

**BUCKS COUNTY AREA AGENCY ON AGING
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
October 17, 2022**

The Bucks County Area Agency on Aging held its regular Advisory Council meeting virtually (via Zoom) on October 17, 2022, at 9:00 AM.

Council members present: Barbara Minter (via telephone); Jim Kelly; Maggi Boyer (chairperson); Jeremy Wechsler; Rich Newman (vice chairperson); Lorena Rodriguez De La Garza; Beth Hudson Keller; Bob Silberg; Karen Hirschman; Mike Bannon; Tammi Mancuso; Chuck Pressler

Guest: John Small, Bucks County Foundation for Aging

Council members absent: Yagnesh Choksi; Jane Fox-Laquer; Bud Johnson

Council members excused: Pat Long; Nancy Spears

AAA staff present: Kathy Bennett, AAA Director; Carol Boyle, AAA Deputy Director; Bill McTigue, AAA Deputy Director; Carin Tinney, AAA Deputy Director; Jessica Seith, AAA Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER

- Pledge of Allegiance
- No corrections or additions were made to the minutes of the September 12, 2022, meeting. A motion was made by Tammi Mancuso, seconded by Rich Newman, minutes were approved as written.

CHAIR REPORT

Nominations Sub-Committee Report – Rich Newman

- Two new candidates have been interviewed and invited to join the council.
 - Billie Willoughby – upper Bucks County resident, previously worked as a Blue Cross care manager, resides in a retirement community, former Ombudsman.
 - Jeff Trently – lower Bucks County resident and currently a full-time caregiver for his mother; will have valuable contributions/insights to add to our understanding of caregiver needs.
- The new candidates are making their applications and need commissioner approval. They are anticipated to join the council in January 2023.
- Nancy Spears and Bud Johnson will be rolling off the council at the end of December 2022.
- Per the by-laws the council can have 15-21 members. The committee is seeking one or two more members to add to our diversity by utilizing the characteristics and categories developed by the committee.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Bucks County Foundation for Aging – John Small

- The Bucks County Foundation for Aging is the 501(c)(3) non-profit arm of the Bucks County AAA and began about eighteen years ago.
- The Foundation began because sponsors can be hesitant to provide funding/donations to county government.
- County funding is designated for specific programs and often very restricted. The foundation provides a way for sponsors to make donations and have those funds be used for existing programs such as Senior Games, the Neff Symposium, etc., and for other things for which there is no other county funding available. The need for funding is identified by Bucks County AAA aging care managers to support seniors already involved in existing AAA programs.
- The Foundation has recently transitioned to having non-county employees in its officer roles while AAA director and administration team provides insight and guidance.
- The foundation has a website (buckscountyfoundationforaging.com) and advertises in social media and the Bucks County Herald. The Foundation continues to work on getting the word out about themselves and what it can offer to the community.
- The Foundation is partnering with Amazon Smile and receives donations each time a registered participant makes an eligible purchase through Amazon.
- Details to come on upcoming events social events.

Enrollment- Kathy Bennett

- PA Department of Human Services has agreed to keep the assessment and enrollment portions of the aging waiver separate. Presumably Maximus will continue to perform the enrollment portion at this time.
- The final agreement/contract (not yet officially signed) between DHS and AAAs is presumably for a three-year duration with the option of two additional years. It is hoped that funding increases occur each year in the new contract.
- P4A is endeavoring and dedicated to making assessment a legislated item that the AAAs perform instead of a contracted item. This is to avoid having to renew a contract every three years and to be in a better position to advocate for change in the way Maximus provides enrollment services.
- Kathy will inform the council when the agreement is finalized.

AGENCY UNIT REPORTS

Long-term Care Unit – Carin Tinney

Information and Referral

- The current agency phone system/process requires callers with questions about long-term care/aging services and supports to leave a message and receive a call back from one of the five I&R care managers.
- On November 2, 2022, the agency call center will be going live and taking Information & Referral and Protective Services calls in real time. This allows for more convenience to the caller who may not be available for a call back.
- The new call center will allow for accurate data collection on calls and quality assurance, i.e., how much time the care manager spends on a call with individuals, how long it takes to complete a Report of Need (RON), etc.

OPTIONS

- OPTIONS care managers currently have lowest caseload numbers in recent years. This is due to the I&R department providing quality information at the front end of a caller's involvement instead of passing a caller to OPTIONS immediately and because of having a care manager solely dedicated to home delivered meals.
- The decrease in caseload allows OPTIONS care managers to work on a project to assess how many clients will be affected by the new SNAP benefits guidelines and a one-year pilot project with US Aging and AmeriHealth Insurance. This program identifies the needs of AmeriHealth clients and offers assistance with enrollment in public benefits such as SNAP, the water assistance program, weatherization program, etc. The Bucks County AAA is one of two AAAs in the country to pilot this program, the other AAA is in Virginia.

Protective Services

- Care managers and supervisors are currently being trained on new iDashboards. This is a new web-based portal being rolled out and it will provide a very clear picture/visual to care managers, supervisors, and administrative staff on the status of investigations. The reports are uploaded twice a day.
- Blair County Senior Services has taken over the statewide hotline. Bucks AAA anticipated a large reduction in call volume and RONS volume. We have seen a small daily decrease in these areas. The largest decrease has occurred on weekends and evenings in the RONS that the agency completes for individuals under sixty.

Fiscal Unit – Carol Boyle

- The fiscal unit is preparing to close out the first live quarter for the state. The agency recently received an updated aging program directive from the state with additional funds. Additional direction is needed as it is unclear which part of the funding is federal and which part is not federal for some specialty programs. A detailed, updated budget will be provided at the next meeting.
- A preliminary budget/negotiation meeting was held with the county. The agency is requesting an increase in funding from the county and hopes to receive 1.32 million dollars to slowly build back up to where we were five years ago. Five years ago, the county provided the agency with 1.6 million dollars and the agency always returned county dollars when it was possible to receive aging block grant dollars, Aging Well dollars, etc. The agency is reaching a critical point in not having the same access to Cares funding as it did before.
- ARPA dollars were received by the county and the PA Department of Aging. The PA Department of Aging provides those ARPA funds to the Bucks County AAA under the aging block grant. Bucks County AAA was awarded 1.8 million dollars, distributed over three years. ARPA funds are being used in the Family Caregiver Program, preventative health, support services, with the bulk of the funding being used for congregate and home delivered meals. Some of these funds are heavily restricted which can make it difficult to expend the funds, however, the agency will be able to use the funds to expand to things such as caregiver trainings, the Home Meds program (medication management reviews with pharmacists), Senior Connect Program, Del Val partnership, and system upgrades (such as new call center upgrade). The agency has until the

end of FY 23-24 to expend these funds at which time we will determine if these expenditures are sustainable or one-time.

- The ARPA dollars received by the county were for the Human Services Division. To determine how best to spend this funding, applications were put out to non-profits and other organizations to determine their needs. Once the applications were approved monies were divvied out. Bucks County AAA was tasked with oversight for two projects: Ivins's House Shared Housing Program and Care Without Walls (CWOW) (in home support utilizing technology).
- Funding is also being used to assist senior centers with recouping some of the monies they lost while closed during the pandemic.
- The dashboard report through August 2022 was shared. The report showed an increase in Protective Services calls, assessments, and PA MEDI. These numbers are expected to continue to increase through the year.

Public Affairs Unit – Bill McTigue

- The 19th Annual Neff Symposium is being held Thursday, October 20, 2022, at Bucks County Community College. Several relevant topics will be covered. Over 255 individuals are registered to attend and continuing education units for nursing, social work, and nursing home administrators are being offered. The keynote address is through Senator Casey's office.
- National Prescription Take Back Day is on October 29, 2022. The AAA is a charter member of the program and remains involved with the program since its inception in 2010. A home-bound pick-up option is offered on the day of the event and is now being offered once per month for individuals who register. The Homebound Medication (HOME) Disposal Program is now offered on the fourth Wednesday of every month from 10 AM – 2 PM, beginning in November. The AAA will be the repository for the pick-up requests and will coordinate with the sheriff's office to schedule the pick-up time.
- Snipes Farm produce program (funded through ARPA funds) delivered produce to twelve senior centers biweekly for eighteen weeks. It is estimated when the program ends for this year that twenty-seven to thirty tons of fresh, locally grown produce will have been delivered.
- United Way of Bucks County has made an offer to deliver fresh produce to the senior centers when the Snipes program ends. Last year, the senior centers who participated in this program had an additional ten thousand pounds of produce delivered.
- Medicare annual open enrollment is open from October 15 through December 7. The agency has already received calls for appointments for Medicare insurance counseling (PA MEDI). There are typically 1,500 to 2,000 hours of volunteer time dedicated in that period of time, with approximately 1,300 to 1,400 people served. A similar turnout is expected this year.
- The new call center roll-out will also affect Public Affairs front desk staff handling the main AAA number. The options for calls will be increased so that callers can be directed to the proper staff more efficiently.
- A new outside facing platform through the county called CivicRec will be used to register callers for Senior Games, the Volunteer Program, and the Health and Wellness Program.

OTHER BUSINESS

- The Bucks County Hub and Veterans Affairs offices are getting an overhaul due to growth in staff and services. Their offices are temporarily located on the fourth floor of the Administration Building.
- Hearing aids are available for purchase online without a prescription. While this is good news, it could create many opportunities for fraud and could heavily impact seniors. Kathy will check with

PDA to see if they have materials that they can provide on this. Many seniors do not realize they don't have to go to an audiologist's office, which can be very expensive. Costco and big-box stores offer hearing tests and hearing aids at a much lower cost.

- PCOA – No new updates. The information shared at September 2022 meeting was identical to information shared at the PDA quarterly meeting. That information was shared at the September advisory council meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

- Motion made by Bob Silberg, seconded by Barbara Minter.

NEXT MEETING

- The next meeting of the Advisory Council will be held virtually starting at 9:00 AM on Monday, December 12, 2022. Sign-in information will be supplied the week prior to the meeting date.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Seith, AAA Administrative Assistant