

*Final minutes as approved by the COA on September 17, 2008*

**FAIRFAX AREA COMMISSION ON AGING  
FINAL MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Wednesday, July 16, 2008**

Braddock Hall – 9002 Burke Lake Road Burke, VA

Commissioners present: Tena Bluhm, Elly Doyle, Eileen Duggan, Jack Fritz, Sally Hottle, Danielle Wight, Joe Heastie, George Myers

Commissioners absent: Anita Kapper

Staff present: Grace Starbird, Carolyn Carter, Brenda McGrail

Others present: Patrice Winter, *Eldercare Coordinator*; Norine Swaminatha, *Alzheimer's Association*; Jane Edwin, *Acting Liaison for Mt Vernon At Home*; Heidi Merkel, *Department of Planning and Zoning*; Keysha Blakely, *Long Term Care Nursing Home Administration*; Jacquie Woodruff, *Fairfax Area Agency on Aging*; Ursula Barretta, *Fairfax Area Agency on Aging*; Alison Baez, *Department of Administration for Human Services Contract Management*; Barbara Antley, *Division Director for Adult and Aging, Department of Family Services*

The meeting of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging (COA) was called to order by Tena Bluhm, Chair, at 1:03 p.m. in the Braddock District Conference Room.

Ms. Bluhm then introduced visiting members of the public to the commissioners and welcomed them to the meeting.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Chairperson Tena Bluhm presented the draft minutes of the June 18, 2008 meeting to the commissioners for approval. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Eileen Duggan, seconded by Elly Doyle and George Myers and unanimously accepted without change.

**COA Officers 08/09: Election and Confirmation**

In correlation to the New Business of last month's meeting, Chairperson Tena Bluhm presented the commissioners with the nominations for vice chairperson of the COA. Elly Doyle nominated Eileen Duggan to continue in the position of the Vice Chairperson for the 2008-2009 year. Her nomination was seconded by Tena Bluhm. All were in favor and unanimously accepted Eileen Duggan as the new Vice Chairperson for the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging.

## **Fairfax 50+ Scorecard - BOS ' Committee on Aging July 28**

Chairperson Tena Bluhm reported that a lot was accomplished at her meeting with the Chairman of the Board's Committee on Aging, Supervisor Pat Herrity earlier today. In preparation for the COA's discussion with Board of Supervisor's (BOS) on July 28, 2008 at the Government Center at 10:00am, the commissioners will speak to the highlights from the report on their various topics.

Supervisor Herrity recommended holding a Scorecard meeting with the Board of Supervisors once a year. The COA will suggest topics of discussion for him to put before the BOS and will be invited to these sessions as observers but not to participate at the table.

Ms. Bluhm suggested adapting the COA's tracking form and to come up with a name after Ms. Doyle asked if there was a kind of method for keeping track of each action asked of the BOS.

### **Special Presentation: Supervisor Sharon Bulova**

Supervisor Sharon Bulova began by thanking the commission for raising awareness about aging issues such as what the "aging" community needs to be prepared for and aware of as the demography changes. She continued with a snap shot introduction of how Braddock District developed.

Some of the main points of Ms. Bulova's presentation were of some of the challenges of 'aging in place.' She mentioned that in the 1940's to 1960's destinations were so spread out and nothing was connected unless you drove to it. One couldn't walk anywhere. There had been no consideration in housing developments for those who could not drive. The question she posed was what does one do in an auto-dependent living pattern if people needed to get around?

She also asked 'What do you do if you are 50+ and want to retire? What opportunities are there to help you plan the rest of your life?' On the other end of the spectrum, what happens to the more frail seniors who need assistance?

She revealed that Braddock District supports and backs independent living places that have activities and people who can monitor the health of these elders. The building of these new independent living units like Little River Glen, an independent, senior living retirement complex in Fairfax, where there is privacy within the units and lots of space to socialize, are models for the District to provide housing assistance – a variety of housing types to suit different lifestyles, where one is able to walk to various locations not far from one's unit. Cities like Arlington, Del Ray in Alexandria, Fairfax Corner, and Reston Town Center have all converted old residential homes to mixed-use retail/residential areas, creating a sense of community.

Ms. Bulova stated that this is the kind of thriving small community of charming old homes, boutique stores, fun and eclectic restaurants, with a great neighborhood feel that Fairfax County is trying to establish and the more people see this neighborhood charm, cute homes, and proximity to shopping and movie theatres, the more they become accustomed to it.

Supervisor Bulova believes that Universal Design laws and codes/public facilities manuals should mandate that housing is accessible, accommodating and visitable for everyone.

She is interested in hearing the thoughts of the commissioners as the BOS has this issue on the forefront of their agenda. The BOS is also preparing for the increasing ethnic diversity of the county which will pose another set of challenges.

When the floor was open for questions, Sally Hottle expressed her concern for the lack of knowledge about the services available to people in Fairfax County because residents 'don't take the time to search for this information.' Supervisor Bulova's response to her concern was that it is usually hard to sift through news and that word of mouth is more feasible. She mentioned that some groups may not know what services are available to them due to language barriers and being new to an area; all the more reason why community outreach is necessary, basically knocking on people's doors to inform them.

Tena Bluhm also asked that in looking at the current budgetary concerns, will there be an adjustment in allocation for service to seniors? Supervisor Bulova responded that adjustments are reflected everywhere, however, the Board has agreed to put more on services/programs for older adults (such as transportation, housing, related health services) or leverage some of the existing services.

Tena thanked Supervisor Bulova for her time and insightful presentation.

### **Universal Design Presentation**

Heidi Merkel, Senior Planner of the Department of Planning and Zoning, briefed the commission on the draft Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan Amendment to include language for universal design. She stated that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) had directed staff in the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) to review the existing Policy Plan as part of addressing actions outlined in *Anticipating the Future: Fairfax 50+ Action Plan*; address planning for a more aging friendly community which will be livable for all ages; and receive feedback from the Commission on Aging (COA).

Ms. Merkel stated that two groups have already been at work and have evaluated current policies and regulations for possible changes to the code to better accommodate universal design. They have concluded that the Policy Plan should be amended to encourage universal design.

Proposed amendment to the Plan:

- Add definition of universal design to the Comprehensive Plan using the definition developed by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University.
- Identify that the county should encourage diverse housing stock
- Housing section of the Plan should focus on creating opportunities for affordable housing in Fairfax County.

The staff of DPZ proposes to have another briefing on the Plan amendment to the Board's Committee on Aging on July 28.

Ms. Merkel concluded by stating that the BOS rigorously follows the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan and will be holding a public hearing in September/October.

## **Director's Updates**

Grace Starbird referred the commission to the Area Agency on Aging's (AAA) Staff Unit Report of Wednesday, July 2, 2008, Attachment B of the meeting package, distributed to the commission in advance of the meeting.

## **Member Activity**

Elly Doyle: No updates at this time.

Sally Hottle reported that the Long Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC) would be presenting to the Board of Supervisors in September.

Danielle Wight shared an article in the July 11-17 issue of the RISE UP newspaper advertising supplement, which talked about 'Respecting our Elders.' The article stated that "the total senior population is expected to jump from about 12 percent now to 20 percent by 2030." It also mentioned that "the national average nursing home cost is about \$70,000 a year. The article made for interesting reading.

Ms. Wight read and distributed a copy of a letter from a citizen constituent, Ms. Sandra Reid, dismayed by the impact of proposed budget cuts on seniors. Ms. Antley responded to Ms. Reid's concerns, suggesting options for home-based care and Medicaid eligibility and stated that each individual situation is reviewed differently. Ms. Antley offered to talk further with Ms. Wight about Ms. Reid's letter after today's meeting.

George Myers: No updates at this time.

Jack Fritz shared that he had engaged in a series of emails with Dr. Gridlock, a Washington Post traffic columnist. Dr. Gridlock had mentioned in his column three weeks ago that Metro was doing away with the Senior Metro ID card. Mr. Fritz's question to him was what were seniors to use when applying for the Metro bus discount? Dr. Gridlock's response was that seniors were expected to use the Smartrip card.

With Mr. Fritz's suggestion of using the Medicare card as ID's, like the Fairfax Connector buses do, Dr. Gridlock agreed that it was a possibility but photo ID's may be demanded at the Metro bus driver's discretion. The information appeared in his column last week and Mr. Fritz invited Dr. Gridlock to a COA meeting.

Joseph Heastie: No updates at this time

Eileen Duggan shared that she attended the Northern Virginia Aging Network (NVAN) meeting the previous day. The speaker was staff to the Virginia Medical Society and discussed some of the challenges facing the health care industry. Eileen also said that

NVAN was working on its 2009 Virginia legislative platform and that she was a member of a subcommittee drafting wording on additional training for direct care workers.

Tena Bluhm reported that she attended the Building For All Committee (BFAC) meeting at the Government Center which focused on teaching consumers what universal design is, how one can use it in their homes to make it user-friendly for all ages. Meetings for “Reinventing your Home” have been scheduled for builders and architects for Friday, November 21 and for the public on Saturday, November 22 at 9am at the Government Center. Mr. Myers mentioned that it would be helpful to offer transportation to these meetings and also recommended these meetings be spread throughout the county or to offer teleconferencing.

### **Old Business**

Carolyn Carter stated that the rotation of locations of regular monthly public COA meetings has been adjusted to meet in the same place for 3 consecutive months (in lieu of 4 consecutive months discussed last month) in order to be present in all districts over a 2-year period. Brenda McGrail will work with district supervisor staff to meet in each district alphabetically, covering the remaining 8 districts beginning January, 2009. The COA will continue to meet at Braddock District for the balance of 2008 as it has for the past few years. She mentioned that the September meeting will be held at the adjacent Kings Park Library meeting room, same building as the Braddock District conference room, since Braddock Hall had already been reserved by another group.

### **New Business**

Tena Bluhm, Chair, reminded commissioners about the interview with the *Golden Gazette*. Mr. Fritz stated that commissioners are also welcome to make suggestions for articles to be featured in the *Golden Gazette*.

Ms. Bluhm mentioned that she will not be able to attend the Planning Commission meeting on July 31 regarding the Plan Amendment and asked if any Commissioner would be able to attend and speak. Ms. Doyle offered to attend.

### **Meeting Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, George Myers moved the meeting be adjourned with Joe Heastie seconding the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda McGrail