



**COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES
February 28, 2022**

PRESIDING: Reginald Avery, Chair

Members Attending

Jennifer Asher
Angie Boyter
Peter Brunner
Susan Hailman
Wei Guo
Victoria Hathaway
Elizabeth Edsall Kromm
Stephanie Lyon
Sue Song
Michael Willis

Excused

Julia Mattis
Eletta Morse (unable to attend due to technical difficulties)
Mark Stinson

Absent

Geetha Jayaram

Office on Aging & Independence

Jenna Crawley
Terri Hansen
Donna Tugwell

Guest Speaker

Hank Greenberg

Guest

Jim Sanders

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm

Approve Agenda

There was a move to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded. Motion was approved. *All in favor. Agenda approved.*

Approve Minutes

Peter Brunner moved to approve the January minutes. Victoria Hathaway seconded the motion. Motion was approved. *All in favor. Minutes approved.*

The November minutes will be reviewed again for approval at the March meeting.

Office on Aging and Independence Report

- County Executive Calvin Ball will be holding the FY2023 residents budget hearing on Monday, March 14th. Commissioners can come out and provide public testimony as a resident and are encouraged to do so. The press release will be forwarded to Commissioners after the meeting.
- As of February 1st, in-person activities and programming were resumed at the 50+Centers. There was a pause taken in January due to the Omicron variant. OAI is working on getting people back into the 50+Centers to pre-pandemic rates.
- The mask mandate was lifted as of February 22nd for most public buildings, and that does include the 50+Centers.
- Older Americans month is coming up in May. The Commissioners were asked to think about what they would like the Commission to do for the celebration of Older Americans month, and their ambassador role. The theme for the month is Age My Way.

Chair's Report

- Newly appointed Commissioner, Stephanie Lyon was introduced. She has lived in Howard County for forty years and has worked for various agencies that assist the aging community and offer the aging community various services.
- Four of the Commissioners will be leaving the Commission on Aging as their second term ends, Peter Brunner, Jennifer Asher, Eletta Morse, and Julia Mattis. There is also a possibility of a 5th Commissioner leaving. To recruit new commissioners, a combination of reviewing the list from the previous recruitment will be utilized along with a request to the County Executive to issue a press release to solicit additional applicants.
- The Commissioners need to consider if they want to start doing in-person meetings again or continue with WebEx meetings. The Commissioners should let Reginald Avery know what they would like to do.

Guest Speaker – Hank Greenberg

- Reginald Avery introduced Hank Greenberg, the Maryland State Director of AARP. He joined AARP in 2007 as the Advocacy Director and became the Maryland State Director in 2011. Currently, AARP is advocating for retirement security, health care, and support for family caregivers. Also looking at affordable utilities to help people age at home.
- Hank Greenberg stated that AARP is a statewide organization and has a strong presence in Howard County. AARP has worked with the Howard County Arts Council supporting their work and judging contests. AARP tries to do “fun with a purpose” when performing advocacy and outreach. Three areas of focus are: health, wealth, and self.
- Many AARP members self-identify as caregivers. Caregiving is one of the issues that AARP is concerned about. Right now, the legislative session is in progress and a focus of AARP is legislation to get paid family leave. Following the legislative session, AARP will focus on outreach.
- In June, AARP will host/co-host Protect Week activities and will have a series of ten different events around the state. AARP will also be doing shredding events. AARP is working toward easing back in to more in-person events. Events in the past have included a virtual book club in the past year, distributed free movie tickets, and before the pandemic, AARP On-tap where people go to craft breweries and have a pint and socialize.

- AARP does a lot of work with Consumer Protection to include addressing issues with utilities and surcharges as well as identity theft.
- AARP organizes an annual Day of Service. This year's focus will be on voter education.
- It was asked how effective AARP has been with reaching federal government partners such as Congress, the Senate, and the White House. Mr. Greenberg reported AARP was very much involved with all of them and had three virtual lobby days last year. AARP has also hosted Tele-town Halls. The last one was on June 14th of 2021 and about 10,000 people attended. Currently a top priority is having Medicare negotiate prices on prescription drugs and having some type of controls placed on the prices of prescription drugs. Maryland was the first to pass The Prescription Affordability Board. Now, about 5 more states have passed it.
- A question and answer session was held with Mr. Greenberg. Issues addressed included: advocacy around making the Livable Homes Tax Credit easier to access; workforce shortages in healthcare; assisted living facilities; support and funding for the Nonprofits for our Aging Neighbors (NANA) Act; and tax relief for older adults.
- The out migration of seniors from the State was discussed. Hank Greenberg said that the out migration from Maryland varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Peter Brunner said the State should be legislating from a position of knowledge. He said the people that are more likely to move out of State are the more affluent people, and that revenue from their taxes will be lost. Peter Brunner suggested that now that Howard County and some other counties in Maryland are doing Age-Friendly initiatives, would AARP consider hosting a conference. Hank Greenberg said this was a wonderful idea. He said that all of Maryland should be Age-Friendly. As the demographics change, there is no comprehensive planning that AARP is aware of for life in Maryland. Next year when there is a new governor, a new comptroller, and a new attorney general, Hank Greenberg would like AARP to go and talk to them about making Maryland an Age-Friendly state. He invited the Commission's involvement.
- AARP learned a few years ago that the State does not keep records on suicides in Maryland. AARP has asked the State to start keeping records on suicides of veterans in Maryland. AARP has become more attuned to mental health in Maryland and the lack of services. About two years ago, AARP started the Cognitive and Behavioral Advocacy Team. They were able to get funding to require that the Health Department study what mental health services are required by people as they age. The first report has just been released.
- Office on Aging and Independence thru the American Rescue plan has received \$850,000. OAI is in the process of planning how to use those funds. Hank Greenberg was asked if there are areas that should be prioritized. He said there are different priorities depending on the area.
- Mr. Greenberg shared AARP has Community Challenge Grants that help fund Livable Communities projects in various communities.
- Jim Sanders is on the Board of the Community Foundation, and the statewide Maryland Philanthropy Network that works on the issue of the workforce shortage in the health care sector, and attended as a guest. Mr. Sanders stated the Maryland Regional Direct Collaborative is a program that looks at the direct care workforce. There is funding that could come to Maryland, and legislation that could address this issue. He asked what AARP is doing in Maryland to support workforce development. Hank Greenberg said that nationally this topic has received a lot of attention. AARP has not yet made this a priority. He will follow-up and see what can be done in this area.
- Hank Greenberg was asked if he saw a role for the commissions elsewhere in Maryland to be most involved in the Age-Friendly rollout. He was asked to share ideas with the Howard County COA as Howard County implements their Age-Friendly action plan. Hank Greenberg shared that every county picks the domains they want to work on. It works best if jurisdictions are inclusive of the community and listen and learn what the community wants and needs.

Having a point person is very helpful. AARP is ready to help Howard County OAI in any way they can as they implement the Age-Friendly Howard County Action Plan.

Seniors and Housing

- Washington Post did an article over the weekend that discusses seniors and housing. Montgomery County has the Silver Nest Group which helps facilitate housing options for older adults. It was suggested that this could be a future discussion point for the Commission.

Adjournment

Sue Song motioned to adjourn. Victoria Hathaway seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Recording Secretary: Donna Tugwell

Future Meetings: March 28th, April 25th, May 23rd, June 27th, July 25th, August – no meeting, September – TBD, October – TBD, November 28th, December – no meeting