

**Minutes of the Commission On Aging Meeting
Garvey Center – Leonardtown, Maryland
Monday, May 23, 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, Larry Younger, Kitty Turner, Arlene Cooper, Ray Cooper and Mary Ann Grusholt

Guests: Clare Whitbeck and Mark Husmann

Department of Aging Staff: Ted Grant and Janis Jacobs

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mary Ruth Horton requested that an item be added to the agenda which would be the approval or disapproval by the COA of a letter presented by the Senior Coalition to be published in the newspaper. There were no objections to this request so the item was added under New Business. Agenda approved and accepted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mary Ruth read the corrected copy of the minutes from 4.25.05 aloud to members. A motion was made by Ray Cooper to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Larry Younger. Minutes were unanimously approved as read, subject to changes by members not present.

OLD BUSINESS

Senior Tax Credit Status: Bill passed and signed – Next steps

The Tax Credit Bill did pass! A photo of COA members with Governor Ehrlich as he signed the Bill was submitted as part of official minutes. The next step is to find out what the Board of County Commissioners need assistance with and what their schedule might be, so it was motioned by Kitty Turner for Mary Ruth to write the Commissioners an email and Larry Younger seconded. A thank-you letter appeared in the Enterprise newspaper recognizing the efforts to ensure the passage of the Bill. Mark Husmann asked about whether the Senior Coalition received any recognition for the Bill passage, and Mary Ruth explained that the credit really lies with NARFE and the COA and that it really was not a Senior Coalition project. A sunset clause of three years was put in it, which means that it will need to be presented again at the end of that time period.

Survey of Senior Service Priorities Update

Ray Cooper explained that the 18 areas of senior concerns had 4 choices each. He tabulated the columns according to number of responses, and then he ranked each answer and got an overall score.

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 Security
4. Identity Theft
5. Recreational Leisure Activities
6. Transportation
7. Independent and Assisted Living Housing

Mary Ruth thanked Ray for the long hours and hard work it took to compile all the information on his computer. A public "brainstorming" meeting will be planned to discuss in depth these concerns. Pat Myers, Ray Cooper, Mary Ruth and Larry Younger have agreed to help with the planning committee for this project which will more than likely occur in October, 2005. Thank you letters need to be sent to groups and offices that helped pass these out. Mark Husmann asked how many surveys were distributed in total, for which there is no method to know those numbers. Members are pleased with the number of surveys completed and returned. Mary Ruth said that an Enterprise reporter wanted to work with us to publicize the results. Mary Ann made a motion to work with a reporter from the Enterprise Newspaper on Senior Survey feature articles. Kitty Turner seconded the motion passed which passed unanimously.

DOA Budget Status

Meal Program Funding: Sources and Dollars -

DOA staff was unavailable for a report due to the opening of the Northern Senior Center.

Mary Ruth attended the public budget hearing and thanked the BOCC for all their support this past year. She mentioned that the COA will be monitoring the Meals program in the next few months to determine any future support that might be needed.

Mary Ruth recommended continuing to put this item on the agenda even though the budget will be completed prior to the next meeting date. Some of the original 12% should be reinstated from initial state cuts.

Closing of Oakley Center –

No DOA staff was available to report. Clare Whitbeck reported that Oakley will stay open with a \$60,000 annual budget, MOW program is fully funded and if a needy senior does not have a meal that is the grounds for emergency for making funding available.

Northern Senior Center staff positions –

All new positions have been filled. Kristi Walton is the Program Specialist, and someone has been hired in the new Senior I & A. Alice is acting as Operations Manager for Northern until someone is hired for that position.

Mark Husmann asked if newly hired Dept. of Aging staff could make a presentation to the COA with their vision for the future. Mary Ruth explained that this has not been done. Only special presentations on a requested topic are usually done. It would be up to Gene Carter, DoA Director, to make a request of the staff to do this. She said there is a fine line between becoming involved with day to day operations of the department and making requests about issues. Ray Cooper also added that after the Northern Senior Center is up and running, perhaps Gene Carter will present the goals and direction he intends to see happen.

Medical Adult Day Services Combination of Center –

No staff available to make a report. Clare Whitbeck spoke about the options she had heard about regarding this decision.

The absolute last day the County Commissioners can make decisions regarding budget is the end of May.

NEW BUSINESS

St. Mary's County COA Report for the Tri-county meeting

The format for this year's meeting is that each county is being asked to report on "What's New in Each County?"

Mary Ruth suggested several major topics unique to St. Mary's County that COA has been working on:

- Tax initiative completed in 2 years
- Senior Needs Survey and the workshop follow-up
- Reinstatement of the funds which were initially cut from the state budget
- Northern Senior Center

Mary Ruth asked if other members of the COA would be willing to speak at the Tri-County meeting about some of the above topics. It was recommended that Pat Myers speak on the Northern Senior Center.

Clare Whitbeck reported that the decision has been made by the Board of County Commissioners Oakley Center will remain open at this time with a \$60,000 budget. She reported that it was a very fruitful meeting. Mary Ruth explained that Clare was asked by the Senior Coalition to be the representative at this meeting; however the COA had not officially discussed this issue.

L.I.F.E. Program: Mark Husmann gave a presentation of the LIFE program.

Senior Coalition Letter – Approve or disapprove?

Mary Ruth read a letter aloud which the Senior Coalition wrote for the newspaper (Enterprise, St. Mary's Today, Washington Post Southern Maryland section, and the Baltimore Sun). A copy is attached to official minutes. Mary Ruth raised the question about the part that said if a senior calls one day they can receive a meal the next day. Janis Jacobs said that it is possible to receive a meal in one day. Mary Ruth asked for member reactions to the letter and asked if they support publishing in the newspaper. Kitty Turner moved to support it. Ray Cooper said perhaps there should be clarification about the possibility of being taken off the meal list if a person doesn't meet qualifications. Janis said that will be explained upon the initial phone call. Ray seconded the motion, and the motion to support the letter was approved unanimously.

DEPARTMENT OF AGING DIRECTOR REPORT

Gene Carter was unavailable for a report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

NSC: No report available, however Mary Ruth did say that the center is up and running for senior activities, and the official ribbon cutting will be June 7, 2005!

RSVP: Janis Jacobs reported that she learned a lot at a recent Ocean City RSVP conference. She is currently learning about all the programs in place. Mary Ruth said that the COA is available for support. Janis asked for suggestions to get the baby boomers more involved with volunteering and asked for ideas to accomplish this.

Medical Adult Day Services: No report available.

UNITED SENIORS OF MARYLAND: USM has been heavily working on legislation. Clare Whitbeck said that organizations should submit by email any legislative proposals they wish made.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grand Opening of the Northern Senior Center: June 7, 2005

Tri-County Advisory Council Annual Meeting: June 9, 2006

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 27, 2005 at 1:30 p.m. at Garvey, Rm. 1.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sherrie Wooldridge

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