



COMMISSION ON AGING

c/o Agency on Aging, DHS

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MEETING SUMMARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FORUM March 16, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nels Andersen, Valerie Crotty, James Feaster, Gordon Hasenei, Cragg Hines, Joan McDermott, Mitchell Opalski, Patricia Sullivan, Andrea Walker, Lena Wang, Erica Wood, Laurie Young

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lincoln Cummings*, Barbara Favola * Excused

STAFF PRESENT: Maimoona Bah-Duckenfield, Glenda Blake, Randy Feliciano, Michael DiGeronimo, Meredith Eisenhart, Aaron Kocian, Susan Lane, Rachelle Thompson (intern), Amy Vennett

- I. **Call to Order:** 10:00 a.m. Ms. McDermott welcomed everyone to the CoA's Community Outreach Forum, quoting both the CoA's vision and mission statements. Ms. Bah-Duckenfield spoke about the Area Plan for Aging Services, and Mr. Kocian gave an overview of the Proposed FY16 County Budget. Ms. Bah-Duckenfield then explained how the forum would work, with core topics to be discussed: Transportation, Supportive Services, Nutrition and Wellness, and Public Information and Outreach. Afterwards, each community member was able to participate in discussions on each of the core topics with CoA members as facilitators and staff acting as scribes. Key themes were synthesized and reported back to the participants at a debriefing session at the end of the forum.
- II. **Forty-two community members signed in and participated in the discussions.** Communities that participants identified as being from: Arlington Mill, Arlington Ridge, Arlington View, Bailey's Crossroads, Ballston, Barcroft, Boulevard Manor, The Carlin, Cherrydale, Crystal Knolls, Donaldson Run, Douglas Park, Green Valley, Gulf Branch, Highlands, Highview, Langston-Brown, Nauck, Nottingham, Overlee, Penrose, Rivercrest, Rock Spring, Rosslyn, Seven Corners, Westover, Wildwood Apartments, Williamsburg, Woodland Hill, Yorktown.
- III. **Key Themes Synthesized from Discussions**
 - **Transportation (Cragg Hines):** A main topic was getting the word out about the services, who is eligible, how to sign up for them, and how to use them. Also noted: a request to evaluate the possibility of new grocery loops in neighborhoods, rather than just from buildings; more availability of wheel chair van transportation; reliability of services (do they show up and are they on time?); information and support for services provided in other languages; sensitivity of the difficulty many older and/or disabled persons have using public transportation; see if ART can do more mid-day (non-commuter) routes that seniors can use, with more bus stops, and coordination of their routes with senior centers.
 - **Supportive Services for Aging in the Community (Erica Wood) :** The bottom line was there are very good services available in Arlington, but many residents are unaware of them. An identified gap was the need to be able to find vetted (trustworthy) handymen with reasonable rates (or senior discounts) whom seniors can contact to do small jobs, such as changing hard-to-reach lightbulbs. Also, it was recommended that lists of available in-home support services

The Arlington Commission on Aging, a body of residents experienced in matters concerning older people, advises the Arlington Agency on Aging and the Arlington County Board on aging issues.

be distributed to discharge planners so that people can be safe at home after discharge from a medical facility. Some other items discussed were: concern about the low wages paid to in-home service workers and the need for flexibility in number of hours provided (the typical minimum of four hours per visit is often not needed); classes, such as fall-prevention and walking, and being able to get to enriching events; doing outreach on making one's home accessible and tax credits for this, and also about little known services, such as back-door trash pickup for persons unable to get their bins out to the curb or the Personal Advocate Service and how these volunteers can help seniors.

- **Nutrition and Wellness (Lena Wang):** The participants noted that they hear about great programs, but if they do not drive, they cannot get there. Many older residents do not realize that Arlington offers so many transportation options. Another noted issue was that the exercise programs at the senior centers are popular and fill up quickly. Senior Centers need to offer more exercise classes (possible space and instructor limitations), to have more parking, and to enhance awareness of their programs. It was noted that having AFAC on site is a benefit to residents. Some places where AFAC currently has on-site pickup are: The Carlin, Woodland Hill, Culpepper Garden, Claridge House, and Arlington Mill Senior Center. Additional AFAC distribution sites can be explored. Also noted: coordination is needed with hospital discharge planners to be sure discharged patients have the services available to be safe when they go home; Meals on Wheels is a great service for homebound persons.
- **Public Information and Outreach (Gordon Hasenei):** An overwhelming theme in this, and all of the groups, was making more people aware of the multitude of services and programs Arlington has available for older residents. The participants wanted to be sure that the 703-228-1700 number becomes well-known, as that is the main way for people who need services to be linked to them. Also, the 50+ Expo at Ballston Mall each fall is a good way for people to get information on services, programs, and resources for seniors. And, the ADSD Speakers' Bureau provides presentations on services and programs for older residents to any group that requests them to do so. Flyers on the speakers' bureau have been sent to civic associations, churches, condo associations, and other places. They discussed many venues for outreach, including getting information about senior services on a program on Arlington TV, which the Public Information and Outreach Committee has already begun looking into. Other items of note mentioned: affluent areas often are not targeted to get information on services, but even if higher-income residents are not eligible for or do not need many of the county's services, they might become volunteers or know people who do need services; outreach in multiple media is good, but many older residents do not have or use computers, so print media outreach (especially with large type) is necessary; keep exploring new venues for outreach; get more information on senior resources to community partners, such as physicians' offices and churches; try to get more information into private homes; ensure that there is diversity in outreach by providing information in languages in addition to English.

IV. **Meeting Adjourned at 12:00 p.m.** Community members were invited to stay for the congregate lunch at Langston-Brown Senior Center and have a tour afterward.