

Oakland County Senior Advisory Council
Monday, January 22, 2024
10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Welcome & Call to Order:

Chairperson Rock Abboud (At-Large) welcomed all and called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

Attendance:

Dist.	RC	Name	Dist.	RC	Name	Dist.	RC	Name
1	P	Royetta Ealba	2	P	Mark Kelly	3	P	Suzanne Patton
4	P	Dianne Bubnar	5	V		6	P	Bridgette Giampa
7	V		8	V		9	P	Ruth Jordan
10	P	Cameron McClure	11	P	Sylvia Whitmer	12	V	
13	P	Norene Yuskowatz	14	P	Dean McCullough	15	P	Brenda Anderson
16	V	TBD	17	E	Barbara Seldon	18	P	Greg Keeler
19	P	Martha Schlesinger	AL	P	Rock Abboud	AL	E	Marcus Jackson
SR	P	Pat Zawadzki						

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

Others Present:

Genessa Doolittle, Public Health Educator, Oakland County Health Division
Dr. Russell Faust, Medical Director, Oakland County Health Division
Jim Ellison, Chief of Older Adult Services, Oakland County
Katie Wendel, Director of Planning and Advocacy AAA 1-B
Kim Vernier, Director of Western Oakland Transit Authority (WOTA)
Robert Whitcomb, Guest

Approval of Minutes

The Senior Advisory Council minutes for the meeting held December 11, 2023, were approved with corrections.

Keynote Speaker – Kim Vernier, Director of Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA)

Director Vernier began her presentation by providing a history of the formation of WOTA in 2020 and talked about the Oakland County Transit Millage (passed in 2022) that enabled additional opportunities to provide more and better transportation options for older adults in Oakland County. As additional Oakland County Transportation Millage funds are received WOTA plans to expand services for the general population; however, WOTA's primary focus is on older adults' needs for affordable and reliable transportation services.

Some ridership statistics were shared: 1) In 2022 WOTA logged 32,351 rides, and in 2023 WOTA logged 50,000 rides with 24 to 28 routes; 2) WOTA dispatchers handle between 140 to 180 calls per day.

The cost of a one-way ride on a WOTA bus is \$2. WOTA service hours were Monday through Friday 7am to 4pm; however, in June 2023 service hours expanded to 6 am to 9 pm. Starting January 6, 2024, WOTA Services will include Saturdays, and in June 2024 WOTA Services will expand to include Sundays.

WOTA is launching a General Public Pilot in Highland Township for 6 months to see how it goes. There are no other public transportation resources available to the Highland Community. WOTA's presence has made a positive contribution to the economies of the areas that WOTA services.

Health Division Update – Dr. Russell Faust, Medical Director

Dr. Faust informed SAC that Region 2 COVID numbers spiked in December 2023, which was a cause for concern; however, those numbers have come down significantly.

Dr. Faust shared that he sits on the Board of the Oakland County Medical Control Authority, which has oversight authority to manage Oakland County EMS. Many counties in the country do not have an equivalent version, and Oakland County benefits greatly because the Medical Control Authority is responsible for maintaining a level of training and competence for Oakland County's EMS Services. The Committee is comprised of Emergency Department Directors.

Dr. Faust was asked about the lingering effect of the flu virus and plans to bring out a new flu vaccination. He explained the process for creating the flu vaccines and how they can be delayed if a new strain is discovered. Some patients can have flu symptoms for up to a month if they become infected.

Dr. Faust was also asked about current concerns regarding the return of measles outbreaks. He said that Pediatric and Family doctors are very diligent regarding screening for measles infections. It is very frustrating trying to overcome the reluctance to receive vaccinations due to

the misinformation regarding vaccinations in general. He recommended an excellent book (“America’s New Vaccine Wars” by Mark C. Navin and Katie Attwell) that describes reasons behind vaccine hesitancy.

Legislative Update – Katie Wendell, Director of Planning and Advocacy, AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services

AAA 1-B has updated its name to AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services. The new name should make it easier for people to relate to and understand. The Agency also has a new logo. Although there are now new employee email addresses, the old email addresses will continue to work and telephone numbers have not changed.

AgeWays is hosting a public hearing to get feedback on an amendment to add Nursing Facilities Transition Service to their service mix. This service would be for people 60 plus (as it is funded by the Older Americans Act Fund) and would be available to provide support in discharge planning for individuals planning to leave a nursing facility and after they have returned to the community. **The Public Hearing is planned for February 16, 2024, from 1pm until 2pm**, as part of a state process to approve the funds be used in a new way. This proposal will go to the Michigan Commission on Services for the Aging; hopefully, in March the new service can begin. SAC Members are encouraged to attend the meeting.

AgeWays continues to watch the Guardian Legislation Package (House Bills 4901 to 4911 and 5047) to create the office of the State Guardian, which was discussed last month.

The State of State Address is this Wednesday. Governor Whitmer will be outlining her policy priorities for the coming year. After the Address it is expected that the Governor’s Budget will be released, kicking off the budget process for the fiscal Year 2025. One AgeWays priority is increasing funding for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Older Michiganians Day will be on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. Ms. Wendell anticipates that it will continue in the hybrid format (in-person and virtual). AgeWays is considering a possible community watch event.

Older Adult Services – Jim Ellison, Chief of Older Adult Services

Jim Ellison responded to an inquiry concerning the status of the Waterford Senior Center Grant Award. Jim said that the Interlocal Agreement was forwarded to Waterford on January 18, 2024. Once the Agreement has been signed and returned, the Award Check would be processed. The Senior Expo that was held at “The J” was a success! More expos are being planned, with the next one scheduled on March 19th.

Mr. Ellison has a Coffee Hour scheduled this Wednesday in South Lyon. He will also be in Royal Oak soon.

Mark Kelly is working with Jim to set up a February meeting that will bring the Directors of Mark's senior centers together. They are also inviting senior center directors whose senior centers are outside of his District. Mark added that all his senior center directors are fairly new and expressed to him a desire to get together to meet one another and to share what they are doing.

The Resource Guide has reportedly been a success; however, it is imperative that the information that is provided is the correct information. Specifically, the telephone contact numbers were not the senior centers' main telephone numbers.

Goals & Objectives for 2023-2024 – Martha Schlesinger Second Vice-Chairperson

Chairperson Abboud shared that the Officers (with input from Council Members) have created the Goals & Objectives for 2023-2024. Because the membership received a Final Draft of the Goals & Objects for 2023-2024, Martha Schlesinger highlighted key things within the Goals & Objectives to ensure that the membership understands what they will be asked to approve.

SAC has three major goals, and these goals have not changed significantly over the past several years. However, the details have varied, reflecting the changing roles, responsibilities, and needs of Oakland County Older Adults. Martha reviewed each of the three goals, the strategies that have been proposed to address each goal, and why each goal is important. Martha also told the members that if they believe there are additional strategies that could be added they can be submitted for consideration for the 2024-2025 Goals & Objectives. At the conclusion of Martha's presentation, she requested that the 2023-2024 Goals & Objectives be approved. **A motion was made and seconded, and the 2023-2024 Goals & Objectives were approved by unanimous vote.**

SAC Roundtable:

Mark Kelly (District #2): Had a meeting with the Friends of Troy Seniors and Lyndsey Ramsey, the new Rec. Supervisor. An update was given on what Troy plans to do with their Senior Center Grant. The Royal Oak Senior Center is undergoing a lot of refurbishing with their Senior Center Grant Funds.

Dianne Bubnar (District #4 and covering District #5): Both Auburn Hills and OPC have conducted events honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The ability of seniors to access the programs at both Auburn Hills and OPC have dramatically increased since the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Bridget Giampa (District #6): Ms. Giampa stated she has learned a lot during the past 6 weeks. She thanked Cam McClure for providing an in-person orientation of SAC. Lake Orion is a very large community, and she has been gathering information regarding all the services that are available at the community center for Lake Orion seniors. The community center is very active

with many programs going on. She is working on setting up a meeting with Chelsie Petrusha, Sr. Recreation Programmer at the Lake Orion Senior Center. Orion Township recently purchased the Great Lakes Athletic Center which is going to be converted into a community space which may include the senior center. There has been a lot of concern raised regarding this possibility. She introduced herself to Chris Barnette, Township Supervisor and to members of the Township Advisory Board and explained her new role as the SAC Rep for District #6. She was told that she would be kept in the loop regarding proposed plans that might impact the present senior center and its members.

Ruth Jordan (District #9): There are two senior centers in Pontiac: Ruth Peterson and the Bowen Center. A correction to the December Meeting Minutes: Ruth Peterson was temporarily closed due to floor replacement. The Bowen Center is next to be scheduled for floor replacement. Ruth Peterson's two Senior Specialists have retired. Deborah Findley, Sr. Specialist at the Bowen Center has been appointed to oversee the Ruth Peterson Center. There are plans to fill the second vacancy.

Cam McClure (District #10): The Bowen Center is now located in District 10 but it makes more logistical sense for Ruth to service both Ruth Peterson and the Bowen Center. Mr. McClure is hopeful that Waterford will soon receive their Grant Award. The J is a non-profit that services all of Oakland County. Cam also has been covering senior centers in Districts 7 and 8 and working on District 12 until the new SAC District Reps have been appointed.

Sylvia Whitmer (District #11): The new West Bloomfield Connect Senior Center (located at 14 Miler Road and Farmington Road) has more than 1,500 members and is growing. The Programs are being well attended.

Noreen Yuskowatz (District #13): Noreen has the Highland Senior Center, the Milford Senior Center and the South Lyon Senior Center. The Original Coffee with Jim Ellison at South Lyon had to be rescheduled due to the weather. All 3 senior centers will be offering tax services for their seniors in 2024.

Dean McCullough (District #14): The Wixom Senior Center had nothing to report. The Novi Senior Center is very interested in the Oakland Saves Program but is having a difficult time obtaining information on the Oakgov.com Website. They would appreciate assistance in obtaining more information on the program.

Brenda Anderson (District #15): Northville will be hosting an Open House on Monday, January 29th, from 10am to 11am. Commissioner Markham will be attending, and Jim Ellison has been notified of the event. Although Northville has received some recent upgrades, they do not have a kitchen facility to provide food service to its members and are looking for additional funding.

Brenda is also covering the Costick Center (located in Novi) until the District 16 Rep has been appointed.

Greg Keeler (District #18): The Southfield Community Center will be offering free tax services for seniors. The Pearl Wright Center in Royal Oak Township is very appreciative of the support that they received from SAC regarding the Senior Center Grant. The center has gone through some much-needed renovations and the staff has moved out of its temporary trailer. The center is offering two free programs (Matter of Balance and a Dietician Workshop), a Black History Program, and Senior Trips.

Martha Schlesinger (District #19): No updates. May have information soon regarding “The J” (formerly Jewish Community Center)’s establishment of a satellite senior center in Ferndale.

SAC Coordinator – Pat Zawadzki

Pat requested that SAC District Representatives and Members at Large please continue to send in their monthly activity reports. She informed the members that District #12 Commissioner Christine Long has submitted a candidate for approval to fill her vacant District Representative Opening. Pat also introduced Robert Whitcomb, who was invited to attend today’s meeting and is awaiting final approval to become the SAC District #8 Representative for Commissioner Karen Joliat. Mr. Whitcomb provided a brief introduction of himself.

Pat told the group that sometime after our monthly meetings return to in-person, we will be looking for places (like our senior centers) to host off-site meetings.

Our guest speaker for the February 26, 2024, meeting will be a speaker from the Michigan Gaming Control Board, and the Topic is “The Bet”. The last Presentation SAC about gambling addiction and seniors generated a lot of discussion.

Adjournment – Rock Abboud

It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 PM.

**NEXT MEETING
VIRTUAL
Monday February 26, 2024
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Microsoft Teams link will be shared prior to the meeting.**