

Maryland Commission on Aging
Maryland Department of Aging
301 West Preston Street Suite 1007, Baltimore, MD 21201
December 9, 2015
Minutes

Members Present: Stuart Rosenthal--Chair, Sharonlee Vogel--Vice-Chair, Hon. Jordan Harding, Maria Jimenez, Rose Maria Li, Louise Lynch, Michael McPherson, Mary Ellen Thomsen

Members Absent: Sandie Callis, Hon. Barbara Frush, Dot Principe, Chandhok (Jesse) Singh

Staff Present: Rona E. Kramer, Secretary of Aging; Rosanne B. Hanratty, Staff to the Commission

Guests: Honorable Benjamin F. Kramer, Maryland House of Delegates

Greetings and Introductions: Mr. Rosenthal greeted those present and welcomed and thanked Delegate Kramer for attending the Commission meeting

Approval of the November 18, 2015 Minutes: The minutes of the November 18, 2015 meeting were adopted without change.

Secretary's Remarks: The Secretary said that the Department's 2017 budget has been submitted to the Governor, that budget issues from prior years had been resolved, and that the Commission will be briefed on the budget once it is approved. She explained that in FY 2015 very small program cuts had been necessary and that Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) had been asked to identify the program(s) on which they determined small budget cuts would have the least impact. In response to Commissioners' inquiries on specific programs, the Secretary explained that there are many competing needs and priorities and that AAAs are often in the best position to determine local priorities.

The Secretary emphasized that activities to maintain health and to prevent loss of functioning in older adults are key. Efforts to promote health and fitness are critical to enable adults to age optimally especially because older adults are a rapidly increasing percentage of the overall population nationally and locally. She noted that the *Groceries to Go* program is going well and that MDoA staff is working with stakeholders to grow the program to the level necessary for continued Federal funding.

In response to questions, the Secretary said that roughly 55% of MDoA funding is from the Federal government, through appropriations under the Older Americans Act, and its distribution throughout the state is largely formula-driven. The Department also receives some funding from other sources including general revenues of the state of Maryland and other revenue streams.

The Secretary also said that an announcement naming a Deputy Secretary of Aging was expected to be made in the next several weeks.

**Presentation by Honorable Ben Kramer, Maryland House of Delegates, District 19
Montgomery County:**

Delegate Kramer distributed a summary of his successful legislation designed to safeguard older adults and enhance the quality of life for MD's senior residents and people with disabilities.
(appended)

Delegate Kramer observed that, in his estimation, there is insufficient interest in Annapolis to address the current and rapidly increasing needs and challenges faced by older adults, the fastest growing segment of the population. He said that his legislative priorities have included facilitating "aging in place" for older adults; enhancing safety, and combating financial and other abuse of seniors; protecting residents of assisted living and nursing home communities; and providing incentives for businesses to hire persons with disabilities.

He discussed unsuccessful legislation which he introduced during the 2015 legislative session that would have increased protection for older adults who are victims of financial fraud and abuse by granting the Attorney General the discretion to recover assets of older adults who had been victims of fraud or other financial abuse in civil proceedings. While the ability to criminally prosecute perpetrators of such fraud and abuse already exists, the criminal evidentiary standard—beyond a reasonable doubt—may be too high a bar to meet in all cases in which recovery of assets is justifiably sought. Under the proposed legislation, the Attorney General would not have been obligated to initiate civil proceedings, but would have had the authority to do so. He intends to reintroduce the legislation this year.

Delegate Kramer also noted that the increasing cost of prescription drugs, including the marked increase in the cost of generic drugs, is one of his major concerns. He also would like to see the establishment of a state-funded electronic system (with personal follow-up) ("Senior Call Check") to monitor the safety of older adults and to notify them of emergencies. He said systems exist that provide similar services for a fee but that many seniors lack the resources to subscribe to such a service.

He also expressed his support for modification to what he considers an inadequate state statute that defines the right of homeowners to void contracts resulting from door-to-door sales. The law requires notice to homeowners that they may cancel contracts within three days of the contract's being signed. He stated that he is not aware of any state with such a short-time period for cancellation. He also said older homeowners are often the targets of lengthy "hard sells" by salespersons who will not readily leave the homeowner's premises and who utilize contracts that do not have notice of the right to cancel prominently displayed and well-explained. He proposes extending the time period to cancel to seven days for all homeowners, with those over 65 having an additional three days to cancel.

Commissioners expressed their appreciation for Del. Kramer's presentation and asked that they be kept informed on pending legislation and additional legislation that he may introduce dealing with issues affecting MD older adults.

Tentative Joint Training on September 22, 2016: Chair Rosenthal announced that Rose Li will chair the training planning subcommittee. Mary Ellen Thomsen and Sharonlee Vogel will serve on the planning subcommittee. Commission members agreed that the broad topic of healthy aging would be the subject of the training and that the planning committee, with the assistance of Ms. Hanratty, will flesh out the program, identify speakers and resources, and finalize a site for the training. Ms. Hanratty stated that state monies may not be available for the training, that the Department budget had not been finalized, and that decisions on resources devoted to the training would be made by Secretary Kramer.

Speakers and Topics for Future Commission meetings: Ms. Hanratty distributed a list of topics, that had been identified during Commission meetings and in training sessions, for future Commission meetings. These include: transportation needs of older adults; emergency preparedness; long term care insurance; wellness and prevention of disease and loss of function; partnership-building; and coordination and interaction with local commissions on aging. She stated that she is identifying and inviting speakers for Commission meetings through June. These include a speaker on long-term care insurance, and coordinating an appearance by the Howard County Executive through the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO), whose staff indicated that he expressed an interest in attending a meeting of the Commission. Chair Rosenthal requested that Ms. Hanratty follow up with MACO staff on their discussion, at the November, 2016 Commission meeting, of the availability of advocacy training and the participation of Commissioners in MACO's late summer meeting. Mayor Harding suggested that a representative of the Maryland Municipal Leagues be invited to speak. Ms. Hanratty stated that she would continue to identify speakers on other topics of importance to MD older adults.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM

Minutes submitted by Rosanne B. Hanratty