

R.I. Governor's Advisory Commission on Aging
Minutes of the Monthly Meeting February 17, 2016
Pasteur Building 57, Pastore Complex, Cranston RI

Present were: Karen Enright, Sue Robbio, Jennifer Barros, Barry Zeltzer, Bill Flynn, Joan Crawley, Dr. Brian Ott, Esther Price, Kyle Macdonald, Herb Weiss, Meghan Connelly (DEA staff). Excused: Nicholas Oliver, Karen McCahey, Susan Adler. Guests: Rachel Filinson, Maureen Maignet

Introduction of New Member: Herb Weiss, the City of Pawtucket's Director of Economic and Cultural Affairs, and a columnist on senior issues, introduced himself. All Commission members introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: On a motion by Crawley, seconded by Barros, **the Minutes of the January 20, 2016 Meeting were APPROVED as presented.**

Director's Report: Meghan Connelly presented Director Fogarty's report on the following items:

- *Governor's Budget Highlights: Increased funding* is included in 3 areas:
 - a) \$600,000 in additional funding for seniors, primarily for through senior centers whose grants were cut in 2006. \$50-\$75,000 of the total will be available to cities and towns' senior programs that weren't funded in 2006. For currently-funded programs, funds will be allocated to programs in proportion to their existing grants.
 - b) Funding to be passed through to home and community-based services providers to provide 7% salary increases to direct care workers.
 - c) Eligibility for services under the waiver program from 200% to 250% of F.P.L.

Funding reductions are made in two areas: a) Funding for the Alliance for Better Long-Term Care (ABLTC's) ombudsman services is reduced from \$198,000 to \$145,000; and b) Funding for the Volunteer Guardianship Program for nursing home residents is eliminated.

Several members expressed concern about the funding reductions. Weiss pointed out that the ABLTC provided valuable information and referral services for seniors and their caregivers seeking residential or community long-term care. Flynn said he had heard from health care providers that the Volunteer Guardianship Program was very important for nursing home residents without any family support. Crawley agreed that the Volunteer Guardianship Program was very valuable.

A motion by Flynn, seconded by Crawley, **to express deep concern to the Governor about the elimination of the Volunteer Guardianship Program and cuts to the Alliance for Better Long-Term Care, was APPROVED unanimously.**

Report on “Aging in Community” Efforts: Maureen Maigret and Professor Rachel Filinson reported on the ongoing work of the Aging in Place Subcommittee of Long-Term Care Coordinating Council during the past year. Led by Maureen, this group of volunteers from local government, providers, advocates and academics has worked to identify the components of an RI Strategic Plan for Aging in Community. This plan will be submitted to the General Assembly and Governor as mandated by a law enacted in 2014.

In 2016 this effort is being connected with a new project funded by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation, “Building an Age-Friendly Rhode Island,” through a one-year research grant to the RI College Foundation. She distributed a handout with details. The ultimate goal of this combined effort is an implementation phase supported by a broad-based “Aging in Community Coalition.” In a related effort, Professor Filinson noted that RIC was hosting an April 13 conference on “building ‘age-friendly’ and ‘dementia-friendly’ communities” that referenced the World Health Organization’s 8 Domains of Age-friendly communities.

Following questions and discussion, Maigret invited the Governor’s Advisory Commission to become a member of this Coalition. **A motion by Weiss, seconded by Barros, to have the Governor’s Advisory Commission become a partner was TABLED on a motion by Crawley, seconded by Ott, on a vote of 6 for, 2 against, one abstaining.**

Report by Subcommittee on Isolated Seniors: Flynn said there were, in effect, two charges to the Subcommittee. The first was to investigate the question of why there was no report-back senior from DEA’s Protective Services to programs reporting situations of possible senior self-neglect or abuse. His preliminary research into state law indicated that while such reports were not public records, under certain conditions DEA could report back to the referring agency or individual the results of an investigation. He noted, however, that had not discussed his finding with DEA staff and so his report was incomplete.

The second, more expansive charge to the Subcommittee, was to examine service or regulatory gaps among state services and programs for assisting seniors living alone with possible competency or safety issues. Ott and Seltzer reported back on their research into this topic was still work in progress. After discussion, there was consensus that the Subcommittee should seek guidance from DEA about the parameters of its research and also discuss whether DEA could devote any staff resources to assist.

Letter of Concern to the Governor: Returning to discussion of this topic, a motion by Weiss, seconded by Ott, that any correspondence to the DEA Director and copied to the Governor should also be sent, along with a copy of the minutes, to the appropriate Governor’s Chief of Staff, was APPROVED unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Minutes by: Bill Flynn