



Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton
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ON AGING**

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**Citizens Advisory Council
Friday, March 31, 2023**

The Citizens Advisory Council of the Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging met on Friday, March 31, 2023 at the Hopewell Senior Center. President Prudence Harclerode opened the meeting and welcomed special guest former Senator Roy Afflerbach.

On a Meitrott/Lohr motion - The minutes of the January 27, 2023 meeting are approved as presented.

Executive Director Connie Brode opened discussion, noting that Mr. Afflerbach is currently a consultant with the PA Area Agencies on Aging Association (P4A), as well as the PA Association of Senior Centers (PASC) and is a strong advocate for seniors across the Commonwealth. Mr. Afflerbach began in state government in 1970 and worked on the Lottery Act and creation of the PA Department of Aging, keeping it a separate entity. He retired from the Senate in 2008 and began consulting with PASC. He feels that having Jason Kavulich, a former AAA director, as the new Secretary of Aging will be very good and he brings with him a wealth of knowledge.

The budget is a major issue with no increase in the base allocation from the Lottery for over 12 years. There is a great need for additional funding to support all the state mandated services provided by AAAs. The Legislature is reviewing funding following the budget hearing and he said Secretary Kavulich did a good job testifying in front of the committee. He noted the changes already made to the Rent & Property Tax Rebate program for FY24-25. At the request of the federal government the intrastate funding formula, which disperses the Older Americans Act money and hadn't been changed in many years, went through a revision. As a result 18 AAAs lost money. This continues to be reviewed.

Legislative changes in the Omnibus amendment for the Older Adult Protective Service Act (OAPSA) is being looked at including financial exploitation and criminal background checks. A workgroup is reviewing what is needed and will present their recommendations to the Legislature. Guardianship work was discussed, with Mr. Afflerbach saying that Connie did an excellent job testifying at the Committee's guardianship hearing in Harrisburg. He said 10 years ago there was a requirement added that all persons had to have legal representation if being considered for a guardian. Connie said the Agency requires every person to have legal counsel. In response to a question, Mr. Afflerbach said legal fees should come from OAPSA funding and uniformity for this will probably be reviewed.

March 31, 2023

Governor Shapiro has added \$10 million to his budget request for aging services. All this has to be presented to various state committees. It was noted that our area is very fortunate to have good elected officials who are involved with and concerned about services for senior citizens. Connie said our Representatives and Senators do attend the Advisory Council meetings from time to time. She said there still remains a concern with senior centers and Secretary Kavulich asked for an additional \$1 million for centers at the recent budget hearing. The special center grant program is now \$3 million with \$1 million going to smaller centers for projects without having to bid which is good.

On behalf of the Council, Mrs. Harclerode thanked Mr. Afflerbach for coming to the meeting and said that we are fortunate to have someone like him advocating for senior citizens.

The January financial report was presented to the group. Connie noted the overspending in caregiver support, home delivered and congregate meals, versus underspending in in-home services due to provider's not being able to get workers. Waiting lists continue. Centers are also doing periodic fundraising meals which helps raise money for their groups. In regard to transportation, PennDOT did provide some extra money this year, but a fare increase still needs to be done for July 1. A special transportation committee is looking at 4 scenarios and will select one for Connie to recommend to the Advisory Council and, subsequently, the Commissioners. A special Council meeting may be needed to review the proposals. She did say the current \$1 fare to come to a senior center is being eliminated.

Lori Heaton reported on the Echo housing project. There was a lot of interest and an applicant has been identified. They are working through the remaining regulations to get the house set up. She said the municipality where the house will be set is very receptive to the idea.

Tony Molinari said that we have received 1 of 5 minivans and the others should be coming soon from Rohrer. Coach & Equipment has told him the 11 buses are getting the graphics put on them and should arrive around mid-April. The Cart system is also getting upgraded radios.

The Senior Expo at the Smithfield Firehall in Huntingdon is April 20. The Agency will have an information table and will be providing bag lunches. A public educational event is being planned at the Bailey Building in Huntingdon on June 28. Plans are for afternoon and early evening sessions to draw in more people. April 13 at 5:00 pm is a Dementia Friends training at the Saxton Firehall and is open to the public.

Bobbi Manges said that the Healthy Steps falls prevention programs are ongoing through May at the senior centers. The Young at Heart games will be held throughout Bedford County from May 1-19 and she had brochures with her.

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