

Commission on Aging

Minutes of the Meeting

December 18, 2017

Present: Chair Chris Robertson, Marion Freer, Dayna Sierakowski, Kathleen Brennan, Sheila Silverman, Mary Ann O'Grady, Mary Morrisroe, George Noyes, Advisor Karen Gaudian

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Robertson at 2:30pm.

Our guests at this meeting were Rep. John Frey, Darylle Willenbrock from WCAAA (Western CT Area Agency on Aging), and Sen. Toni Boucher.

Sheets were passed out to members of the public in attendance to give to John Frey to bring to Hartford, in petition of MSP program cuts that were made in recent budget.

Sen. Toni Boucher stated that every state has gone to lower limits.

Daryll Willenbrock pointed out to representatives that there are other states with higher limits including Alabama which has a much lower cost of living than CT. She also stated WCAAA and CT Legal Services could support an asset limit, but not income limit. She believes the State of CT does not want to implement an asset limit, as it would be more complicated.

Darylle asked public to continue to call representatives to continue to petition changes, at 860-240-8600, 8500, 8800, 8700

Susan Proctor of Ballard Green asked if special session has been held yet. Darylle stated that it has not taken place.

Barbara Kavanaugh--dad in Prospect Ridge--asked if changes are to go into effect Jan 1st---Darylle stated it will be March 1st. More than likely could be June 1st.

Sen. Toni Boucher stated that CT house and senate members signed petition to get themselves in before Christmas to fix this problem (does not have approval of Governor). She has been asked to save December 26th to only deal with the MSP issues.

Sen. Boucher also discussed changes the governor made during the summer for a four-year freeze on job cuts for state employees. She stated that she would not support an increase in taxes.

Rep. John Frey talked about difficulty of balancing budget. Stated that CT is in bad shape and hard to put arms around it. They are "Balancing it on the backs of those who need the help the most."

Meeting on the 26th, will get budget through June 30th. Rep. John Frey stated that asset test could be considered. John stated that only one person testified against MSP change when the budget was passed. Karen Gaudian pointed out that no one knew change was coming.

ConnPACE was program before this, to help with Part B coverage. Sen. Boucher asked if anyone gets earned income tax credit. She asked if state should keep that or get rid of it for MSP program.

Elizabeth Azud, 201 Stadley Rough Road, Danbury—works in insurance. Thinks we have to have one group at meeting that is not here--the pharmaceutical companies. They are not contributing, because they're not made to. People are not going to be able to afford their medications.

Mark Breckenridge, 15 Lawson Lane, Ridgefield—how will they plan to implement asset limit?

John Frey—not sure. There used to be an asset with ConnPACE, that they then got rid of so that everyone could participate. Big question is what happens July 1st—issue needs to stay in the forefront. Mark -why doesn't state say that we can buy drugs from Canada and bypass manufacturers?

John—we have a lot of pharmaceutical companies in CT. John can call drug companies on case by case basis to get help for people. John says it's a possibility—and a good point.

Toni Boucher- stated that medications could be older from Canada—to what degree should we allow free market to determine/vs. price fixing/big government to sway (ie. Canada is government medical plan).

John Burke, 25 Gilbert Street, referred to the heat subsidy program—asset test already in programs run by state.

Susan Proctor, Ballard Green—mentioned that we don't have a competitive market here.

Laurie Baldwin, 55 Prospect—asked about continuing to contact legislators. John Frey said to include Gov. Malloy on list.

Karen Gaudian—better to call or email?

John Frey—email better because it becomes part of record

Maree Macpherson, Ballard Green—wondered why bill was put through...she has paid taxes, social security, etc. She stated at her age she shouldn't have to be pleading for medication. Gave details of her situation—meds are \$2000 a month. She's angry, it's insulting and demeaning that it was passed. If this goes into effect she would be left to live on \$4,000 for the entire year.

John Frey—stated that he's heard of 80 year olds having to go back to work.

Susan Proctor, Ballard Green—stated that state has become insolvent. The city of Hartford is facing insolvency, state is close. State employees cannot be touched.

Toni Boucher---employees came to state (realizing change in administration next year)—wanted to protect benefits for 10 years, with 4 year no lay off. Unions could come to table if pensions at risk long term—state does not have to pay if state doesn't have the money.

State employee programs should be on par with local town programs; Like 401K program.

Everyone else's benefits are being eroded.

Sen. Toni Boucher—legislators get 28K a year (part time).

John Frey—legislators eligible for pension—after 20 years could get 8K...Based on last 3 years of job with state. John Frey has put forth bill in the past to get rid of pension

Barbara Kavanaugh—asked when next info will come out?

John Frey—after 26th...thinks Governor will sign bill immediately, giving reprieve until June 30th. July 1st, will have \$116 million hole in budget.

Linda Kavanaugh, father on Prospect Ridge effected—have pharmacies and providers been notified of extension?

Coco Barron—Prospect Ridge—why can't government stop drugs from coming from Mexico? We need to talk more about issues in town? We need more activities for seniors.

Tony Phillips, Town of Ridgefield Director of Social Services—we have many things happening that effect seniors in town. We need to educate our seniors about how things are going to impact them.

Toni Boucher—this happens all the time—budgets are 800 pages long, and it would be good to have foresight.

Debra Franceschini—advocate for seniors—asked timeline—if there's a chance it doesn't get passed? John Frey stated that it will be passed.

Kimberly Henderson, advocate, 25 Gilbert Street, Outside of looking at cuts at MSP, something will have to be cut, will people be kept informed?

Toni Boucher—best through news media, sign up for newsletters, sign up for online publications out of Hartford.

John Frey-if he gets a single email, he tries to respond. If he gets 3-4 letters, he considers it a trend.

Karen Gaudian—can you notify Ridgefield Social Services of any updates/changes so that we may pass onto effected residents?

John Frey-yes.

Don Gardner, Ballard Green, stated unions did roads all last year—reclaiming roads...

Elizabeth Azud—when she looks at deficit for MSP –saving \$134 per person per month, is not an actual accounting of cost. Many of these people are going to end up with full Medicaid and then the State is going to be paying out even more.

John Frey—we have second highest MSP second to DC. Our cost of living is higher; property tax 3 times higher in CT than MA.

Maree Macpherson--Where do we go from here?

Toni Boucher—advocacy is most important. People should go to Hartford when issue is proposed. When appropriations committee holds meeting—between Feb and April.

Maria Thompson, 19 Bennetts Farm Road, hadn't received letter yet.

John Frey—benefits will not change.

Minutes from last month approved by Kathy Brennan, seconded by George Noyes.

Meeting adjourned at 3:52pm.