

**North Carolina Coalition on Aging**  
**Minutes of Friday, May 18, 2018 Meeting**

**Held 10:00 a.m. in Room 104, Brown Building on Dix Campus in Raleigh**

**In attendance:** Mary Bethel, Bill Lamb, Marty Lamb, Alan Winstead, Janice Tyler, Lisa Riegel, John Thoma, Kent Earnhardt, Sarah Straniero, Emily Duberman, Nancy Francis, Linda Shaw, Catherine Goldman, Carol Kelly, Roger Manus, Ray Riordan, Betsy Crites, Gina Upchurch, Brian Kennedy, Martha Fowler, Leslie Jones, Regina Bell, Hank Bowers, Tommy Goldsmith, Randolph Cloud, Audrey Edmisten, Joseph Wheeler, Tracy Colvard, and Charmaine Fuller Cooper.

On phone: Dick Hatch, Dee Hatch, Guy Weaver, Chrissie Moody, Jeff Horton, Jillian Hardin, Kerry Hepburn, and Scott Herrick.

**Opening Remarks and Introductions** – Mary Bethel, President

**Approval of Minutes from April 20, 2018 Meeting** – Marty Lamb, Secretary.  
Minutes were approved.

**Review of Treasurer's Report** – Alan Winstead, Treasurer, reported. Balance is \$17,284.97. We have two new individual members - Ann Webster from Columbus, N.C. and Laura Martin from Durham.

**Activities and Updates Since April Meeting** – Mary Bethel reported almost everyone has paid their dues this year who paid last year. Two *Updates* have been sent out recently along with other communications including a recap of what's gone on at the legislature and talking points for the Aging Policy Listening Sessions. The comments from the Coalition on the Medicaid concept papers were sent in on April 27. Mary went to Dot Crawford's hundredth birthday party in the western part of the state on April 24. The DAAS director position is still posted. On April 13, Janice Tyler sent out information that Mary Bethel's email had been hijacked which could prevent delivery of emails from her. Mary noted that she had a conversation with Dr. Richard Dest who was referred by Suzanne Martin with the Oral Health Collaborative. He is advocating for Medicare coverage for

dental care for older adults. He said his team of dentists and hygienist serve over 200 senior living facilities in 95 counties in the state. Gina Upchurch with Senior PHARMAassist noted that a lot is being changed about Medicare in 2019. She requested a summary of things that CMS is working on at our next meeting. Charmaine Fuller Cooper with AARP offered that some of us need to strategize with incoming legislators to make sure they are aware.

Mary participated in the Care4Carolina meeting on April 23<sup>rd</sup> by phone. Their next meeting is May 21, and they are also having a prayer breakfast coming up on May 23. The Legislative session has started and there are lots of committee meetings. It was not a traditional start with 20,000 teachers marching on the opening day. It may be a very short session. The Aging Policy Listening Sessions are going well. There were over 100 in attendance at the Asheville session. Adult protective services (APS), housing, transportation, and other issues were mentioned. Three other Listening Session are coming up. Persons have three minutes to speak at each. The Governor's proposed budget is \$24.5 billion dollars.

**Federal and State Developments:** There is not much on aging in the Governor's budget, but there is a request for a new staff position to deal with protective services and guardianship and support for APS and guardianship - \$1 million total with \$81,000 for the staff position and the rest to local departments of social services. An additional \$2.8 million for affordable housing and \$3.9 million to support housing for persons with disabilities was also in the budget. Having enough rural health care providers in rural areas is a concern. Other items supported in the Governor's budget proposal include expanding Medicaid, funding the suicide prevention hotline, increasing the complaint investigation staff with the NC Division of Health Service Regulation, and funding for two new nursing homes for veterans. The budget provides match to enhance election security enhancements. There is a 1% increase for state retirees and 8% for teacher raises.

Our Virtual Lobby Day is May 22. We are in the second year of a two year budget, and the House and Senate leaders have been working on the budget development and it is almost finished so we need to focus on relationship building with legislators. We need to place emphasis on making connections with health and human services legislator leaders: Rep. Dobson, Rep. Lambert, Rep. Dollar, Sen. Hise, and Sen. Pate. We need to be consistent with our mission and with our talking points. Having Constitutional amendments on the November ballot in the following areas are being considered: voter ID, protecting crime victims' rights, protecting right to hunt and fish, prison support, and establishing an income tax cap. Concerns about a tax cap were shared. There is huge distinction in N.C.

between who's thriving and who is not, commented Gina Upchurch. Charmaine Fuller Cooper shared that in the aftermath of the Equifax breach, Rep. Sane is interested in legislation to address consumer protections when there are breaches.

The U.S. House of Representatives will be voting on the Farm Bill today. This would change the way that SNAP program works with work requirements a possibility. On May 8, the President released his formal request for rescission of \$15 million in unspent federal funds, most of which was in the CHIP program (last year's funding). Gina Upchurch commented that there are some sweeping things being talked about by the President.

**Update from the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the Division of Aging and Adult Services** – Hank Bowers, Assistant Director of the Division of Aging and Adult Services, provided an update on a number of things. It is Elder Abuse Awareness Month. Listening Sessions, as noted above, are being held. The Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Programs met April 15 and will meet again on May 19. Contracts between counties and DHHS will have performance agreement in them for state Special Assistance (SA) and Protective Services for Adults. The contracts have to be in place by July 1. Staffing for regional offices is being discussed. The Center for the Support of Families will be having listening session during the summer, but they are not scheduled yet. In June, Joyce Massey Smith will represent the Division on a program on opioids and older adults in Wilson. The Director's position for DAAS has not been filled yet but is expecting to be announced soon. Lisa Worth (Housing Consultant) and Jessalyn Bridges (No Wrong Door program) are new hires for the Division. Alicia Blader will be the Alzheimer's Coordinator replacing Mark Hensley. Shenika Keia will fill the Ombudsman position vacated by Laura Jean Ward. Melinda Charles will be coming on board to oversee the SCSEP program. He is pleased about the new position proposed in the Governor's budget to work with adult protective services. Hank shared that he went to the meeting for State Aging Directors in Atlanta for his first time and heard many interesting speakers.

**John Thoma reported on the work of the Coalition's Organizational Structure and Resource Development Workgroup** – (John is a member of the Workgroup). The Workgroup met on May 11 and continued work on drafting by-laws and articles of incorporation. Draft by-laws from other organizations and from the NC Center for Nonprofits have been very helpful. David Heinen with the Center for Nonprofits has agreed to review our draft by-laws. The final draft of the by-laws will be shared with the members prior to the June meeting and voted on at the June 22 meeting. Dick Hatch who was joining the meeting by phone asked a question

about why we are becoming incorporated. He said that it was his understanding that we do not have to be a corporation to become a 501-C3. Mary volunteered to follow up with Dick after the meeting on this. Gina Upchurch said that the Workgroup looked at the pros and cons of becoming a 501C-3. The Workgroup is encouraging the Coalition to seek sponsorships for the annual meeting in September which can support the annual meeting as well as the continuing work of the Coalition.

**Addressing Senior Hunger in North Carolina** – The remainder of the meeting was spent hearing from the panel of presenters on senior hunger/food insecurity and having discussion and questions and answers among the attendees and panelist about this.

- Audrey Edmistein, Aging Program Specialist, NC Division of Aging and Adults Services, brought awareness to hunger among older adults in North Carolina. Every year a survey is done on food insecurity for Feeding America and the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. We now have the second highest rate of marginal food insecurity in the nation per the survey. As the population of older adults goes up, the problem of food insecurity increases. There are food deserts across the state which contribute to the problem. The correlation between food insecurity and health care was shared. With food insecurity there is a higher risk of hospital admissions and readmissions. Charmaine Fuller Cooper asked about the tie in with oral health issues. Audrey did not have the data but noted that health issues are related to what one eats too. Audrey shared that a study at the emergency room at UNC found that over half of older adults coming in had malnutrition. Alan Winstead said at Wake County Meals on Wheels they have 175 people on their waiting list so they do not need more referrals of hungry people without more resources to address the problem. Audrey said we need to collaborate and work together. There are numerous programs to help including food bank, senior farmer's market program, local food policy councils, NCBAM, etc. Home delivered meals can now be shown by data to have powerful effect on money savings and improved health. Medicare may be looking at more flexibility soon that could help. The average monthly food stamp allotment for seniors is \$118. There is effort to identify more seniors who might qualify. She stated that she would like to see two added standardized screening questions relative to Hunger Vital Sign questions.

Gina Upchurch shared that there is a social determinants workgroup that is looking at utilization of the two questions.

- Regina Bell, Assistant Section Chief for Economic and Family Services, NC Division of Social Services, presented next about SNAP and persons with dual eligibility (Connie Dixon could not come today). She discussed the Simplified Nutrition Assistance Program. Persons have to be receiving SSI and be living in the community and not receiving benefits from any other state. She also discussed numerous programs and various eligibility criteria. Benefit Data Trust (BDT) is the vendor for the outreach program with dual eligible. Mary Bethel mentioned concerns that outreach to seniors by phone calls and letters may not be an effective way to reach them as people are skeptical of contact from those they do not know. Working with groups that seniors know would probably help to open the door to reaching more people.
- Betsy Crites, Co-Coordinator for Durham Farm Food Network/End Hunger Durham, discussed some of their efforts to address food insecurity as well. They were founded three years to address coordination. They do policy work. Their first response was to work on SNAP to protect the basic transitional SNAP. They are also working on ESAP. It's a waiver from standard rules starting at age 60 rather than 65 and allows for longer certification times and a simplified application process. She would like to see a state waiver for this. Gina Upchurch reported that Dr. Besty Tilson, the State Health Director, is behind it. It may take advocacy. Eight states already have it. This would be a demonstration project. If we got it, we could make an impact on the number of people who get SNAP. She'd suggested the Coalition advocate with DHHS for this waiver. In some states it has been rebranded and the process has been centralized. Some states have set up a call center. Mary Bethel commented that anything that requires changes for NC-FAST will be difficult to do. Gina Upchurch shared that Durham has a program call Bull City Bucks that is focused on seniors which provides \$40 for food at Food Lion. They would like this to become statewide.
- Brian Kennedy (in place of Alexandra Sirota) with the NC Justice Center reported that the Farm Bill had been defeated in Congress while we were meeting. We said we had representatives in this state that voted against it

for the right reasons. He explained why it was a good thing for our state that it was defeated. He explained that there is interest in looking at allowing additional federal deduction for medical expenses. North Carolina could submit a waiver to have a standard deduction which can circumvent the difficulties in the 15 states that got the waiver. People could have \$50 a month and eligibility would be checked every three years instead of every year. The National Council on Aging has a good website about this.

Mary indicated our panel gave a good review, and our status as second in the nation with marginal food insecurity for older adults is awful. ESAP waiver and standard medical deduction are seen as important. The issue of cost neutrality would need to be worked out. She said that the Coalition can communicate with the Secretary of DHHS about doing more to address senior food insecurity after the legislature adjourns the short session. She suggested that other aging advocacy groups may wish to join this effort.

Gina Upchurch shared that Melinda Munden has been named the new director of SHIPP in this state.

The meeting was running long and several people had already left so the meeting was adjourned without sharing by Coalition members.

### **Remaining Meeting Dates for 2018**

June 22

August 24

September 28 (annual meeting)

October 26

December 7

Check out our website: <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/> and “like” the Coalition on Facebook