



# Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton AREA AGENCY ON AGING

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## Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Friday, November 18, 2022

The Citizens Advisory Council of the Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging met on Friday, November 18, 2022 at the Hopewell Senior Center. The meeting was opened in pledge to the flag and prayer.

***MOTION - On a Meitrott/Lohr motion - The minutes of the September 30, 2022 meeting of the Advisory Council are approved as presented. Motion carried unanimously.***

Council President Prudence Harclerode welcomed Senator Judy Ward and Aide Aaron Welkner to the meeting. Senator Ward's coverage area is Huntingdon, Fulton, Blair, Mifflin and Juniata Counties and she is currently Chair of the Senate Aging & Youth Committee. The Senator mentioned several bills that have passed including Acts 48 & 49 on elder abuse and Act 94 on expanding eligibility for PaceNET. She noted the special senior center grants provided by the PA Dept. of Aging and said how wonderful and important centers are for older persons, as well as the in-home services and skilled care provided through AAAs. Senator Ward related her thanks and gratitude to those who work in the aging field.

Connie Brode, AAA Director, continued the discussion and said in-home service providers still cannot get enough staff to fill the Agency's service care plans. There are just under 100 consumers on a waiting list and there is concern how long this will continue. Protective service cases are also increasing with a lot of financial exploitation and neglect reports. The Agency has about 80 guardians and many have to be placed out of the area which separates them from their families. The Agency is guardian of last resort and appointed by the court. Locally, there is no other entity for guardianships and this is becoming a problem.

Another big concern is not receiving funding from the State. The Agency has a \$1 million line of credit and just took out a second one for \$300,000 since the State has not released any base allocation funds from the Lottery since September. Senator Ward said she would follow up on this and that it isn't right for programs to have to take out lines of credit. Connie said there is usually a little delay in receiving funding at the beginning of a fiscal year, but not this long. Ms. Meitrott asked about the interest and Connie said it comes out of the AAA's budget. Commissioner Shives said the base allocation for AAAs has not increased in about 15 years and asked about an increase. Special money has been received over the years, but it is



mandated by the State for certain services. Senator Ward said that AAAs provide vital services and there is a review of the Lottery to try and change the structure to allow for more funding.

Cart rides are increasing, but remain below pre-Covid levels and senior center attendance is also low. Connie praised the senior groups for their fundraising to help with costs at the centers. Lori Heaton, Deputy Director, said people are worried about paying their heating bills. Senator Ward has met with suppliers and said they are also having problems. She said this is statewide and there needs to be an increase in LIHEAP reimbursement. Ms. Harclerode said the price of diesel is going to impact shipping of food and other supplies. Ms. Mellott praised the new center operator at Warfordsburg and said she is doing a great job of informing participants about available programs for heating and other assistance.

Bobbi Manges thanked Senator Ward for the State continuing to provide the special senior center grants. However, they are half of what had been allocated in the past and she is hopeful they can be increased in the future. It was also suggested that a portion of the grants be competitive and a portion be a set amount for each center for less extensive projects.

In closing, the group thanked Senator Ward and Mr. Welkner for taking their time to come and discuss aging matters.

Brenda Gordon, PA Council on Aging representative, provided an update. There was discussion on what senior centers are doing to offset meal costs with lower attendance and most held fundraisers, social interaction and activities among centers, soup sales, crafts, etc. It is noted that federal regulations require any food items made and sold include a label listing all ingredients and where it's from. Some also do games of chance which requires a license costing \$125 per year. Ms. Gordon provided information on the LIHEAP program, as well as Caregiver Support which the Agency's offers in our 3 counties, and other available resources to seniors.

Connie noted that the increase in the cost of meals has had an impact on the congregate and home delivered meal service. If funding gets tight there could be no-meal days which can be a time for the senior groups to have a fundraiser meal. There was discussion on the continuation of 'grab & go' meals which were established by the State during Covid and were to be temporary. It is up to each agency if they want to offer the 'grab & go' meals. The feeling is that more people will come to the centers if they were discontinued. Connie said if someone needs a home delivered meal they can be assessed for the frozen meal program.

***MOTION: On a Blatt/Zimmerman motion - The Advisory Council recommends to the Joint Board of Commissioners that the 'grab & go' meals be discontinued. Motion carried 12-1.*** Connie will present the Council's recommendation at the next Joint Board meeting.

Connie introduced Mr. George Palmer from the Center for Independent Living (CIL) who discussed collaboration with the Agency on various cases and how well this works. CIL covers 7 counties in the region to meet the needs of persons with any disability, including peer

counseling, advocacy, independent living skills and transitioning. Anyone needing assistance must ask CIL for it. One Council member said she has referred persons to CIL and they are very good to work.

Tony Molinari, transportation director, said trips are slowly increasing and we continue to interview for Cart Drivers in Bedford County. He said the on-time trip rate continues to be high at 97-98% and thanked all transportation staff for continuing to do a great job. The Agency expects the arrival of 6 mini-vans shortly from Rohrer Bus. Hopefully, 11 transit buses will be here after the first of the year. In response to a clarification question by Mr. Emerick on the special senior center trips, Connie said the fare is \$1.00 for each stop on the trip and this money comes to the Agency to provide additional service.

Having no other business, the Citizens Advisory Council meeting adjourned.