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Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2023

A meeting of the Citizens Advisory Council for the Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging was held on Friday, May 26, 2023 at the Hopewell Senior Center. The meeting was well attended and called to order by Council President Prudence Harclerode at 10:00 AM.

Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. ***MOTION: On a Lohr/Cooper motion, the minutes of the special April 28, 2023 meeting were approved. The motion carried.***

The meeting was turned over to Director Connie Brode who explained that one of the main topics of this meeting was to focus on the Agency's Congregate and Home Delivered Meal (HDM) programs. She explained that she has asked representatives from Pittsburgh Companies North (PCN) to be here to participate in the meeting and introduced Lee Markosky, Fallon Smith and Dave .

Lee explained that there has not been much communication with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA) and there has been no annual nutrition conference since the onset of COVID-19. However, the 2023 National Nutrition and Aging Services Conference is being held in Philadelphia in June and will focus on bringing people back into the Senior Centers. Lee stated that people are starting to come back, but not to the level it was pre-Covid.

Lee explained that the purchasing of food is going better, however, there are still some supply chain issues. He explained that everyday PCN gets a notice of what food they will and will not get. He said that they do now have some of the other vendors they can go to. He explained that PCN does want to improve its communication with the Centers on what food will not be coming so that the menus can be adjusted. He explained that supplies have been significantly affected by two major facilities being destroyed by fire including Maid Rite and PFG Reinhart. The other thing is that companies have now limited their variety because of less demand such as when schools were closed, etc. However, they are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel now with the list of foods not being available getting shorter.

Regarding the quality of the food, Lee explained that they are looking for the new Aging Program Directive (APD) which they are hoping will loosen up some significant restrictions surrounding sodium, fat and protein requirements. Connie asked if PCN felt things would improve with the new PDA Administration and Lee felt it was too soon to tell. However, both agreed that some advocacy work needs to be done locally to help bring people back into the centers. Lee said that, while some people do indicate that people don't necessarily come for the food, he feels food can be a draw. He would like to look at different strategies in writing menus, but much of this will hinge on the requirements in the new APD. One idea is to have more enhanced meals. These meals do go over the fat, sodium and protein requirements, but currently they limit these to one time per week and then the rest of the week gets

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adjusted to accommodate. Lee stated from what he understands the new APD is looking better than the one we currently have, but it is still not reviewed and released by Harrisburg. The other issue with the current APD is that people have not been able to take their leftovers home due to fear of it being mishandled and someone getting sick. However, the discussion from the group was that these are adults coming into the centers and, if they are allowed to take their leftovers home from a restaurant, they also should be allowed to take leftovers home from the centers.

Another discussion was that PCN and the centers are working together to come up with themed meals and Connie expressed that she appreciates this in an effort to bring in the public. She stated, however, that we are not seeing the rebound we are hoping for and just not bringing in the younger generation. Bobbi Manges, Senior Center Director, stated that the whole face of senior centers is changing across the state and that people want flexibility and expressed that people do not necessarily want to come on a daily basis anymore. Much more discussion was held about ideas such as taking the center outside of the walls and having a congregate meal at a park or other locations that would be appealing to people. Another idea was about offering breakfast or other strategies such as advertising a free meal day. It was discussed that often when the centers provide something as free, they make more in donations than with the usual meal. Mary Gates expressed that Saxton has 3 senior housing apartment buildings and that many of these people do not come to the center. Suggestions were made about putting the menus and fliers up in these buildings. Virginia Cooper also suggested that we have information at urgent care centers and doctor office waiting rooms.

Discussion regarding particular menu items and special requests was held. Joanne Mellott requested that PCN start offering gluten free foods or at least sending the meals to the centers in such a way that they could be prepared as gluten free, such as not putting the breading directly on the chicken and sending gravy and other sauces separately. She also expressed concern about the vegetables and noodles being "mush" when they arrive at the centers. Lee felt that these items were an easy fix and Fallon offered some ideas on current practice and how to remedy this situation. Mrs. Lohr expressed concern with the quality of the bagged lettuce and suggested PCN send lettuce heads that the centers could tear up upon arrival which would be more fresh. Discussion was held that people want more salads such as grilled chick salad.

The meeting moved onto other business. Mrs. Cooper asked the group about CART and if it is considered "state" and asked who sets the rules/regulations for CART. She also asked if it is influenced by county government. Connie explained that it is a shared ride public transit system and that, while our Board of Commissioners does vote on certain things, it does not provide any funding or say with regards to the guidelines for ridership, etc. which is set by PennDOT. Mrs. Cooper stated that the reason she was concerned about this was because she is aware of a candidate running for commissioner who says they want to eliminate CART.

Budget Review: Connie reviewed that the Agency is over budget for meals and that this has created an opportunity for the centers to plan some of their own meals and keep the proceeds to benefit the centers. The Agency is also overspent in Caregiver Support Program (CSP). Connie explained

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that this program has been growing by leaps and bounds within our Agency and we are asking for more funds to support the program.

CART is still waiting for approval from PennDOT for the proposed fare increase. It was hoped that there would be some discussion about this yesterday, but the meeting was requested to be rescheduled by PennDOT. Connie explained that there has not been a lot of concern about the proposed new cost because most people expected that the fees would have to go up. However, she did explain that while we may lose a few riders initially, we will eventually grow and expand. It was pointed out that the cost of using an Uber or paying for gas/maintenance is still higher than CART fares.

Farmer's Market Vouchers (FMVs) are delayed until the end of June due to issues with printing the checks. The Agency will likely not plan any distribution dates until after July 4th to be sure we have the checks in hand and are ready to disperse them appropriately. The information received from the Department of Agriculture with regard to the delay has been forwarded to local newspapers, TV and radio stations as well as the Agency website.

Legislative Updates: There has been a proposed change in the tax/rent rebate program, but this has been held up. We are waiting for changes in the protective service law and are anticipating a new bill to be introduced by Senator Ward.

Other items: The Agency is still going around the counties offering the Dementia Friends training. The next scheduled training is being held at the Warfordsburg Senior Center on July 7th at 10:00AM.

There is a public Elder Justice Event scheduled for June 28th in Huntingdon at the Bailey Building on Penn Street. There will be two sessions--one from 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM which will discuss SCAMS and Power of Attorney, and a second session from 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM which will discuss SCAMS and keeping your personal information safe. There will be a reception with food and conversation in between the sessions from 4:30-5:30 PM. People can feel free to sign up for one or both sessions.

ECHO House update. The family that was selected in Broad Top no longer needs the unit and, therefore, the Agency is again looking for new applicants for the program.

Having no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.