# **St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging (OFA)**

# **Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

# **February 8, 2021**

**Meeting called to order:** 10:00 AM by Roger Bennett, Chairman

**Present:** *(voting members)* Roger Bennett, Linda Wilkinson, Russ Backus

Larry Denesha, Kathy Skelly, Gail Teele

**Present:** *(non-voting members):* Chiara Delosh, Andrea Montgomery, Barb McBurnie

Brenda Sanderson

**Present:** *(New Members/Pending BOL approval)*

**Excused**: Dana McGuire, Michael Boprey, Brenda Sanderson

**Absent:**

**Public Attending:** None

**Meeting Location:** Zoom

**♦Introductions:** Meeting brought to order by R. Bennett. Opened with Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Reflection. Welcome and introductions.

**♦Guest Speaker –** None

**♦Public Comment** – No public comments

♦**Approval/Minutes** – motion to approve minutes by R. Backus, seconded by L. Denesha, all in favor.

# Motion passed.

♦**Correspondence** *(Kathy Skelly)* – None.

**♦Old Business**– N/A

**♦New Business** – N/A

**County Council of Senior Citizens Report** *(Brenda Sanderson)* No Report.

**StateWide Senior Action Council Report (***Barb McBurnie)* Very active this year with zoom meetings. There will be a zoom meeting this afternoon. Working on Legislature Platform where they will be advocating for safe staffing in nursing homes and hospitals. Memberships are renewed at meetings and as of right now half of the individuals haven’t renewed their membership. Senior Medicare Patrol are promoting to watch out for scams and fraud. If you need information call Barb. Since there is no outreach happening right now due to the pandemic it makes it hard to get information out to the seniors.

**Veterans Services Report** *(Mike Boprey)* No Report.

**Public Health Report** – *(Dana McGuire)* No Report.

**County Legislator’s Report** *(Larry Denesha)* There has been 25 new COVID-19 cases since yesterday. We are trending in the right direction and we are starting to slowly drop down. As of Friday there has been 71 deaths. Larry wants to thank Andrea and her staff for assisting clients with signing up for the vaccine. Danc will be doing a high speed broadband survey this month. Medicare scams are going on right now. Internal Revenue, Social Security, etc. do not contact individuals through the phone.

**AARP Report**- *(Vicki Clark)* A. Montgomery mentioned that Vicki Clark emailed her saying that AARP isn’t meeting right now, so they won’t have any updates until they start meeting again.

**Office for the Aging Report** *(Andrea Montgomery)*

* Our office is extremely busy right now. We have currently assisted 500+ individuals with vaccine appointments and questions.
* We are now accepting nominations for the Senior Citizen Award. The three applications are for Senior Citizen of the Year, Outstanding Contribution By A Senior Citizen, and the Jacqueline Sears Volunteer Awards. Applications are available at Office for the Aging, and the applications were sent out to all the Senior Club Presidents. The applications need to be sent in by March 1st.
* We have a waitlist of clients needing appointments for the vaccine. We have been reaching out to individuals that are most vulnerable. Our office has been doing a lot of media, press releases, and Facebook posts regarding the vaccine. We are targeting individuals that don’t have access to technology, or have anyone that would be able to sign them up for an appointment. Other Office for the Aging in NY State are doing what we are doing.
* The NY State hotline sometimes has better availability.
* Public Health is very busy with COVID-19 response and COVID-19 vaccination making the call volume extremely high.
* The SUNY Potsdam vaccination site is well organized and has National Guard there to help navigate individuals, and assist with individuals needing wheelchairs or help into the building.
* Working with District Management at Kinney’s to streamline a process for the seniors.
* Working on plans for the vaccine shots for individuals that are homebound.
* Public Health finds out about a week before on how many doses of the vaccine that they will be getting and who the vaccine will be going out to.
* We have about 600 HDM clients right now.
* There is a critical need for volunteers for our HDM program. We have a waitlist of over 60 individuals due to lack of volunteers to deliver meals. We still have 19 HDM routes.
* In the last few months our Nutrition Sites have done an increase of frozen meals for our HDM clients. Also, we have shelf stable food boxes in the office.
* We have hired some new staff members. Peter Zimmerman is our new Advocate Worker, Kelly Zakarauskas is our new Keyboard Specialist, and Shirley Gollinger is our new Temporary Nutrition Aide.
* Our office staff volunteered at the County Pod this past Friday with assisting and navigating individuals at the Pod.
* We helped hundreds of older adults during our holiday drive. Things were done differently this year due to the pandemic. Our office usually delivers holiday baskets to clients, but this year we sent out gift cards with a holiday card to local stores (Walmart, Kinneys, Price Chopper, etc.). We received record response for contributions this year.
* Social isolation with the older adults has become a real concern. We are trying a variety of programs to see what will work. We have a Pen Pal Program going on right now where we are partnered with our Youth Bureau. Clients will call to register for the program and then be assigned to either a classroom of local elementary students, or a local teen as their pen pal. Letters between the pen pals will be mailed to our office, and will be forwarded to the assigned pen pal so there is no exchange of home addresses. Also, we are partnered with the Youth Bureau for a Valentine’s Day card drive. The other programs that our office is offering is the Virtual Caregiver Support Group, Virtual Senior Center, and Senior Connections.
* We had a health promotion class with Cornell Cooperative last October-December that was successful. We are looking at starting another class in March.
* The Clarkson Occupational Therapy students are making activity boxes for our seniors right now, and then calling the individuals with a follow up on how the activity boxes went.
* The Telephone Reassurance Program is still going on.
* NY State budget funding level has remained the same. State OFA is looking at FEMA Grant for nutrition.
* Trying to get new members on board for Advisory Council. Dave Spillman might want to join the Advisory Council.
* Look at By-Laws at next meeting. Email everyone a copy of the By-Laws to discuss changes.

**♦Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn by L. Wilkinson, seconded by R. Backus, all in favor.

R. Bennett adjourned meeting at 11:05 AM.

**♦Next Meeting** – April 12, 2021, TBD

*(Minutes respectfully submitted by Chiara Delosh)*