

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

Advisory Committee Meeting

January 23, 2023

Hybrid

9:30am

Members present: Hart, Beyers, Hatch, Hultberg, Stamm, Izbicki, Lesser, Mallison, Shearer

Liaisons: Burger, Hillson, Lynch, Askew, Evans, Jewell, Klein

Staff: Monroe, Bullis, Stevenson, Sprague, Willer (intern)

Public: Lawrence

1. Hatch called meeting to order at 9:30am.
2. Meeting minutes from September 2022 and November 2022 Public Hearing approved.
3. Member comment: Lesser brought up issue of monitoring the driving ability of aging drivers, believes increasing issue. Believes in the past DMV used to test vision more frequently but is now only doing it at license renewal every 7 years. Who is responsible to make sure that people have the ability to drive, especially after dark? Monroe discussed Driver Fit program and AARP Driver Safety courses at Lifelong. Burger reports that they are currently full for the next class. Sprague reported that one of the local driving schools offers seniors a comprehensive assessment where instructors will ride along with them and assess how they do. Monroe will send out information.
4. Lawrence asked about newsletters for individual towns and if there was a way to gather and send out. Monroe stated we would look into.
5. COFA Update-Monroe:
 - We have 2 potential new members.
 - Monroe will send out 2023 meeting schedule and the information on open seats on the board. Will also include information on subcommittees.
 - Postcard campaign for Fair Pay for Home Care Act. Template forms that we can get to people to fill out or share in their communities. A repercussion of this act is that the home care agencies that we contract with are now looking for COFA to make up that \$3 increase that the aides received by increasing our rates. In addition to the Postcard Campaign our advocacy group, Aging NY, is advocating for an increase in our funding to absorb the rate increases.
 - Older Americans Month- NYSOFA is working to switching back our annual volunteer recognition to May vs. November. This year it looks like it still may be a virtual event in November. COFA is looking to keep a recognition event in May whether it is a luncheon or another open house. Stay tuned for information on nominations.
 - COFA has hired a new part time Account Clerk Typist who will be starting February 6th.

- PERS Report: Monroe reported on PERS data for 2022. Previously had a PERS Advisory committee which dissolved after contracting with Doyle. Monroe will report out quarterly. Numbers have remained fairly consistent. Reasons for removals include deaths, moves, decision that device is no longer needed or desired, etc. Service calls are what our Outreach staff troubleshoot with clients. PERS data is broken down into varying demographics. Financially, program is breaking even. Currently running around 50 clients as zero pays due to being unable to afford the monthly payment. Mallison suggested promoting program through Southside or GIAC to reach more people of color. Hart reminds members that part of what they can do is share information with their communities. Lynch asked if Siri or Alexa has had an impact on the program, Monroe answered no, that we haven't noticed an impact.

6. Liaison Reports:

a. FLIC: Lynch-

- Spoke about the Postcard Campaign
- Loan Closet is very full; if someone cannot afford the borrow fee, they can waive it

b. Burger: Lifelong-

- Have added some new classes and programs to their catalog that is available online
- Finalizing a new website and they are hoping that it will be up and running by beginning of March; people will be able to register for classes online
- Have started taking appointments for their Tax Preparation program and are very busy; program previously offered through Alternatives Federal Credit Union is no longer running; appointment scheduling is all staffed by volunteers; will be doing taxes in person starting Saturday, February 4th; also have sites in Trumansburg at the Ulysses Philomathic Library and in Dryden at the Southworth Library; will also be doing on site clinics for residents of Titus Towers and McGraw House; program is prioritizing 60 and older or a disability or had their taxes done there last time call designated tax line 216-7862; others will be accepted starting March 1st. 211 is scheduling some Tompkins county folks for the VITA program in Cortland County. Izbicki asked why Alternatives is no longer doing the program; Burger commented that she wasn't sure but that they just didn't apply for the funding this year. Lawrence asked if they were still accepting volunteers. Burger stated that they may need more volunteers for greeters.

c. Evans: Foodnet-

- On days that Foodnet is not able to deliver meals, clients have Blizzard Bags with shelf stable meals
- End of year, served over 160,000 hot meals;
- Save the Date for Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 4-6pm; Mac n Cheese Bowl at the Farmer's Market; booths will be available for tabling; will be working on how to address parking

d. Hillson: TCWH-

- Health Department and Mental Health Departments have completed their merge and are now Tompkins County Whole Health; have new logo and are rolling out information to public
- Completing Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan narrative; sharing more in February, will be presenting at the Health Planning Council meeting
- COVID- reminders about vaccinations and taking precautions as we are in the midst of Flu season; community level based on CDC metrics did go to Medium last week; masks and test kits available in libraries and other places in the community

e. Klein: Legislature-

- Gov. signed law that included a requirement for an extra notification for all low-income seniors; we had already notified people but this law required an extra notification; if you receive or hear that someone received a notice from the County Assessment Department, this is something that always existed
- NYS law that allows local governments to give partial property tax exemptions to volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance drivers; up to each municipality to enact it or not, planning to do it at the county level
- Community Recovery Fund-gave out 6.5 million to 52 organizations; Lifelong and Foodnet are both recipients
- Reshuffling committee structure; Klein will remain chair of the Health and Human Services Committee which COFA is a part of; Klein also became Vice Chair of Legislature, may effect his role on this committee-will keep posted; Members of Health and Human Services Committee are: Travis Brooks, Vice Chair, Randy Brown, Amanda Champion, and Susan Curry (after special election)

Mallison asked about the status of the Second Wind Expansion project in Newfield. Klein responded that the Town of Newfield is against the project moving forward and are about to enact a moratorium that would stop this project from going forward. Klein added that they currently have 18 cottages, and they want to add 25 more. Maxed out sewage capacity of land so these extra 25 cottages would have no running water, there would be a central bath house. This puts them in the category of campgrounds which is what the moratorium is on. If you would like to discuss further, please reach out to Dan.

f. Askew: Statewide-

- Tomorrow patients advocate teach in from 10-11am on Medicaid/Medicare changes
- In February will have information on the budget and the State of the State so keep an eye out for that
- Looking for information on people who are suffering from medical debt; looking for stories from people or who are not getting care because they are afraid of accruing medical debt.
- Free newsletter and tool kit you can sign up for

- Any events that you would like tabling for please let Sarah know; can do free presentations

g. Jewell: Love Living at Home-

- During last year went through a strategic action plan; have changed mission statement
- Have changed age limit from 62 to 50
- Working on year end reporting-provided 450 programs last year; over 1500 volunteer provided services
- Starting subgroup to expand more rural outreach
- Working on service to provide transportation home from same day procedure

7. Discussion: Visiting Nurse Service of Ithaca and Tompkins County: SueEllen Stuart, Executive Director

- Have been in community since 1984; daily census is usually around 250 patients; in a year VNS provides service to about 2000 patients
- Services provided by VNS are Nursing, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Social Work, Nutrition, and Home Health Aide.
- They are certified so they can bill Medicare as well as all major insurance companies including all Medicaid providers
- They are providing services to covid positive patients; have provided services to 40-50 covid positive patients over the past year
- Specialty Programs: working with Hospital on a program called "Choose Home"-if a patient is in the hospital and are trying to decide if they need to go to a nursing facility for rehab or if they could do rehab from home, they are providing more intensive services to provide them the option to go home; also have a palliative program called "Advanced Illness Management"-provides more support to patients who have long term chronic illness; support for anxiety and pain; additional social work support to assist with important end of life decisions
- Licensed agency to bill Medicaid-primarily for patients who require assistance with medication (pours and education);
- Medicaid Health Home- if they have Medicaid and 2 chronic health conditions or 1 mental health condition; provides services by a Care Coordinator to provide additional support such as transportation, getting medications, attending doctors' visits, reviewing discharge orders, etc.

Lesser asked about the reimbursement rate of Medicare and if it's adequate? Stuart responded that Medicare consistently looks at reducing the rate for home care and changing the reimbursement structure. Each year they face changes and it gets really hard to adjust to provide these services; one change that they face this year is going to Value Based Payments which requires you to reach certain benchmarks. If those are not met, they can lower reimbursement. Medicare Advantage Plans can cause issues as they are not user friendly for reimbursing home care.

Total staff of 80; certified in Tompkins (can bill Medicare), licensed in 6 counties (bill Medicaid)

Rehab and therapy can take place in places like Bridges- will receive therapy until they are able to do outpatient therapy

No wait lists for services.

Medicaid Health Home- service that provides transportation and support at physician's appointments by Care Coordinators

8. No old business

Next meeting will be February 27, 2023

Meeting adjourned 11:00am