

Maryland Commission on Aging
Maryland Department of Aging, 301 West Preston Street Suite 1007, Baltimore, MD 21201
February 11, 2015
Minutes

Members Present: Stuart Rosenthal--Chair, Sharonlee Vogel--Vice-Chair, W. Lee Hammond, Hon. Jordan Harding, Maria Jimenez, Louise Lynch

Members Absent: Sandie Callis, Hon. Barbara Frush, Maurice DiPoli, Paula Martin, Michael McPherson, Chandhok (Jesse) Singh

Staff Present: Acting Secretary of Aging Rona Kramer, Deputy Secretary of Aging Stephanie Hull, Principal Counsel Jeffrey Myers, Gabrielle Allen, Rosanne B. Hanratty, Rachel Lonberger, Andrew Ross

Greeting: Mr. Rosenthal welcomed Acting Secretary Kramer and invited Commission members to introduce themselves and summarize their backgrounds for her. Acting Secretary Kramer described her professional background and service as a State Senator, including her membership on the Budget and Taxation Committee which has oversight of the Department's budget.

Mr. Rosenthal provided a capsule summary of the Commission's role as an advisory body to the Department.

Acting Secretary's Remarks: Acting Secretary Kramer noted that 82% of the Maryland State budget is governed by mandate and, as a result, the governor in his proposed budget has little leeway to modify budgets for programs for older adults. She stated that, while the Legislature does not set the budget totals and cannot add to the governor's proposed budget, it does have authority to cut and/or move monies within the budget.

She said that the State and Department of Aging face fiscal challenges and that the Department of Aging, like all State Departments, must take a 2% across-the-board reduction in its budget this fiscal year. Because there are only six months remaining in FY 2015, the actual cuts will amount to approximately 4% of the Department budget. She noted the Department's challenges in meeting the required maintenance-of-effort requirements for its Federally-funded programs and its efforts to respond to the State audit findings through improved record-keeping. She stated that Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) budgets will be reduced in FY 2015 and that it is projected that an additional 2% cut in AAA budgets will occur in FY 2016.

Ms. Lynch expressed concern about the cuts for medical adult daycare subsidies in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's proposed budget and asked Secretary Kramer to follow up on this issue.

Acting Secretary Kramer said that, notwithstanding budgetary challenges, she is quite impressed with the Department's programs and plans statewide visits in the near future.

December minutes: The December minutes were approved without changes.

Legislative Update: Mr. Ross, the Department's legislative liaison, reported on the Legislature's activities. He noted that one-third of state legislators are serving their first terms and that approximately 2500 bills had been proposed as of the date of the Commission meeting. The Department tracks bills dealing with issues and programs for older adults and people with disabilities. For example, bills have been introduced dealing with elder abuse, Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs), and Maryland Access Point's (MAP) role as a single gateway for long-term care services and supports. Mr. Ross supplied the Commission with information to access the General Assembly's website so that they can examine the content and status of proposed bills.

Ms. Lynch expressed concern about the funding of MAP, the Federal funds for which are expiring in FY 2016. Ms. Hull stated that having the MAP program become self-sustaining has been the goal from the outset and that the MAP program will continue to operate. Ms. Lynch requested that the Department make a presentation to the Commission on changes in MAP funding.

Tentative Commission on Aging/ Local Commissions on Aging Training: Mr. Hammond stated that the Department's ability to fund the training in 2015, as it did in 2013 and 2014, is uncertain. Acting Secretary Kramer indicated that audit findings about the appropriate use of program funds would be taken into account in any decisions on funding the training.

Mr. Hammond said that the Commission training subcommittee and Ms. Hanratty are securing information about and will visit possible venues. He said they will evaluate topics for training based on suggestions from local Commissions on Aging, attendees at the 2014 training, Commission members and Department staff. Ms. Lynch suggested that transportation be considered as a topic.

As an alternative to the Department's funding the 2015 training, Mr. Rosenthal asked if training participants could pay for the training and Ms. Lynch and Ms. Vogel asked if it is possible to obtain sponsors or partners to fund the training.

Mr. Myers stated that there are both legal and fiscal guidelines for securing sponsorships and having participants pay for the training. He said both he and the Department's fiscal staff should be consulted for specific guidance if training is to be sponsored (financed) by an outside group or paid for by participants.

Guidelines for meetings and events of the Commission on Aging: Mr. Myers stated that members of the Commission must comply with the Maryland Public Ethics Law and the Maryland Open Meetings Act. Commission meetings are open to the public.

Mr. Myers said that neither Department employees nor Commission members may solicit gifts for the Commission, including meeting space, food, lodging or transportation. He stated that the Secretary may seek gifts or contributions to help fulfill a Department mission or function and this authority may be delegated, as appropriate. Mr. Myers noted that there are statutes and guidelines governing the acceptance of gifts, for example sponsorships for events such as the Leadership in Aging awards and training. He said if sponsorship is sought both ethical and fiscal guidelines must be followed.

Mr. Myers said that if the Commission receives an unsolicited invitation to hold a meeting at a private facility, Department staff should ascertain that the requirements of the Ethics laws and the Open Meetings Act can be met, that the facility is prepared to accommodate members of the public who may attend, and that the Department is aware of outstanding complaints and quality-of-care issues, if any, associated with the location. He stated that a Commission meeting may not be held at a facility regulated by the Department (e.g., a CCRC). He noted that the Ethics Law militates against accepting a gift of free meeting space from an entity that does business, or seeks to do business, with the Department; is a registered lobbyist; or has a financial interest that may be affected substantially and materially by the Department's or Commission's performance or nonperformance.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at noon.

Minutes submitted by Rosanne B. Hanratty