



COMMISSION ON AGING

COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING

Minutes

October 23, 2017

PRESIDING: Sharonlee Vogel, Chair

Members Attending

Jennifer Asher
Reg Avery
Angie Boyter
Pete Brunner
Susan Hailman
Jan Horan
Bob McLaughlin
Andrew Monjan
Eletta Morse
Michael Willis

Excused

Barbara Catlin
Deborah Fleischmann
Sue Song

Absent

Julia Mattis

Office on Aging and Independence

Terri Hansen

Department of Community Resources and Services

Jackie Scott

Guests

Wynne Hayes, Department of Technology and Communication Services
Tom Yeats, Department of Technology and Communication Services

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Approve Agenda

Reg Avery motioned to approve the agenda and Bob McLaughlin seconded the motion. Motion was approved.
All in favor. Agenda accepted.

Approve Minutes

Michael Willis motioned to approve the minutes, and Reg Avery seconded the motion. Motion was approved.
All in favor. Minutes accepted.

The meeting began with the introduction of our guests, Wynne Hayes, Director, Department of Technology and Communication Services (DTCS) and Tom Yeats, Deputy Director, DTCS.

Conversation with the Department of Technology and Communication Services

The Commission began the conversation with DTCS by focusing on the county website. DTCS identified that it is their goal to make the website easier to navigate and multiplatform or mobile friendly. Tabs like “how do I” and trending search data are intended to boost ease of use for the customer.

The Commission shared general concerns about the County’s website before moving into specific examples. Generally, the Commission felt the site required too much previous knowledge to navigate successfully. Users frequently reported issues with needing to know too much jargon to find what they were looking for or felt they needed to understand too much of county government structure in order to find results. Commissioners reported that use of the search bar was often frustrating and that their searches were often abandoned as they resorted to making phone calls. Angie Boyter recounted a recent issue she encountered while searching for how to report a sign code violation. While her search resulted in 33 hits, only one was actually relevant, but even that didn’t take her directly to what she needed, she still had to navigate through the “I want to” page. Overall it was felt that the website catered to the structure of the county and was not intuitive enough for most consumers to be successful.

The Commission also shared frustration about the need for multiple accounts across the County’s platform. The Commission questioned if it was truly necessary to have citizens sign up for multiple accounts when it was the same information was included in each account. Additionally, Angie shared an account where she was prompted to create an account, and was then approved, but was unable to sign in to the account as the website reported there was no account with her email address. Several Commissioners shared frustration over the need for separate accounts to register for Recreation and Parks programs or Office on Aging and Independence activities. These accounts require a staff member to approve them before registration can be completed and during the lag time, classes fill.

Concerns were also shared over the lack of links and information sharing. The Commission felt that the average consumer would appreciate links to sites like the Howard County Library, Howard County Public School System, and the County Court System, even though Howard County Government doesn’t maintain those sites. Also shared were concerns about lack of links to independent county sites like the Clean Water Howard site. While this site is a legacy site, should that really be the case or should it be incorporated into the County’s website? This can cause a great deal of confusion for consumers.

The Commission also shared suggestions for improving the end user experience. Simplification was a theme to the suggestions. For example, would it be possible to create one central log-in and choose from a menu which departments you’d like to access? The COA also suggested having periodic reviews of content, as sometimes incorrect information is present. Jennifer Asher shared an error that was found following the revision of the Senior Tax Credit; while the form was updated with new guidelines, the FAQs found on the same page were not. Pete Brunner shared his frustration about finding new guidelines for the Aging in Place Tax Credit on the website. The County issued a press release which included a link to the Department of Finance’s page, yet the information was not changed on this page until the legislation was approved, causing confusion and the appearance of incorrect information being presented to the public.

The discussion concluding with suggestions on what types of advances in technology would be the most utilized by the group. Several members reported they didn’t find social media sharing very useful as often the post isn’t relevant to them at the time and is hard to go back and find if the information becomes relevant. Overall the majority of the Commission reported that YouTube videos would be better received than webinars, but would prefer more interactive opportunities via services like Skype or FaceTime to just watching a YouTube video.

Committee Reports

Nominating Committee

Reg Avery reported that the nominating would be nominating Jennifer Asher as Vice Chair. Jennifer accepted the nomination. Reg motioned that Jennifer become Vice Chair. Andrew Monjan seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

50+EXPO

Andrew Monjan shared that the Commission's booth at the 50+ EXPO was a success. As in previous years, the chief concerns of participants were aging in place and property taxes. This year, the Commission was successful in having more in-depth conversations with those that came to the booth. Many people were interested in the property tax handouts. Six people who visited the booth were eligible for the aging in place tax credit; five had already received the credit and one was in the process of applying. Next year, Jennifer Asher will be taking over the 50+ EXPO Committee.

Howard County Police Department

No report.

Caregiving

No report.

Budget

Pete Brunner shared that he felt the Legislative Breakfast was excellent and that the reception of the tax credit info was good.

Health and Wellness

The Committee is meeting this week.

Aging in the Community

Eletta Morse reported that housing is still an area for concern and that it's difficult to find adequate assisted living beds in the County.

Chair's Report

Sharonlee motioned that the remaining COA pens be donated to the Loan Closet. Pete seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Sharonlee reminded committee chairs that they are welcome to have members from outside the Commission on the committees.

Sharonlee suggested the Commission hold a retreat on January 29, 2018 at the Gateway building in lieu of the regular monthly meeting. All Commissioners present were in favor of the retreat. Sharonlee suggested everyone begin thinking of topics to include on the agenda.

Office on Aging Report

Terri Hansen shared that the Department was screening applicants for the Office on Aging Administrator position.

Terri also reported that the 50+ EXPO was a success. As always, the Capitol Steps were well received, as were the variety of seminar offerings.

New Business

None.

Senior Issues Heard (Sharing from Commissioners)

Reg Avery reminded everyone that even seniors need to be prepared to evacuate and to include pets in their emergency plans. After a natural disaster, it may not be possible for responders to get to you for days.

Bob McLaughlin shared that he would be attending the upcoming meeting of the Transit and Pedestrian Advisory Group. This is the first meeting and represents an opportunity to help steer changes in transit from the inside.

Jennifer Asher reported that she felt both the Legislative Breakfast and the 50+ EXPO were successful. While she was manning the COA booth she was visited by a number of consumers who were very excited about the tax credit information.

Pete Brunner shared that he wasn't sure people at the 50+EXPO were getting the most out of the virtual dementia tours. People he spoke with seemed to have mixed reactions and treated the tour like an amusement park attraction.

Angie Boyter let the Commission know she had now been in her home for 50 years! She also shared that she received a copy of the Howard County General Plan which was not printed in a senior friendly way; text size is much too small and the green print doesn't contrast enough with the page.

Susan Hailman shared an experience with the Community Care Team (CCT) from the hospital. A member of the Village invited village representatives to sit in on the first meeting with the CCT. The village member cancelled the second meeting and was rehospitalized. Susan reminded everyone how important having an advocate is.

Michael Willis shared that his workplace is undergoing training from CMS on creating a more patient centered care space. Michael also had the opportunity to attend the Taste of Senior Living and reported it to be a great event.

Adjournment

Reg Avery motioned to adjourn. Michael Willis seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.

Recording Secretary: Jennie Rittenhouse

Next Meeting: November 27 23, 2017, Ellicott City 50+ Center, 7pm