

Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes: December 2, 2014

Jordan Conference Room, 11:00 am

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

Visitor: Larry Gross, Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging

Staff: Matthew Sturgis

1. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 am.
2. The minutes of the 10/28/14 meeting were reviewed, and no changes were made.
Motion to accept minutes by June O'Neill, Second by Bruce Nelson, motion approved 5-0.
3. Chair Seekins welcomed Mr. Gross to the meeting. He gave a synopsis of the work performed thus far by the Commission. Mr. Gross was aware of the Commission's work. Chair Seekins identified some of the key issues discussed by the group (transport, housing, taxation, etc.)
 - a. Mr. Gross provided a presentation entitled "Aging is our Future". Maine is in a position that this (senior issues) has critical importance.
 - b. Mr. Gross has been with SMAAA for over 30 years. Agency has been here since 1972. SMAAA services older adults and those with disabilities. Volunteers help out, benefits and resources are available through them. They help 20,000 people, ranging from Kittery to Bridgton, east and west.
 - c. Also working with Medicare patients to try and help them in not needing multiple admissions to the hospital by intervention programs. This can help folks get the proper education, follow up. Hoping to help patients act as their own advocates. This has helped reduce readmissions by 38%. Partnering with SMMC, ME Med, and Pen Bay Med. Ctr.
 - d. SMAAA is a social service organization, also helping now on the health service side.
 - e. Helping adults from "Hail to Frail" from signing up for Medicare to helping active older adults in finding volunteer opportunities that are productive.
 - f. Last year the total saved by helping people know their options, and last year by consulting on medication they helped save over \$500,000.
 - g. Adult day care programs can provide programming the client finds enjoyable, also allows the care giver to have some freedom.
 - h. Maine has the oldest housing, oldest home owners, highest percentage of ownership. Maintenance is a long term concern.
 - i. Cape Elizabeth has a positive approach regarding accessory dwelling units.

- j. Towns are changing their zoning to meet the needs of a changing society. In Biddeford the zoning was changed to allow adjust day care in the same zone as where child day cares are allowed.
 - k. Transportation is also an issue. How can we make towns more pedestrian safe? Make signs bigger so people can read them, left turn lanes and arrows for safety.
 - l. Funding for SMAAA is considered discretionary and is subject to legislative politics.
 - m. Can we find ways to engage older adults with education? We need to find opportunities for them to resist age and skill stereotypes.
 - n. Mr. Gross spoke of some local senior centers. Mr. Marshall asked of the funding supporting the Falmouth center.
 - o. Mr. Gross responded that Falmouth was paid for by a capital campaign. The facility was built out at \$6 million. The programming however is private pay. Some of the centers even provide transport. Saco / Biddeford has transport available if within 15 minutes, while Falmouth patrons get there on their own means. Programming is estimated to cost approximately \$18 per hour.
 - p. Mr. Marshall stated at \$18 per hour a participant is looking at \$72 for a four hour block.
 - q. Mr. Gross responded that yes that is true, but it is approximately a 1/3 the cost of a day center. Also include a meal, a snack, help.
 - r. Barbara Page asked of how a person can do a benefit check?
 - s. Mr. Gross said it is easy. Just call SMAAA and make an appointment. They also work with the National Council on Aging.
 - t. Ms. Page asked if they are a national organization?
 - u. Mr. Gross responded yes, and there are roughly 600 across the country, and they operate in different forms.
 - v. June O'Neill asked what do they find as the best way for communicating with the senior age group?
 - w. Mr. Gross says the internet is a good option, but paper is the most successful.
 - x. Bruce Nelson asked if towns with senior centers have less problems.
 - y. Mr. Gross responded that they are rare in Maine, but those that exist seem to do well. They become proprietary. Scarborough has tried to create one twice, but has failed to pass. As an option they did a space use analysis and found that their was school space available. The recreation department was their best partner. Scarborough also has an elder services coordinator.
 - z. Barbara Page asked if SMAAA has resources that would help.
 - aa. Mr. Gross said yes, but they are limited.
 - bb. Chair Seekins and the Commission thanked Mr. Gross for visiting and sharing his information.
4. Mr. Marshall asked if there was some way to dedicate a staff person for senior programming / services?

- a. Chair Seekins said the Town Council is looking at ways to provide this service and potentially use of Spurwink School as a senior center, according to Councilman Walsh.
 - b. Mr. Marshall stated that may not be available until 2016 due to the Library construction. Are these ideas goals? Seniors may need something more immediate. A dedicated senior programmer would be a strong development.
 - c. There was a general discussion of the lack of senior specific programming, as is has been morphed into “adult programming”.
 - d. Barbara Page recommends that the Courier interview Mr. Gross, and the Town Council also could benefit from getting a presentation from SMAAA.
 - e. Chair Seekins stated he would speak with Wendy Keeler about getting another article in the Courier.
5. Elizabeth Baillie provided an overview of the services provided by Living Innovations, and their services are well utilized in Cape Elizabeth.
- a. Chair Seekins stated they could partner up / contract out for senior citizens as an option.
 - b. Elizabeth Baillie stated that they would need to qualify what services people will need. The #1 need people raise the most is transportation and #2 is post hospital care / assistance.
 - c. June O’Neill stated that she still believes that there is a need for a senior center.
 - d. Bruce Nelson is concerned about the politics of recommending a dedicated senior programmer and the possible tax implications.
 - e. Chair Seekins stated that the Commission’s recommendations are apolitical. If the need exists, it is a pure recommendation.
 - f. Elizabeth Baillie agreed, the recommendations are fact based, the method of paying for the recommendations is a separate question.
 - g. Bruce Nelson stated that one recommendation to make is a review of trash handling options. Specific challenges exist for older residents and handling refuse. The possibility for curbside pick up should be explored.

6. The meeting adjourned at 1 pm.