2005 with suggested changes, which was seconded by Daniel Hinz. Unanimously approved by COA members.

OLD BUSINESS

Department of Aging Meals Program Discussion

Mary Ruth Horton, Chairperson, asked the guests at the meeting to introduce themselves. She then requested an information overview of the Department of Aging meals program to the COA since there are concerns about the \$25,000 which was cut from the requested amount in the FY06 budget. Mr. Carter has expressed, via emails in answer to emails from Mary Ruth, that he feels the program will not be adversely affected by this budget request cut. COA members requested information regarding how the Department of Aging meals program works, how seniors qualify for it, how many are we currently serving, and amount required in budget to maintain current status. Since Gene Carter was not able to attend the meeting, the necessary financial information was not available. Gene asked Alice Allen and Julie Van Orden to come to the meeting to answer the questions about how the programs work but stated that they did not do the budget. Mary Ruth acknowledged that members realize there can be abuse in government programs and that a good system is necessary so that rules are adhered to and monitored on a regular basis. Mary Ruth shared the DoA latest meal report to the state, October – December 2004. There were 297 unduplicated elderly persons served 16,039 meals in the homebound program and 293 unduplicated eligible persons served 5,643 meals in the congregate meal program. There were 10 persons on the waiting list for home delivered meals. The average cost of a meal is \$4.00 each. Alice and Julie explained the congregate meals program included 10 – 15 clients at Cedar Lane (3 meals a day, 7 days a week) in addition to the senior center sites (1 meal per day/5 days a week). Julie said that the new Meals on Wheels Coordinator will be able to closely monitor these clients. Mary Ruth requested that a monthly report be made at each COA meeting giving the number of clients and meals served for the previous month as well as the current budget meal status so that a determination can be made if additional money from the County Commissioners to meet the current need is necessary.

Mary Ruth reported that, after heavy lobbying by volunteers and United Seniors of Maryland, the probability is that most of the earlier requested 12% budget cut has been restored by the legislators. Although this is not a guarantee nor is the amount known at this time, this should make additional funding available in the meal program and help reduce the impact that the \$25,000 local cut would have.

Pat Myers asked how the opening of the Northern Senior Center will alter the Meals on Wheels program. Alice Allen explained that the numbers in the congregate would increase, however the home delivered meal routes will more than likely just be reorganized and not a large increase will occur. Alice explained that no one over 60 is refused a meal and, due to the Older Americans Act, are only encouraged to donate to the meal cost.

Daniel Hinz asked for some explanation of the funds brought in through the March for Meals national campaign. Pat Myers suggested evaluating the amount of donations brought in during this campaign in order to perhaps increase efforts.

After reviewing known funding sources, Mary Ruth Horton asked if the COA should ask the Board of County Commissioners to restore some funds to the budget meal line item. Julie Van Orden stated that Gene Carter "seems to feel comfortable" with the Meals on Wheels budget since the initial cut was reinstated.

The consensus was to not request the \$25,000 cut be restored at this time due to expected additional state funds from the earlier 12% state cut and Gene's comments. The COA members will monitor the meal program monthly and make any recommendations to the County Commissioners if special funding is needed at a later date. It was agreed that Mary Ruth would represent the COA at the county budget hearing on Tuesday night, April 26, 2005 to thank them for all their past support and inform them about our meal monitoring plans.

Mary Ruth asked if there were ways in which the COA could help with the meals program, and Julie explained the great need for volunteer drivers. She said that often staff leaves their jobs during the day to fill in when needed to deliver the meals to senior's homes. Mary Ruth repeated her suggestion to contact the churches to see if they would take a route in their congregation area for a specific period of time as a way to get more volunteers. She asked if there were any other general questions about the meal program prior to moving on in the agenda.

Northern Senior Center Staffing and New Department of Aging Organizational Chart

Alice Allen has been hired as Manager, Senior Program Operations (newly created Step 10 position), Kristi Walton will be full-time as the Program Specialist, an Operations Manager and full-time Information & Assistance position have not yet been identified, and a new Operations Manager will also be hired for one of the other county senior centers. Pat Myers made the point that the greeters/receptionist position will be filled by volunteers.

Survey of Senior Service Priorities Update

Raymond Cooper was not available to make the report, so Mary Ruth attempted to explain the information. The responses to the Survey of Senior Service Priorities, to which almost 400 people responded, were as follows:

1. Property Tax Relief
2. Health Care Resources
3. Crime and Personal Safety
4. Assisted Living

Dr. Grant questioned the way the information was evaluated. Since Ray Cooper was not at the meeting to explain how he put the data together, it was decided to put this issue on next month's agenda and wait to release any information to the public.

Senior Property Tax Credit

Mary Ruth contacted the Department of Legislative Services who informed her that Governor Ehrlich will be signing House Bill 121 into law at the state house the next day. Pat, Mary Ann and Mary Ruth will be present for the signing. The next step is to work with the Board of County Commissioners as to how they will be implementing it. This credit pertains to taxes on the primary residence (live in it for 6 months or more per year) for 70 year olds and above.

NEW BUSINESS

DEPARTMENT OF AGING DIRECTOR REPORT

Gene Carter was not available to give a report.

Status of Area Plan

Julie Van Orden reported that the FY 05 Plan has been approved by Maryland Department of Aging; however no work has been done on the 06 budget yet.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

NSC: Pat Myers updated that the kitchen needed to be sanitized and the floors waxed. Furniture is scheduled to arrive, and the IT Department is currently installing computers and the center's phone system. The dedication ribbon-cutting ceremony will be June 7th at 11:00 a.m.

RSVP: Janis Jacobs has been hired as the new RSVP Director.

MADS: The location of the consolidation of the two Medical Adult Day centers has not yet been determined, due to a right of recovery issue on one of the current properties. Julie VanOrden reported there were positive participant numbers for the month of March, and it appears likely that April and May look encouraging as well, which can affect grant money. There are 61 enrolled and the average daily attendance this past month between the two centers was 44 participants.

UNITED SENIORS OF MARYLAND: USM members have been working hard to get the state cut budget funds reinstated.

SENIOR SUMMIT WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP: The COA will begin planning a workshop to take place in September in order to provide an environment where groups of seniors would be able to brainstorm solutions to major issues determined by the senior summit workshop and senior needs survey.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Caregivers Conference will be at Chancellor's Run Activity Center on Friday, April 29.

The COA will be monitoring the meal program to ask for additional funds if the need arises.

County Budget hearing is Tuesday, April 26 at Great Mills High School. Mary Ruth Horton will represent the COA to thank the Board of County Commissioners for all the support they have provided this year to the senior community of the county. She encourages other members to feel free to attend as well.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 23, 2005 at 1:30 p.m. at Garvey, Room 1.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Pat Myers to adjourn, which was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Prepared by:
Sherrie Wooldridge
Senior Administrative Coordinator, St. Mary's County Department of Aging