

Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes: June 10, 2014

Jordan Conference Room, 11:00 am

Attendees: Chair Brett Seekins, Elizabeth Baillie, Patricia Bredenberg, William Marshall, Bruce Nelson, June O'Neill, Barbara Page

Visitors: Pastor Ruth Morrison, Nancy Miles

Staff: Matthew Sturgis

1. Chair Seekins called the meeting to order at 11:02 and introduced Paston Ruth Morrison of the Methodist Church and Nancy Miles from Judy's Pantry.
 - a. Chair Seekins introduced "The State of Senior Hunger in America 2012" , and its executive summary info on page 2 and additional data on page 7, which identified Maine's position in regard to the report. Chair Seekins also introduced "Genworth 2014 Cost of Care Survey" that summarizes the cost of care at home, facilities, etc. nationwide and also in Maine.
2. Chair Seekins introduced Pastor Ruth Morrison from the Methodist Church. Pastor Ruth described the congregation and the diversity of it. She mentioned that the group that has either moved on or passed away left a void, as they were strong volunteers who were greatly committed to the church. Pastor Ruth expressed that many who leave the community are leaving due to the high cost of living and taxes.

Pastor Ruth stated that the Methodist Church congregation is more at risk, as the congregation is not as affluent, with many poor or financially struggling families and individuals.

While the Church does not offer elderly specific programs, it does offer "community", as it is the first place people connect to the Town. Pastor Ruth also identified that there are many congregations at the church, the "bean supper crew", the "Sunday services crew", and the "Judy's Pantry crew".

Pastor Ruth senses that there is a strong community support of senior needs. One concept may be a senior day care, and there was a group looking to do this, however they have been unable to find a facility with easy access, and at this time it is not happening and the effort has seemed to be stalled. Chair Seekins detailed some of the level of employment, regulation, and cost of operating a senior day care. June O'Neill sought to qualify the issue by defining if what was needed was senior day care or a meeting / gathering place. The day care aspect has an entirely different level of regulation. The demand may be more for available gathering space (with programming / activities) as opposed to the level of service provided by a day care. One concept brought up by the group was possibly a "soup and seniors" program.

The Methodist Church has had some participation from older members of the community, with seniors coming to Vacation Bible School. Also, Village Crossings does take their people to church and picks them up again. However, transportation is an issue in getting seniors to church, and if a senior does not have a car they are stuck in place.

Chair Seekins inquired if there is any collaboration between churches?

Pastor Ruth stated that there are a couple of events, and some efforts out there, but there is nothing official as far as collaboration.

Pastor Ruth commented that there should be better use of the Spurwink Church, maybe as a community prayer service or a Thanksgiving service. It is an ideal location as it is non-denominational, great acoustics, and would be an ideal location for an afternoon program. She felt that she has run into some issues / resistance to planning an event there in the past.

Pastor Ruth also expressed the thought that any activities directed toward seniors should not have a cost, as that may be an insurmountable barrier.

Bill Marshall asked if the Church could sponsor a senior center program, as a day care may involve medicine management, which would not be possible, and without that component may be easy to do. Pastor Ruth stated that their insurance covers them for all activities at the church. Nancy Miles had an idea that each church of all denominations could sponsor a program. June O'Neill noted that on Peaks Island all the churches have programming that is independent of each other, not just for seniors, but the seniors are the greatest number of participants.

Bill Marshall noted the importance to primary care givers of seniors needing relief from having to provide constant care. Outside programming could provide that break.

3. Nancy Miles introduced the information on Judy's Pantry, the food pantry at the Methodist Church. She noted that this is the fifth summer of operation.

The pantry started with fresh produce and no distribution space, and 8 to 10 people who would partake. Now there are over 30 households consistently. The pantry is open to Cape Elizabeth residents, with the exception being for any special circumstances when allowing others from out of town to come.

June O'Neill asked on what is the make-up of the families. Mrs. Miles responded that there are as many as 41 families, and that today (June 10th) there were 25 to 30 families. The pantry is open twice a week in the summer (Tuesday and Thursday 3 to 5 pm), and twice a month in the winter (2nd and 4th Tuesdays 3 to 5 pm). The group is roughly comprised of 18 families over 60 years old, 10 of them may be over 70, and one is over 87 years, and there are 33 children.

Mrs. Miles explained that they receive financial support from the Lions Club and the Rotary, while the schools have provided canned food drives in support. Mrs. Miles also stated that at the schools they are also focusing on free and reduced lunch, with approximately 150 kids in that program. Hunger is an issue.

Additional support is provided by the IGA, which has loaned shopping carts and donated bags. The Lion's club provides assistance through their donation boxes and Rotary does a stuff the bus event.

Pastor Ruth noted the pantry is a happy and joyful community, with music playing cut flowers, and a genuinely positive experience.

The Pantry also provides SNAP training and instructs people on how to use the program if there is a need. The pantry also needs to spread the word on their existence and what they offer. The pantry finds they are reaching out to external programs like senior to senior, which has helped in matching supply with needs (i.e. snow shoveling).

Pastor Ruth stressed that inter-generational interaction is important, and seniors should not be isolated, include them. When planning events it is important to keep that in mind with community programming like Family Fun Day and the Strawberry Festival.

Chair Seekins and the Commission members thanked Pastor Ruth and Nancy Miles for attending and sharing their information.

4. Chair Seekins passed around a draft thank you note to be sent to speakers at the Commission's meetings. There was consensus by the Commission that that was a great idea.

Chair Seekins also stated that he has received correspondence from Leading Age, and they would like to speak with the group on national trends facing seniors.

He also briefly discussed that there are grant opportunities available for funding senior focused programming.

5. The Commission began discussions on planning for a public input session.

Bill Marshall stated that TRIAD will be having a speaker at their meeting on June 26th who will discuss contracts between adults and their parents regarding care, finances, and other heir issues.

June O'Neill stated that the session to be held by the Commission needs to have some food to attract people.

Barbara Page indicated that an interesting speaker is also needed.

The Commission discussed the general details of the meeting, with a desire to hold the meeting October 18, 2014 at the central fire station, have the meeting from 1 to 3 in the afternoon, serving cider and donuts.

Bruce Nelson stated that it is important to attract as many people as possible, we need to have a good understanding of senior issues and get ideas on how to help.

Bill Marshall stressed the importance of publicizing the event.

Chair Seekins stated that we need to publicize the event early and often, through the churches, website, CETV, The Courier, The Current, etc.

Bill Marshall stated the publicity needs to be visible, buy an ad, put poster up at CVS, IGA, Thomas Memorial Library.

6. Next meeting and other upcoming issues.

Elizabeth Baillie stated that Paula Banks will be coming to speak at the next meeting on June 24th. Paula works for Living Innovations, which is a private pay home health and geriatric care management provider.

Elizabeth Baillie also mentioned she recently attended a seminar by Legal Services for the Elderly that was a tremendous resource of information.

Chair Seekins will speak with St. Albans about coming to speak.

Elizabeth Baillie will speak with the Rotary about coming to speak.

Barbara Page will speak with the Lion's club about coming to speak.

Chairman Seekins thanked all for coming and for all of their work for the Commission. The next meeting will be June 24th, 11 am.

6. The meeting adjourned at 1:05pm.