

DENVER COMMISSION ON AGING

Minutes – October 15, 2009

Location: Cook Park Recreation Center

Present: Cecil Bethea, Jr., Juanita Rios-Johnston, Muriel Arvay, Phyllis Hirshfeld, Sandi Armstrong, Erin Kruse, Chris Wanifuchi, Morris Price, Sr., Dre’ Dufford, Fern Osborne, Michelle Williams, Jamie Malone, Mary Madrid

Excused: Sandi Armstrong

Guests: Loretta Martinez, Jayla Sanchez-Warren, Anthony Aragon, Betty Sweeney, Kristi Butkovick, Bill Lundgren, Suzanne Laurila, Frank McGovern, Joyce Butler and Benita Muniz

TOPIC	DISCUSSION SUMMARY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE/PLAN
Minutes	Minutes were approved as corrected.	
Guest Speaker: Betty Sweeney 303.455.7600 x 14	<p>Andrea Autobee from Congresswoman DeGette’s office was unable to join us. Betty Sweeney from Senator Michael Bennet’s office was in attendance and was able to share some information on health care reform legislation that is in process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House has passed 3 bills, the Senate has passed 2 bills. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is costing the bills out currently. The Senate is working to meld the 2 bills passed by the HELP (Health, Education, Labor and Pensions) and Finance Committees. The leadership of both houses will get together to meld their individual bills, then they will go to conference to reconcile one package. The President wants this to happen by Christmas. • The aging community needs to be aware of the myth that Medicare benefits will be cut. Medicare Advantage Plan is Medicare Part C (A is hospital, B is doctors, D is prescription drugs). If you choose an Advantage Plan, it includes prescriptions and can include things like Silver Sneakers, vision, dental, etc. Part C charges government 14% more than regular Medicare. The government is looking for savings in that 14%. Part C may also include premiums, co-pays and there are caps. Medicare covers hospice care, but Part C does not. The “cuts” would come from this 14%. Dre’ said that Advantage plans require patients to go to doctors in a specific network but many seniors don’t know that when they sign up; then they are stuck with it for one year. The plans don’t pay for hospital stays longer than 10 days. Advantage Plans are not good options for seniors who are not healthy. <p>Phyllis stated that some Advantage Plans are very good. She said that dental is not covered with regular Medicare and the medical community is beginning to understand how important dental care is to seniors.</p>	

Jamie said that open enrollment is November 15-December 31st. She will send out information to Commissioners about Medicare education sessions.

Joe said that some insurers are withdrawing their Advantage Plans because of concerns they will not be reimbursed at sufficient levels with the changes in healthcare.

Betty said there is a hearing this week regarding the reimportation of prescription drugs.

AARP has a good benefits calculator but it was cautioned that they sell insurance plans. Joe said AARP has made an effort to separate its advocacy and insurance business. Medicare also has a good tool to calculate benefits.

Betty recommended using SHIP resources to understand choices (Senior Counseling Health Insurance Plan). You can also call 303.894.7552 - Liz Tredennick from State Dep't of Insurance.

Morris stated that you can go buy insurance on your car, house, etc, but it's so difficult for healthcare. He asked what is the conflict that makes it so difficult? Betty said that the culture developed of company provided health care emerged and now it's being re-thought because of the expense. She encouraged individuals to understand their personal responsibility and to become more savvy consumers. Joe responded that it is a matter of cost.

Bill Lundgren stated that as a provider there have been no increases in reimbursements since 1996 but his costs continue to increase.

Betty recommended going to the website and watch Sen. Bennet's presentation on healthcare. Joe shared there is a excellent Power Point presentation on Sen. Bennet's website: www.bennet.senate.gov

Betty said tort reform is about 1% of conversation but it drives up costs because doctor's order extra tests to cover themselves. Approximately 60% of bankruptcies are health related and 80% of those are people with insurance. The bankruptcy percentage is much higher for seniors. Joe said that there aren't catastrophic coverage clauses in the plans being proposed and every bill has caps and Medicare doesn't have it at all.

Cecil said he recently read 3 articles about this issue. One said most insurance plans have a \$100,000 cap per disease, and it hasn't been raised in 10 years. The average cancer treatment costs \$50,000 and he wonders how we will meet these expenses in the future.

Phyllis said, as representatives of seniors in the community, we have a responsibility to be

	<p>educated and advocate for those seniors. She encouraged everyone to read the legislation, keep abreast of what is happening in Washington and contact our elected officials. Fern asked how will we get the information about to the general public. Phyllis responded that until there is a final bill to understand and communicate, things are moving too quickly to try to respond.</p>	
<p>Committee Reports</p>	<p>Advocacy Committee: Dre’ reported that cmte did not draft letter addressing cuts but asked for clarification as to content. Betty Sweeney suggested being concise but share additional details as available. Cmte will draft it and send to Commission for approval. Jayla suggested highlighting one or two issues that are most concerning.</p> <p>Accomplished goal of developing an advocacy plan that addressed the needs of seniors. Developed plan to advise Comm. on legislative issues that need action/input, collaborated with Denver Human Services on Elder Abuse Awareness Day Program, met with leading advocates in City to educated cmte members about process and how to have successful outcomes and provided Commission with speakers addressing critical senior issues.</p> <p>Partnership Committee: Phyllis reported that the cmte met this month and it has met its major goal of visiting the other County Councils on Aging. Continuing to work to strengthen relationship with Office on Aging through regular meetings between Phyllis and Anthony. The third goal was to set up service providers to present at monthly meetings and cmte will continue to invite to future meetings. For the rest of the year the members will focus on reaching out to other City Commissions and attend those Commissions meetings.</p> <p>Anthony suggested charging the Partnership Cmte with reaching out to City Council members and Phyllis agreed. She mentioned the nice brochures that some of the other County Councils utilize and the cmte would like to develop one.</p> <p>Fern received information recently on AARP’s conference on Livable Streets and would like Commission to look at. Jayla shared that Denver County is working on Living Streets initiative. Loretta said that first session occurred last night at Montbello Rec Center. She will share future dates/events. Gideon Burger is heading up this process for City. Chris raised a concern that with the budget constraints at the City would any action be taken. Some changes can be made with minimal expense, such as changing timing of street lights, and Anthony shared that this was started with an EPA grant.</p> <p>Outreach Committee: Mary reported that she, Cecil and Anthony had a conference call. The cmte has held two meetings out in the community. The next meeting will be held at DRCOG and the December meeting will be at Highlands Senior Center. Business cards have been made for Commissioners.</p> <p>Summit on Aging is planned for fall of 2010 and will be a major initiative of the cmte and Commission next year. Mary sees it as a good opportunity to dialogue with seniors.</p>	<p>Loretta will share with Commission dates of future Living Streets sessions in community.</p>

	<p>Mary will distribute posters and our information to meal sites and there are about 20 in Denver. Cmte is pursuing having town meetings.</p> <p>Gala Ball is set for Tuesday, 12/8, at the Convention Center and tickets will be \$20. Fern would like all Commissioners to sit together and Mary can reserve one or two.</p> <p>Michelle commented that they have been doing outreach to known entities but are still interested in finding the hard to reach seniors and will focus on it more next year. Jayla mentioned the regional County Council will also be working on this so stay in touch.</p> <p>Anthony suggested having a focus on the Census in 2010.</p>	
Nominating Committee – Phyllis Hirshfeld	<p>Cecil, Vicki, Mary, Fern, Chris, Michelle, Juanita and Phyllis are being reappointed.</p> <p>Bill Lundgren, Joyce Butler and Benita Muniz are being appointed through the Mayor’s Office. Three of four open positions will be filled.</p> <p>Chris, Mary, Phyllis, Sandi are cmte members and Anthony serves as ex-officio. Zane and Erin are continuing as Treasurer and Secretary. Sandi will become Chair and we are seeking a Vice Chair.</p>	
Age Matters Initiative – Anthony Aragon	<p>Anthony said the video will be filmed on November 2nd and 3rd; focus on seniors speaking about their concerns. The Commission will be more heavily involved in next stage.</p>	
DRCOG	<p>No report because of extended meeting with DRCOG at next month’s meeting. However, Joe mentioned the importance of completing the survey on providers. They are beginning the funding cycle and the Commission’s feedback is critical in the process.</p>	
Denver Office on Aging Report – Anthony Aragon	<p>Council fairs are going very well. Has begun planning for Mayor’s Gala Ball. He is attending the Outreach Committee meetings.</p>	
Chair’s Report – Phyllis Hirschfeld	<p>The GLBT Commission has requested support in opposing the proposed Denver Vehicle Impound Ballot Initiative (I-100). It is already on the ballot and will be mailed in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>Fern moved that DCOA publicly oppose Denver Vehicle Impound Ballot Initiative (I-100). Dre’ seconded. Motion passed.</p> <p>Need to form an ad hoc cmte to plan January’s retreat. Let Phyllis know if you are interested.</p>	
Community Questions and Input	<p>Anthony encouraged visitors to serve as volunteers on sub-committees.</p> <p>Fern attended C4s Community Based Services Seminar and spoke on a panel about the Older Americans Coalition.</p>	

Next Meeting	Thursday, November 19 th 9:30-11:30 am DRCOG Office 1290 Broadway Denver, CO	Jayla will send out map and parking information.
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