

Oakland County Senior Advisory Council Meeting
January 10, 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	P	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	E	Royetta Ealba	20	P	Martha Schlesinger	21	A	Cheryl Cushingberry
AL	P	Rock Abboud	AL	P	Marcus Jackson			
SR	P	Pat Zawadzki	SR	P	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:

- Commissioner Marcia Gershenson (District #13)
- Commissioner Charlie Cavell (District #18)
- Commissioner Kristen Nelson (District #5)
- Dr. Russell Faust – Oakland County Medical Director
- Carolyn Krause – Oakland County Community Development
- Katie Wendel – AAA-1B Director of Planning and Advocacy

APPROVAL of MINUTES

Senior Advisory Council minutes for the meeting December 13, 2021, were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Carolyn Krause, Community Engagement, updated SAC members on the following county activities:

- Charlotte Fisher has been appointed Director of the county's Public Communications Department. Ms. Fisher will be responsible for senior outreach strategy
- The county health department continues to provide both covid testing and vaccinations at multiple sites throughout the county
- The county continues to be involved the aftermath of the Oxford High School shootings
- The State of the County Address will be given by County Executive David Coulter in two months.

COUNTY UPDATE

Dr. Russell Faust, Medical Director of Oakland County, shared the latest Covid information with SAC members and engaged in an extensive question and answer period after the update.

Main points included in his update:

- The current covid "upsurge storm" comes from holiday gatherings and increased travel (which meant more indoor group activities, and less masking because these groups were often related family members), as well as the highly contagious nature of the omicron variant. The massive number of infections is overwhelming hospitals – these are the highest daily reported numbers in almost a year: mid-April 2021 the daily number was less than 1,000 new cases; currently there are more than 2,000 new cases being reported daily.

- The “good news” is that it is highly unlikely that those who are vaccinated and boosted will be in the hospital, or vented, or dead. The “bad news” is that Omicron can still infect us. But the vast majority of COVID19 patients hospitalized and on ventilators are not vaccinated. The breakthrough cases are among the elderly with comorbidity factors or they are immunocompromised (often because of medications).
- He urged SAC members to continue to mask, to distance, and get vaccinated and boosted. He also noted that the co-infection of covid and the flu is a potent problem...increasing the risk of mortality by a factor of six.

The extensive Q & A covered a wide range of concerns, including:

- The County’s current position on closings: Not needed because we have the preventative tools that work – though he did suggest that those who can work at home should do it.
- The County’s position on masking in schools currently is to mask.
- There are a number of vitamin supplements that can help strengthen the immune system – he recommended taking a daily dose of vitamin D (2000mg). He suggested everyone consider taking a daily multi-vitamin.
- For those who have contracted covid, if they aren’t already boosted, they should get the booster as soon as they are better.
- Regarding home testing kits: they are currently in short supply again, and they are expensive. He suggested individuals come to the county sites for testing, as those tests are much more sensitive (more accurate) than the home test kits, and they are administered without charge.
- Regarding the effectiveness of different mask types: many mask types are proven effective (not just the N-95).
- There is no decision or timeline for administering a second booster on any government/administrative level.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Katie Wendell, Director of Planning and Advocacy AAA 1-B updated SAC on the following new developments:

- The ARPA funding from the federal government's Older Americans Act, which has been held up in Michigan by the state legislature until now, has finally been approved and will be available to MDHHS to allocate by the end of the month (of January).
- The Oakland County Blueprint for Healthy Aging report has been completed and paper copies of the document are available through the county. Oakland County will work with AAA 1B to implement the recommendations.
- The state legislature is developing new language from the Elder Abuse Task Force regarding guardianship and conservatorship.
- Regarding redistricting – it is going on in both in the county and the state. The proposed maps are being released (she will send a link to Pat Zawadzki for SAC members). Many of the new state districts are crossing county lines; the number will be going from 34 to 42 districts in AAA 1B's region (which serves 6 counties)
- Volunteer opportunities are available at AAA 1B for the Caregiving Coaching Program. AAA 1B is looking for individuals to serve as volunteer coaches. They will receive some training from AAA 1B, and then be connected by them to families who need this help. (They will work remotely.)
- The organization is also receiving requests from those who are in need of a coach to help them. (Additional notes were put in the 'chat' section of this meeting.) She also reported that there are support groups for care providers. There is a list of referrals groups, and she will send a link to Pat Zawadzki to make available to SAC members. It was strongly requested by SAC members that any information given to SAC be more than just a link – it be a list that includes in-depth information that can be shared with senior centers and their staff.

PRESENTATION: UPDATE ON OAKLAND COUNTY'S STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT FOR HEALTHY AGING

County Commissioner Kristen Nelson (District #5), who serves as the Chairperson for the county's Ad Hoc Committee that developed and oversaw the Blueprint's creation (in conjunction with AAA 1B) gave a background report and update on its current status.

The Ad Hoc committee was established in February 2021, to identify and respond to the needs and priorities of the rapidly aging population in Oakland County. Through surveys and meetings at senior centers, information was gathered that was then collated into a 36-page report which the County Commissioners adopted in November 2021. The report contains many recommendations regarding aging strategies and services, and the top 10 will be used to establish focus areas to develop responses to articulated needs and priorities, through various county-commission committees. Those 10 focus areas are: Housing – Repair, Housing-Chores, Transportation, Elder Abuse Prevention, In-Home Services, Senior Centers, Socialization at Senior Centers, Socialization Utilizing Technology, Volunteerism, and County Roles.

Her specific area of interest is establishing a home modification project, including reestablishing the former chore service program. She also wants to reopen senior center grant funding; begin the creation of pamphlets and other informational materials about the Blueprint, that can be sent out to seniors county-wide; and increase access to technology and information.

Regarding the Blueprint, there will be a public (virtual) meeting on January 25 at 11:00 AM with the Oakland County Public Health and Safety Committee. She will send a link for SAC members to attend if interested.

She will also continue to update SAC on Blueprint-related activities and follow-up. It was suggested that communication with seniors in Oakland County be done by snail mail, as well as, electronic mail – particularly on such issues as senior abuse and what to do about it. She will follow up on this suggestion.

A lengthy discussion followed Commissioner Nelson's presentation. Main points included:

- Widespread concern among SAC members for those seniors who are in the position where they can't afford to pay independently for home services/repairs, but exceed the current level of qualifying financial criteria. She said the goal will be to ensure ALL seniors can benefit from the program.
- Covid has significantly limited the ability to track/respond to senior abuse because it has limited personal interactions. In addition, it is important to clarify the criteria of what constitutes senior abuse. It was noted that the Michigan Attorney General has been involved in the strengthening/clarifying of senior abuse criteria for the past few years,

and an Elder Abuse Task Force held a series of listening sessions to gather information and to get feedback.

- To better engage SAC members in implementing the focus areas of Blueprint, it will be important that SAC members know which commissioners will be responsible for which focus areas.
- Commissioner Nelson indicated that there is an ongoing discussion regarding the possibility of creating an Oakland County Department of Senior Services.
- Concerns regarding the funding of senior programs, it was pointed out that Oakland County doesn't have a 'senior millage', and it was suggested that the Healthy Aging Ad Hoc Committee take this up and explore it further. Each community's senior center currently has different – and widely varied – means and levels of funding. Commissioner Nelson said a senior millage is not off the table. Discussions with the County Executive are ongoing, but because it would involve a ballot initiative it would take a lot of preparation. 'More to come'.
- Regarding AARPA spending modifications, Commissioner Nelson was asked to elaborate on what the funds can be spent on. She replied that since the modifications just came up, the topic will be discussed at the next caucus meeting and she will update SAC after those discussions.
- Commissioner Cavell clarified that in Thursday's final federal ruling as written, Oakland County will be getting \$244,270.949. The county will have 3 years to assign it, and 5 years to spend it all. Commissioner Nelson then added that specific amounts of funds are in the process of being allocated by the commissioners to 'bucket's':
 - Strengthening healthcare
 - Robust economy
 - Sustaining the environment/infrastructure
 - Physical health
 - A reserve fund (which currently has no allocated amount)
- SAC President Cam McClure noted that only 21 out of 37 of Oakland County's senior centers responded the AAA 1B/Ad Hoc Committee's survey. In order to fully capture overall senior center needs we need to request survey input from the missing 16 senior centers. Having more complete Senior center survey information will help the Ad Hoc

Committee regarding how best to assist our Oakland County Senior Centers. The SAC District Representatives can assist in making this happen.

- Senior Centers (and other seniors and senior organizations) also need to know how SAC members interface with the County Commission and our respective district commissioners – including which district commissioner(s) will be heading up which funding/program areas.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00. **Next SAC meeting will be VIRTUAL, and held Monday February 14, 2022.**