

AGE-FRIENDLY SOCIAL PARTICIPATION WORKGROUP MINUTES



Date: 03/23/2020
Time: 3:00 PM
Facilitator: Terri Hansen

In Attendance

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| Barbara Scher | Malarie Burgess |
| Mary McGraw | Andrew Monjan |
| Dave Conway | Ann Benjamin |
| Seema Aqarwal-Harding | Peter Brunner |
| Bruce Fulton | Pat Sasse |
| Ruth Coleman | Colleen Konstanzer |
| Jeannie DeCray | Manuel Evangelist |
| Jim Sanders | |

Minutes Approved

First: Peter Brunner
Second: Mary McGraw

With the following corrections:

- The first bullet point under discussions where it says Howard County Board should read Howard County Public School System.
- Add Pat Sasse should be added to the attendee list.
- Seema Harding sent in edits to the minutes and was also left off the attendee list. Her other major comment that in the section where the discussions were held Adal talked about low economic needs group. There was a bullet that said ethnic groups can be socially isolated as well, especially with language, so she added “and cultural barriers” plus another bullet which was “low economic needs group can also have limited social participation.” There was also a reminder that the Age-Friendly initiative will benefit entire county people of all ages, and all backgrounds. Under engagement what kind of things bring community together there was only one bullet which was food from different cultures, and Seema added activities of mutual interest which was also highlighted.
- Pat Sasse added that Seema Harding edited the google doc we have in the folder which we established and that is where the edits are. Sent Terri Hansen the link. So, if you look at the link you will be able to see her edits.

Announcements:

- Andy spent 25 years at NIA monitoring a program that look at stress on the aging brain and served on the Commission on Aging for a number of years.
- David Conway has been very interested in activities with Seniors for some time, very involved with the walking aspect of getting people together. He felt Social Participation is something that involves people getting together and doing things together was the primary reason. He serves on the executive council for AARP representing Howard County and retired after 40 years in the surgical device sales arena. Wellbeing has always been an interest to me, especially as it relates to fitness, exercise, and activities. Since retiring I have found myself more involved in these things.
- Malarie Burgess, the exercise specialist with the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence, picked this group since she oversees a lot of program offerings that encourage social participation and she hopes to grow those offerings at this level.
- Barbara Scher is the 50+ Center Division Manager with the Office on Aging and Independence.

Old Business:

- Terri Hansen: part of what we will discuss today is how move our work forward given the COVID-19 pandemic. The draft report for the survey is done and she needs to review it before sending out to all workgroups – by mid-week at the latest. It is a substantial report with good information that will help workgroups develop recommendations that will eventually be turned into action plans for the County over the next 3 to 5 years. Any questions about the survey? The second thing the planner is working on is a report of prior reports, which pulls together all those reports from the last several years. These reports are relevant to the Age-Friendly plan as well; workgroup members will receive a report which details findings from each of those reports and recommendations. The report, combined with the most recent survey, will provide information about what our community has been telling us about the assets and needs of the community and what gaps remain. What do we want to address in the action plan? Can previous recommendations that did not get started or were not completed be reexamined with the Age-Friendly lens? Expect to get that report of all that information by the week of April 13. Because of COVID-19 our listening sessions and focus groups are postponed at this time; there is no definitive date as to when we can reschedule them. Any questions, comments, or concerns that anyone has on those three items?
- Terri Hansen was asked if the reports will be distributed in an electronic format and whether there will be assignments related to how we should review these materials to discuss later.
- Terri: Pete said there may be specific things that individuals and groups will be tasked with related to their domain, but there will also be overarching directions that everyone will work under. If the co-chairs or members at large have suggestions how they would like to see that presented, she is open to ideas.
- Ann Benjamin: some organizations are beginning to look at online focus groups; there is research that they can be effective. Is that a possibility as we move forward to bring in community input?
- Terri: we have not explored that, but we can look at that possibility. There may be some advantages to that if it helps us to move forward. The disadvantage is that it may exclude people who do not have access to the internet. We need to explore that.
- Terri: has everyone reviewed the minutes; are there any corrections or revisions?
- The meeting was turned over to Bruce and Pat to discuss rules of engagement.

New Business:

- Pat: hopes the group had a chance to look at the rules of engagement; they are standard, common sense rules. If you have any additions or concerns, let us know what those are now to make it easier for us to operate together online. Did everyone have a chance to look at what she and Bruce came up with after looking at different websites? There are a lot of different approaches to this topic; we need to come up with one that makes sense and that we can focus on to narrow things down. They looked at websites that talked about:
 - Isolation in young children
 - Isolation in teens
 - Various kinds of groups
 - What do we want to do?
 - What do we want to focus on?
 - What works for this project that we are assigned to do?

Has anyone given it some thought? Anybody do any research?

- Seema Harding: isolation has become even more pertinent right now because of the isolation we have been forced into. As to how it affects people, there is evidence that when people interact with others, it does not always have to be face to face. Staying socially connected in some way has benefits and highlighting that for our audience would be a great motivator for everyone to participate.
- Pat asked Seema to clarify.
- Seema suggested a couple of things:
 - Reach out to people 50+
 - Improve our messaging about participation and the benefits from social interaction.
- Ann: some of the research that was sent to us, including the PowerPoint presentation on intergenerational volunteers, supports the point that was just made. One of her strong interest areas comes out of a research finding which is:
 - “Opportunities and services in Howard County tend to focus on the senior adult 70/75+ with little to no emphasis on younger older adults age 50/55+.

As we start talking about breaking up the subtopic areas, she would choose to work on that. Also because of her background in family literacy and adult literacy. That particular age group is what we are missing to make our work distinctive from what has been done in Howard County in the past.

- Pat: if we focus on 50+ do we end at a certain age?
- Ann’s point is that we need to make sure we address the needs of that particular group. We should make the 50 to 55 group a particular designation in our action plan.
- Seema: it would have to be a deliberate effort, otherwise it is easy to forget; it will fall through the cracks and result in a continued focus on older, older adults.
- Andrew Monjan thinks it is a good idea to expand into the younger adult group. In aging, we always stratified that there are age groups that have different needs and different biology as far as the system goes; we should consider doing something online.
- Colleen agrees with extension to the 50+ group, and believes that is a big gap right now. The group can transition to the older age group and continue to connect socially.
- Mary: is it more like the 60 to 70 age group - since people now work longer, working can be a big isolator.
- Pat: Mary, are you saying not to start at 50 but to include?
- Mary: since people in their 50’s are still working and have family they may be tied up.

- Ann Benjamin retired from the U.S. Department of Education at age 49, then went on to a second career at John Hopkins and worked there until she was 59. She thinks if we lose that 50 to 55 group, we are losing those who are beginning to segue into the later stages. There are things that happen at 50 that are important for us to capture.
- Seema Harding: the amounts of time people have are important; the younger older adult, the 50 to 55-year-old, is looking for things to do and that does not necessarily exclude them from participating in programs. Include all relevant age groups, 50 to 55 as well as 60+. It is not a huge group. When you say elders it means different things – those 50 to 55 are different than 60 to 75, but they all require different ways to adapt and participate.
- Andrew: from his experience (being retired for more than 10 years now) there was no lack of social infrastructure when he was working. When you are working a third of your day is spent outside the home. After he retired, he realized there were other things to do in Howard County that interested him.
- Pat Sasse: thinks Andy made an important point – at that age people should start thinking about retirement and maybe that is our reason to include them. By letting them know we are including them, they can see what else there is. Should we pursue this?
- Peter Brunner likes what he is hearing and offered a suggestion. County Executive Calvin Ball has a bulletin that comes out on a regular basis – maybe we could put together a resource guide to address the immediate situation and get that out to a broad audience.
 - a) Useful service to the community
 - b) Alerting people what an Age-Friendly community can look like and do.
- Mary: over time, our generation's concept of being old has changed. People in past generations were not as active in the community, as working as much as we are now at higher ages. The idea of being old has really shifted. Anybody else see that? She thinks we need to define what old is.
- Andy: NRA director Williamson did not allow us to use the words old or elderly. His point was that using the terms old and elderly denote an endpoint. As aging continues, we could talk about the aging population. We can appreciate that distinction and focus upon the notion that we are ably aging.
- Ann Benjamin: that speaks to the fact that the aging process is a continuum, starting with the 50+-age group and extending into later years. But again, it is not static; it starts earlier than it has and particularly because people now bring in incomes that allow them to retire sooner and do other things with their lives.
- Peter Brunner: much of that is a state of mind. He knew people that seemed old when they were in their 30's and young when they were 80.
- Andy Mojan has been able to tell people how to age successfully in eight words. They are:
 - Act young
 - Think old
 - Grow old
 - Aging as a mental aspect
- Terri: we need to be conscious of how we think about the aging process. The age-friendly concept says that we begin aging when we are born; aging is a lifelong process. As we look at the age-friendly concepts, including social participation, as defined by the World Health Organization and AARP, we are looking at across more than just the older adult population. If you look at social participation on the AARP website they address the intergenerational aspect of social participation - that we remember the advantages of sharing what we have as older adults with the younger generation and learning what they have to share with us.
- Jim Sanders wonders what percentage of people in Howard County are active in social participation. A national study showed that 25 to 30% of the aging community participate.

1. Do we have programs that encourage more people to participate?
 2. What part of our community has the greatest need around participation?
 3. Are there particular communities that are at great need that require attention?
- Pat: the reason we are having this discussion is we are trying to scope what we can reasonably do. If we think about it in terms of making intergenerational opportunities available even if we are focusing from the aging standpoint, we can incorporate other generations. On the AARP site, there are projects that were done that brought generations together. How do you feel about this focus on intergenerational activities?
 - Ann: that is a particular interest of hers, especially as it relates to addressing the achievement gap – what older adults are doing in terms of tutoring and mentoring programs with students from 1st to 5th grade.
 - Jim: other communities who have done these projects have 4 to 5 initiatives within a given theme. We have talked about how we address:
 - The young aging 50 – 60
 - Intergenerational
 - Isolation audience

We will likely come up with 4 or 5 initiatives within the action plan. Year 1 is the overall strategy and we have 5 years to improve. We would come up with a broad set of recommendations that would then support a 5-year improvement.

- Pete reiterated the need to include the Howard County Public School System in the steering committee; that goes with the discussion on intergenerational participation.
 - The public-school system people think of themselves as being in a separate silo and not part of the overall community.

This gives us the opportunity to focus on how to get young people involved in the community as a whole.

- Ann: the Howard County School System has a community education division; we could tap into that as a starting point to learn what they are already doing and what we could build on. As was mentioned earlier, look at what we can build on or what we could do a little differently by tweaking.
- Pat: Jim, can you explain to us about the group you are leading on Civic Engagement. I know it overlaps with Social Participation and I do not want us to get into the volunteer thing if that is what your group is focusing on.
- Jim: they are using the AARP definitions and focusing on volunteering, employment and civic engagement. They have not yet defined civic engagement. All the domains are independent. Every group is self-defining.
- Pat said we do not want to leave out something that we could be doing and take up something that you are also doing.
- Jim stated we are a volunteer group, and it is about what volunteers care about.
- Colleen Konstanzer stated that she shares that concern. She sees those kinds of overlapping in two of the domains, respect and social inclusion and work and civic engagement. Her concern is that we lose the opportunity to really focus on the access to affordable activities that combat isolation.
- Jim said in terms of the AARP model this group is the only that covers isolation.
- Pat made the point that she is not saying not to talk about intergenerational opportunities, but we should not limit them to just older people volunteering with younger people.
- Mary referenced what AARP says for our social participation workgroup; it mentions loneliness, health conditions, and deals with sadness and isolation. She thinks that is what we should focus on.

- Andrew thinks when we look at intergenerational activities, we should consider the beneficial effects on the older person. What is it about intergenerational activities that produce these positive effects? There have been studies that it improves brain function, moods, other aspects as well. One of the aspects that benefits the older generation is having that interaction with the young generation.
- Pat said it looks like we have a direction for us to start doing research. She thinks we can come up with some good ideas.
- Seema added that lifelong learning can be enormously powerful, especially in the present day. Online learning can provide an engaging way of creating social spaces where people from different generations can interact in many ways,
- Ruth Coleman said she sees this as one of our main goals. Maybe intergenerational activities could be one of our main goals and then we could have sub-activities under intergenerational goals. One goal could address policy and education about the younger older adult that people are interested in. Maybe begin as an educational effort.
- Colleen said she would look at improving accessibility in terms of cost. Things like online learning, wellness, fitness activities that will help our 50+ age into healthy 70+ as well as cultural activities.
- Terri said to remember that we need to be serving people at all levels:
 - Income level
 - Social economic level
 - Offer opportunities to those who might not have the ability to seek out on their own.
 - Cognitive and physical ability level
 - People who have some disability
 - How do we address social participation for individuals for whom even the simplest aspects of getting around and getting involved are an issue?
- Pat: one of the things we outlined in our task list is the need to survey what is out there already, before we suggest adding to it. We can make that an action item and look at the idea of intergenerational as an overall target, with sub-categories to consider. Bring some ideas to the next meeting for things that we want to look at.
- Jim: we are narrowing our focus too fast. The topic is a broad one and our charter is to recommend how the County can improve. We can improve in many ways – Intergenerational is one but is not the only one.
- Ruth: there should still be a mission or vision statement saying something about what Social Participation is in Howard County. One of our goals of that mission statement would be intergenerational programming.
- Pat commented that she is trying to narrow it down; not sure how big a scope to take on.
- Jim said the end product is a strategic plan on how to improve. The 5-years after are an improvement set of steps. Charter is to create an analysis for improvement which will go to the steering committee and to the County Executive.
- Terri said the steps within the action plan need to be measurable, broad and specific at the same time. Will have to do some narrowing to achieve this.
- Terri: started to work on a vision statement with each of the groups, to help members focus on where they want to go with their domain. A Vision statement is aspirational and describes the long-term effects of this work – that may help you. You can make it into a homework assignment and ask people to look at words and phrases that address the ideas of what we want to accomplish. Pull 2 to 3 people from the group to try and hammer out a couple of sentences.

- Peter: the materials the planner is pulling together will include prior attempts of coming up with a vision statement. This gives us something that we can build upon, by looking at what has been done before.
- Some action plans have a single vision statement for the entire action plan, and some have a vision statement for each of the individual domains.
- A link for Washington DC's strategic plan was shared as a sample vision statement. Terri read the vision statement for DC:
 - A city where leisure, cultural, intergenerational, and creative activities are widely available and accessible for residents age 50 and over.
- A member asked if they address wellness, fitness, etc. They did not in this statement.
- Terri: everybody has something to learn from. Throwing in wellness is very meaningful.
- Pat: can we send that statement out to discuss at the next meeting since it seems to cover everything we talked about?
- Terri: it is a nice foundation – something to start with, then add or subtract from.
- Ruth: does everyone have the link to the google drive folder? She added the link there.
- Pat: it's a good idea to hammer out our own vision statement and goals for the next meeting.
- Peter: this gives us a starting point, so we don't have to start from scratch.
- Andrew: there is a Stanford group that centers on longevity - on their website there is an article on redefining the aging process.
- Terri: how would you know that items have been put in the Google folder?
- Workgroup members should check the folder at least once a week; web browsers have the option to receive notifications; does everyone have that option?
- Terri: as she finds information relevant to the group she will add it to the Google folder.
- Seema: is there a chart for us to stay on task? There was a model set up by Manuel Evangelista for all the workgroups – does it need to be modified before sending it out?
- Pat: is there any more discussion? If not, we have our plan; Ruth explained it well.
- Ruth stated our tasks for the next meeting

Homework Assignments:

Review the vision statements of other communities and present some that are relevant to our community to share with the group.

Next meeting: prepare to create our vision statement.

Next Meeting:

April 27, 2020 – 3:00pm (will be a WebEx invitation will be sent before the meeting).