

Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes: July 22, 2014

Town Council Chambers, 11:00 am

Attendees: Chair Brett Seekins, William Marshall, Bruce Nelson, June O'Neill, Barbara Page, Pat Bredenberg, Elizabeth Baillie, Council Liaison James Walsh

Visitor: Representative Kim Monaghan-Derrig

Staff: Matthew Sturgis

1. Chair Seekins called the meeting to order at 11:05 am.
2. The minutes of the prior meeting were reviewed; motion to accept the minutes made by Barbara Page, seconded by Elizabeth Baillie, unanimous approval.
3. Chair Seekins welcomed Representative Monaghan-Derrig and Councilor Jim Walsh, and thanked them for attending.
4. Representative Monaghan-Derrig greeted the Commission, thanking them for the invitation, and then introduced her talking points.
  - a. Three bills were passed in the most recent legislative session that was senior focused.
  - b. The first bill was LD 1691, which was focused on predatory lending practices. Elders were considered to be primary focus of abuses of this nature, and low reporters of the crimes. Many of the predatory lenders were not located in Maine, or in the USA, and now this practice is illegal.
  - c. The second bill was LD 527, an act to protect elders from exploitation. This bill strengthens the laws to prosecute people who obtain consent from elders who are demented, impaired, or unable to comprehend. This is where the senior signs a paper authorizing a further act due to their improper influence, benefiting another from their confusion.
  - d. The third bill was LD 1751, which provides property tax relief to Maine Residents. It increased the Property Tax Fairness Credit to \$300, and up to \$400 for those over 70 years of age. This benefit is based on income and requested for by filing income tax forms. This benefit begins on January 1, 2015.
  - e. Representative Monaghan-Derrig stated that she is always happy to receive question, and people can email her any time.
  - f. Rep. Monaghan-Derrig spoke of a very successful elderly issues tour that was held this year. The legislature is looking for help on how to improve conditions for seniors. This tour resulted in some recommendations for the

Maine Council on Aging. Much of the focus is on finding community based solutions; improved living arrangements, health care, transportation, housing, safe streets, and livable communities were the focus. Their discussions were very much in line with what is being discussed by the Cape Seniors.

Chairman Seekins pointed out that John Hennessy from AARP spoke of similar issues when he came to present.

Rep. Mongahan-Derrig stated that we need to take the steps necessary to make our towns livable. What the State needs is an aging friendly model. Many towns are busy at trying to make it better.

There was a discussion that followed focusing on probate and trust law, the costs of differing documentations, and the function of the power of attorney.

- g. There next discussion point focused on the difficulty for seniors in meeting the financial burdens of aging. Bruce Nelson pointed out that Cape Elizabeth is wealthy residentially, but not commercially. Based on the strong value of the community the Town receives little financial assistance on education or other revenue streams from the State. Rep. Monaghan-Derrig agreed that this is a difficult point, as the lack of real estate diversity is tough to reconcile. The State needs to look at other sources of revenue generation, and property tax seems to provide for greater shares of the tax stream. The State needs to look at meals and lodging taxes better, and the Taxation Committee needs to look on diversifying revenues.

Councilor Walsh pointed out the Town is preparing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) documents for the fall, with the funds earmarked in the TIF for infrastructure expenditures in the Town center. The Town has taken steps to creatively meet its spending needs and take the burden off from property taxes, with an example being the charging of fees at Fort Williams for tour busses and vendors.

Councilor Walsh also explained that the Town and Schools are doing a five year forecast for spending. People are interested in seeing where their tax dollars are going

- h. June O'Neill stated that there is a growing population of people who need assisted living. How will we begin dealing with Maine Care needs, this will be a serious issue quickly. Rep. Monaghan-Derrig agreed that is getting worse and bigger, it is an issue that should be front and center for the next Governor. Chair Seekins pointed out that there is a study being performed by DHHS and Director Mary Mayhew that explores what we

have vs. the current need. This was followed by a discussion regarding the conversion of obsolete buildings into senior housing, eligibility for Maine Care, and the limitations Maine Care places on people and facilities, and finally the push for families to provide the care in home.

- i. Chair Seekins thanked Rep. Monaghan-Derrig for coming and all of her efforts. Councilor Walsh thanked her as well, and then asked her to also look for a solution to the Maine State Retirement and Social Security issue, where Maine is one of 15 states that are pursuing inequitable policy.
5. Chair Seekins thanked Councilor Walsh for coming and indicated there were some questions regarding the senior discount at Community Services, the Senior Expo, and the senior forum that the Commission would like his input on.
- a. Councilor Walsh expressed his and the Council's gratitude for the Commission's hard work. He has read all of the minutes and has noticed the great discussions and issue identification by the Commission. He explained that he looked at the school and community services budgets line by line to understand them as well as the Town's budget. He noted the Community Services budget did not have any senior discount accounted for in their budget, while the Council had received roughly 50 to 60 letters lamenting its demise. To help this specific issue the Council placed \$10,000 in the budget to cure this issue. He reported that as a result of last week's discussion and some additional out of meeting clarifications, the senior discount is back in place.

Councilor Walsh stated that many of the additional issues brought forward regarding senior programming at the previous meeting are really for future discussions, and should be considered separately.

- b. Barbara Page pointed out that some of the discussion was focused on improving the quality of programs, but she is concerned that even if a scholarship was awarded it may still not be affordable.

Councilor Walsh responded that the goal is to keep people healthy and active and that Community Services should come back to visit the Commission and talk about programming and services.

Bill Marshall stated that he has served on and even chaired the Community Services Advisory Commission, and found the discussion last week as difficult to comprehend.

Councilor Walsh stated that the cost of programs and the ability to provide them is an issue. Community Services is one of the reasons why people move here and stay here. The discussion last week was simply in error.

Councilor Walsh then went on to address the other questions. He pointed out that the election in November could be a good opportunity to measure what people's sentiments are regarding senior issues. Ted Jordan's class at the High School could be a helpful resource as a solution to surveying the voters.

The public forum is a good idea if that helps the Commission get the information they desire. He would encourage getting all opinions, not just seniors. Councilor Walsh said he would be happy to help in facilitating any meeting. He also recommended that the format employed with the library forum and some of the school forums may be useful in modeling.

Elizabeth Baillie commented that there appears to be a strong divide between the under 60 demographic and the over 60 demographic, with the senior issues not seeming to be important to one, while it is very important to the other. Her question was if Councilor Walsh had any recommendations on how to get both sets engaged.

Councilor Walsh recommended reaching out to the school parent associations and have them provide input, and other community organizations. He advised to take care in not polarizing the issue, and keeping the focus away from the allocation of funding based on population distribution, but more on what are the needs and the best ways to address those needs. He also thought sending a group from the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission out to these associations to solicit input.

Councilor Walsh also pointed out that many people are dealing with aging, either directly by having elder family members living with them, or they are looking for support services for their loved ones.

Elizabeth Baillie agreed that staying away from the discussion of allocation of funds based on population is a great point, as the issues we are facing go beyond that and it is much more complex.

6. Senior Expo. There was some general discussion as to if the Commission still wanted to be involved in the expo. There was consensus that the issue will be discussed at the August 5, 2014 meeting.
7. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be August 5, 2014, 11 am, in the Jordan Conference Room.
8. The meeting adjourned at 1:10 pm.