

DRAFT Oakland County Senior Advisory Council Meeting

February 14, 2022

VIRTUAL MEETING

10:00 am -12:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Cameron McClure (District #5) called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE: Secretary Martha Schlesinger (District #20) conducted member roll call and meeting attendance.

Member Attendance:

Dist	RC	Name	Dist	RC	Name	Dist	RC	Name
1	P	George Hanley	2	?	Linda Hyduck	3	P	Jerry Sowik
4	P	Carolyn Morrison	5	P	Cameron McClure	6	P	Renata Erickson
7	P	Barbara Garbutt	8	P	Norene Yuskowatz	9	V	VACANT
10	E	Carolyn Price	11	P	Howard Adams	12	V	VACANT
13	P	Sylvia Whitmer	14	V	VACANT	15	P	Dianne Bubnar
16	P	Mark Kelly	17	P	Barbara Seldon	18	P	Marsha Kamin
19	P	Royetta Ealba	20	P	Martha Schlesinger	21	A	Cheryl Cushingberry
AL	P	Rock Abboud	AL	P	Marcus Jackson			
SR	P	Pat Zawadzki	SR	E	Genessa Doolittle			

Key: **Dist** = District # (AL -Member-at-Large, SR – Staff Rep); **RC** = Attendance (P – Present; E – Excused; A -Absent; V – Vacant); **Name** = District Council Member

Others Present:

- Lisa Grodsky - Program Operations Manager, OLHSA
- Dr. Russell Faust – Oakland County Medical Director
- Carolyn Krause – Oakland County Community Development
- Sandy Dorey – Recreation Supervisor Adaptive and Senior Programs
- Katie Wendel – AAA-1B Director of Planning and Advocacy

APPROVAL of MINUTES

Senior Advisory Council minutes for the meeting January 10, 2022, were unanimously approved.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Lisa Grodsky, OLHSA Program Operations Manager for Oakland and Livingston counties, spoke to the SAC members about the issues and challenges of grandparents (and other non-parents) raising (grand)children. Because of the wide range of these non-parental relationships, she explained that the correct terminology is “kinship care” and said that while the goal of such care is the reunification of children with parent(s), often that is just not possible due to factors such as parental mental health, incarceration, drug and other substance addiction, and death.

OLHSA delivers a wide range of services and programs and has many partners helping to reach out to existing and potential benefit recipients. The need is huge – it is estimated that in Michigan there are 66,378 grandparents who are ‘head of household’, and that number does not include the number of informal arrangements where kinship care givers are not registered with any public agency and therefore get no financial or public assistance. The kinship care estimate for the Tri-county area alone is over 11,200.

There are two Michigan legislative bills, the Kindship Navigator Program and a Kindship Advisory Council, in process to address the kinship care procedures and their challenges. But there is currently no toll free 24/7 Help Desk/Hot Line or website available in the state for those who need immediate guidance on their options and understanding the ramifications of those options. Grandparents/kin often have only 48 hours to decide whether or not to keep the children.

Navigating kinship care can be particularly complicated. The Kinship Navigator Program would allow someone to investigate what their choices are based on the predicament that they may be a well-informed adult and choose what might be the best for themselves and the children. The group helps/GROUPS HELP family members reconnect with each other by sponsoring intergenerational activities like cooking, walking, and field trips to parks, Eastern Market, Greenfield Village, the DIA. Since many families are mixed race (with children being of a different race than kin-carers) the group also helps them identify and cope with those special challenges.

OLHSA recently applied for and received a technology grant to help families acquire a laptop and hot spot connections to the internet, as well as training on how to use a computer. This is crucial because all communication with schools these days is via technology, and many (grandparents especially) don't know how to do so. The two-year project will teach participants how to send and receive emails, log onto sites, use zoom, and other basic computer skills – as well as learning skills related to family budgeting and other functions.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Carolyn Krause, Oakland County Community Engagement Liaison, shared the following information with SAC members:

- The State of the County address by County Executive David Coulter will be given at the M1 Concourse in Pontiac, Michigan on Tuesday March 15, both online and with limited in-person attendance. It will also be broadcast on WDET. A preview of the address will be shared with certain groups prior to the March 15 delivery.
- County health officials rescinded the masks-in-schools mandate, effective February 28.
- KN95 masks are available to all county residents. A supply was received from the State, and efforts are underway to get them to all who want

them, and especially those who most need them. Contact Carolyn for more information.

COUNTY UPDATE

Dr. Russell Faust, Oakland County Medical Director, updated SAC members on the COVID numbers and trends saying that “we’re in a pretty good place now”. There are currently 300 new cases per day, and although we are in a high transmission state the numbers are headed downward. The high vaccination rate and high Omicron rate is leading to a high immunity rate Oakland County, but he cautioned that every infection offers the virus an opportunity to become a new virus.

Looking to the future, he said there is a good chance that a vaccine for under-5-year-olds will be approved by fall – and there is work being done on an Omicron-specific vaccine.

Responding to questions and comments from SAC members, Dr. Faust said:

- People who are immunocompromised are now getting additional booster shots, and there is no downside to doing that. The timetable for an Astra Zeneca vaccine for the immunocompromised is unclear.
- Regarding the county’s school mask decision, he said the topic is very divisive, and the problem with a public health mandate is there is no way to enforce it among those who ignore it. It’s a school-by-school/parent/superintendent decision.
- However, the county’s strong recommendation (as stated in a recent press release) is that indoors in groups, individuals should wear a mask – and this tracks with the CDC position.

COUNTY PARKS AND REC UPDATE

Sandy Dorey, Recreation Supervisor of Adaptive and Senior Programs reported the following:

- There is a new top administration in Parks and Rec, after 30 years. Chris Ward has been appointed Director of Oakland County Parks and Recreation. Sandy will send a link to Pat with all the information, so she can share it with SAC members.
- Summer 2022 programs are rolling out for both active adults and for people with disabilities. Parks and Rec have sponsored virtual fireside chats. They are now looking at how to put the fireside chats on YouTube. Once that has been accomplished Sandy will notify Pat. New Fireside Chats are scheduled on March 15 and April 13. For the summer, Parks and Rec is scheduling a series of 4 tea parties. Buses have already been scheduled for the senior centers for anyone who wants to attend a tea party. The programs at the Red Oaks Water Park are being delayed until May due to staffing shortages. Staffing remains a challenge, but she will keep SAC updated. Activities that will be available are the Riverwalk and an "Over 50s" event where you must show your ID to enter. Addison Oaks will have the "Holly, History and Harmony Program"
- the History of the Buell Estate. Independence Oaks will have a Senior Day with all types of activities like archery, fishing, accessible hayrides and kayaking with accessible launches. There, also, will be Nature Center Programs scheduled
- Annual Oakland County Parks vehicle permits are now available and are free to those over 62 years of age.

- The Rec Assistance Partnership Program offers 2 programs to each community. Pat will get an email to distribute to SAC members about it.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Katie Wendell, Director of Planning and Advocacy for AAA 1-B gave the following updates:

- The Governor's budget was released last week, which signals the start of the State budget process. It contains:
 - o Recognition of the severe shortage of direct care workers, and the \$2.35 increase in hourly pay would be continued until 2023
 - o Repeal of the pension tax
 - o Kinship care givers language, including the establishment of a Kinship Care Advisory Council.
 - o Recommendation for a large increase for respite care givers, but it is not clear how it will be accomplished or where the funds will come from

There will now be hearings on the budget's various topics and at various levels. There will be local community matches required for many of the program dollars proposed.

- House Bills 5611 and 5612 will repeal the state tax on incontinence and feminine hygiene products.
- AAA 1-B is working with Oakland County Commissioners to implement The Blueprint. There was a meeting last month to determine the staffing for the committees. Hopefully the groups will convene soon.

Responding to questions, Ms. Wendell said:

- Regarding the soon-to-be Kinship Care Council, those on it will be appointed, but she was not certain of the appointment process. She will check and get the information to Pat for SAC distribution.
- Tax on pensions is proposed to take effect in FY 2023, but it could be later.

Regarding The Blueprint, SAC Chair Cam McClure added the following information:

- The report has been printed and is available in hard copy and online
- Of the 10 action items, commissioners are focusing in on four with a particular impact on seniors:
 - o Quality of Life (senior centers, social isolation, lifeline expansion)
 - o Housing/volunteers (home repair, chore services, volunteer programs)
 - o Basic needs (elder abuse, in-home care, transportation)
 - o County roles (making the Blueprint a reality)

Housing/volunteers may get the quickest attention, because such a program already existed and then ran out of money.

To help the Blueprint become a reality, McClure urged SAC members to begin to interact with their respective commissioner, as well as other representatives and organizations in their districts.

In recent discussions with his District 5 Commissioner Kristen Nelson (the Blueprint subcommittee chairman) she indicated she is considering the establishment of study groups to explore various topics. She also is going to present a resolution requesting funding for senior centers specifically (without including libraries) in early March. If that happens SAC will need to establish

criteria for priorities for the senior centers in their district, including a 'wish list' of what they would do with additional funding. While the AAA 1-B survey addressed this in their survey, there was not a robust response to the survey and many centers didn't see the survey so SAC members could improve the depth and breadth of senior center participation by interacting with theirs.

DISTRICT UPDATES AND OTHER BUSINESS

Rock Abboud (Member at Large) informed the members of legislation that the Michigan state house has passed and is presently sitting in the senate dealing with short term rentals that could have a major impact on senior housing availability in our respective communities. That the Birmingham Next Community Center currently rents space from the Birmingham School District. Next is strategizing next steps for upgrades to the community center. Rock shared regards to SAC members from (long time former SAC member) Celia Todd and reported she is doing well.

Marsha Kamin (District 18) updated SAC members on a resolution that will be presented by her Commissioner Charlie Cavell and is co-sponsored by several other county commissioners. Named the Attainable Housing Trust Fund, it proposes taking \$29,100,000 of ARPA funds for an Oakland Together Housing Security Initiative, \$20,000,000 of these funds would go to create attainable housing for working families and for seniors looking for more affordable housing in order to downsize. The Attainable Housing Trust Fund would include money for critical home repairs and money to help seniors age in place. It would also include money for a comprehensive scan of the county's housing stock.

Sylvia Whitmer (District 13) stated that one of our SAC goals is to establish a Dashboard of specific senior center priorities for all centers, it was suggested that a subcommittee be created to develop a dashboard template so all SAC members could use it when working with their respective centers. She also reported that the West Bloomfield Diversity Task Force held a meeting with speakers organized

around Black History Month, which had a large attendance. The seniors in her district need more space, and space specifically for seniors, including a place to walk.

Diane Bubnar (District 15) reported OPC has lots going on, and all of it well attended, included: art classes, speakers, a DIA trip. Membership has gone 'way up during the pandemic because everyone wants activities.

Carolyn Morrison (District 4) said that Independence Township distributed the AAA 1-B survey, and it will be discussed at their March meeting. Clarkston is having an Impact Weekend April 23-24, during which volunteers will deliver services in the community including assisting seniors with yard cleanup. The district also hosted a program with Lisa Grodsky from OLHSA (and today's SAC guest speaker).

Pat Zawadzki (Oakland County SAC Coordinator) thanked all SAC members for their ongoing work during these challenging times. She also reminded SAC that there are many adults who are hesitant to start going out because of concern for their health and safety and urged kindness and patience as we encourage others to resume activities.

She asked SAC members to continue to send their monthly activity reports to her.

Meeting adjourned 11:57.

**Next SAC meeting:
March 21 (virtual)**