

Washtenaw County Commission on Aging

October 15th, 2021

8:30 – 10:30am

Remote Via Zoom

Join by Zoom: <https://zoom.us/join>

Join by Phone: 312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 954 3400 0397

Passcode: 633697

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

Called by Chair Munce at 8:33 AM

II. Roll Call

Present: Steven Stein, Gary Munce, Bennett Stark, Elizabeth Thompson, Marie Gress, Bonny Webber, Marta Larson, Margaret Reynolds, Ellen Offen, Jason Maciejewski

Absent (excused): DeLois Wilson

III. Citizen Participation

No Public Comment.

IV. Commission Response to Citizen Participation

No Response Public Comment.

V. Approval of Minute

Moved: Reynolds, seconded Thompson, that the minutes of the 10.1 meeting be approved.

Unanimous Roll Call Vote in the Affirmative.

Minutes Approved.

VI. Subcommittee Updates

A. Data Organizations / Domains

No Update pending release of Healthy Aging Collaborative November data report.

B. Survey - holding pattern

No Update pending release of Healthy Aging Collaborative November data report.

C. Website and Communications

Gress provided the report - the subcommittee worked to develop a template to communicate with Commissioners and reported back on her initial conversation with her member of the Board of Commissioners.

D. Potential Millage

Thompson provided the report – Thompson and other members of the subcommittee attended a presentation by Jim McGuire on the topic of Millage related to aging issues. She discussed that they identified additional areas to learn more about how to understand what a potential millage would or would not be able to provide as a path forward for the Subcommittee.

Commissioner Maciejewski spoke to what the most important aspect of this conversation is when it comes to address the political aspects of a millage: demonstrating need and connecting that to proposed activities. Gress agrees and says that her conversation with commissioners echo this and adds that they want something specific to respond to when considering a millage.

Webber and Stein speak to the breakdown of funding and service costs that could come from a potential millage to better understand how other counties that have millage balance administration of funds, with actual service costs.

Larson adds the importance of building in meaningful evaluation and wants to ensure those types of results are baked into a millage from the beginning.

Thomson mentions the subcommittee's next goal is to meet with communities that have millage and ask them how they address many of these issues.

In response to question from Stein, Offen and Munce clarify the role of the Commission on Aging and this subcommittee is first goal is information gathering to help identify whether a millage is a good fit for Washtenaw County. The second goal (based on the information gathered) will be to prepare fact-based recommendations to help support the millage should it move forward. Webber agrees that information gathering is the best next step, and asks that the committee specifically incorporate looking at the financial impact of a millage on senior residents, and not just service deliverables, so that the COA can balance the costs and benefits, specifically on senior homeowners.

VII. Special Presentation

A. Senior Centers of Washtenaw County, Monica Prince

Monica Prince gave a high-level presentation about Senior Centers in Washtenaw County. Currently, there are about 14 in Washtenaw County, though that number fluctuates occasionally. She gave important background that about 12 years ago, the Blueprint for Aging brought together the various senior centers to talk about successes and challenges and they have continued to meet on a semi-regular basis.

Prince defined the main goal of senior centers, (pre-pandemic, during the pandemic and currently) is to provide opportunities for older adults to lead healthy and fulfilling lives through classes, activities, connections, and a wide variety of services. Monica Prince highlighted examples that are provided (art classes, exercise classes, and computer literacy lessons). She discussed how some of these services and connections were able to continue during the pandemic in some form over Zoom, but acknowledged the limitations of reaching individuals through these methods.

She also talked about pandemic-specific initiatives, specifically how senior centers act as hubs for grocery, PPE, and household supply distribution. One important caveat discussed, is the wide range in the level of funding and staffing senior centers have in being able to consistently deliver services.

After additional conversations about what senior centers do and have done in the past, she opened it up for questions and conversation:

- Stark asked about his experience with the Plymouth Senior Center regarding attendance and the impact of the pandemic on service delivery – Prince agreed that we don't know the full impact, but that one of their major ways to respond and stay connected through

email and frequent phone call check-ins. While she acknowledged the limitations of this work, she reported relative success.

- Gress brought up the growing technology program at the Ypsilanti Senior Center, which is helping seniors access and use technology to stay engaged in services, connect with family, and more.
- Thompson underscored the importance of remembering that these brick-and-mortar senior centers represent an opportunity for in-person service delivery in Washtenaw County. She also pointed out that because everyone enters a system of services at different points, a broad network of partners is a good thing for our community. She also noted that the physical location and access to senior centers continue to play in a big role in supporting senior citizens. Munce agrees and reminds the commission that as conversations around domains of services continue that senior centers are able to reach across domains.

VIII. Discussion Item

A. Commission Strategic Direction

Chair Munce offers an update on what the process of bringing on a consultant or facilitator could be. The two options forward he discussed include and RFI to ask open ended questions to hear what other might want to do to help with strategic planning and / or an RFP to ask for a specific plan with guidelines, proposed activities, and cost estimates. While the decision won't happen immediately, as the information gathering actively happening is laying the groundwork for larger strategic planning efforts, the officers wanted to bring this back to the group for a brief discussion.

Lindeman and Webber help clarify the general timeline and overall process, and how it allows for flexibility in building out additional conversations to better inform future work. Webber adds RFIs sometimes raise questions you weren't expecting which can lead to new ideas and directions. She also stated that RFI can trigger multiple processes rather than a single RFP.

Stein voices that the open-ended nature of the RFI feels like a very good place to start given the commission's current status.

Stark asks if the RFI could include folks proposing additional research, specifically asking whether the commission could use this process to get individuals to conduct research on a specific topic like homebound individuals and the pandemic. Munce clarifies that it would be up to the respondents to decide if research is part of their proposal. It could be, or there could be a separate process specifically about research.

Webber supports listening to what consultants or facilitators propose but wants the COA to insure that it is centering its needs and goals in this process. Webber further discussed that

engaging a consultant/facilitator should be a joint process in order to develop a plan that works for the COA and Washtenaw County as a whole. Webber stated that the COA would contribute its local knowledge and a consultant/facilitator would provide their expertise and experience in developing a plan.

Lindeman offers some insight on the funding of these types of projects, and how there are processes for internal and external funding that we can go into when needed in the future. Webber points out that an RFI is a great opportunity to get a general estimate of cost.

Munce summarizes next steps that the Officers will work to move this process forward and bring an update back to the full group. Webber asks Commission members to send specific thoughts/requests they want incorporated to commissioners.

IX. Report from the Chair

Munce did a check-in on the pace and the Commission's current and future meeting schedule and wants people to start thinking about next year's schedule.

Munce discussed developing a first report to the Board of Commissioners, which will mostly be a status update, in January or February.

Munce also discussed the next presentation from the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development.

X. Report from the Board of Commissioners

Chair Munce moved this item to the front of the meeting.

Commissioner Maciejewski offered a brief update on the Board's efforts to fund a dedicated support person for the COA (relieving Peter of much of his current duties). Maciejewski stated that the new support person would provide administrative support for the Commission as a whole, but not to subcommittees. Examples provided were that the COA would be supported with a minute taker, setting up Zoom meetings and sending out meeting notifications, assisting with contacting presenters, and providing other higher-level support for the COA. He also explained that subcommittees would be required to take their own minutes, contact their subcommittee speakers/presenters, and arrange their meeting times/places. Webber asked clarifying questions to confirm roles and responsibilities to ensure that the new support person understood the county processes and was able to assist in making sure that the County's legal requirements and best practices are still being followed. Maciejewski assured the COA that the new person would have these skills and knowledge.

Maciejewski also gave a high level look at the second iteration of the American Rescue Plan expenditures and that it will likely include funding to community organizations and wants to

make sure senior-serving organizations are included. Stein suggested that the Commission be active in reviewing the next proposal, so that they can collectively make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners.

Gress asked Commissioner Maciejewski how the communications lines between the Board and COA could be developed so that the COA could be informed on current topics and could review and/or provide input to the Board. Maciejewski said that he will work to flag relevant topics as early as possible and forward so that the Commission on Aging can discuss and give input on Board actions related to aging.

XII. New Business

Stark offers some recent updates, at the request of Chair Munce, about capital improvements at Lurie Terrace, including funding from the Ann Arbor Housing Commission. The residents were able to vote on the improvements, and selected improved system-wide WIFI and intercom services. Other improvements were made, including renovating certain showers and bathtubs to improve accessibility. He was encouraged by the participation and engagement of residents in coming together to decision making.

Stark wants to prioritize his requests about data gathering on homebound individuals to be included in future work and conversations of the Commission moving forward. Gress agrees and points to the meals on wheels service delivery model led by our next presenter OCED as an opportunity to do that. Webber, Gress, and Munce all point to some data that exists, and that hopefully the Healthy Aging Collaborative's forthcoming report will answer some of these questions.

XIII. Setting Next Meeting

A. November 5th, 2021 8:30 –10:30am

XIII. Adjournment

**Moved: Reynolds, seconded Gress, to adjourn.
Meeting adjourned.**