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

# **Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

# **April 3, 2023**

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

**Present:** *(voting members)* Russ Backus, Roger Bennett, Larry Denesha, Joan Howlett, Mary Jones, Barb McBurnie, Brenda Sanderson, Kathy Skelly, Gail Teele, Linda Wilkinson

**Present:** *(non-voting members):* Andrea Montgomery, Kelly Zakarauskas, Michael Boprey, Jolene Munger

**Public Attending:** John Burns

**Meeting Location:** HSC

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

**♦Guest Speaker** – Mary Jones, from Hospice, has joined the advisory council. Office for the Aging has partnered with Hospice for their 40th anniversary to roll out the new book, Roadmaps for the Journey’s End. Lots of paperwork needs to be done before you pass. This book discusses advanced directives, funeral planning, legacy (stories, photos), AIM – Advanced Illness Management program. Books can be purchased by anyone in any area and may be purchased online.

**♦Public Comment** – *(John Burns)* President of the Clifton Fine Senior Citizen Club – Interested in having a Tai Chi class out in Star Lake or Fine area.

♦**Approval/Minutes** – motion to approve minutes by B. McBurnie, seconded by K. Skelly, all in favor. Motion passed.

♦**Correspondence** – None.

**♦Old Business**– *(Kathy Skelly)* Wanted to know if we receive Medicaid funding from the state, since the federal government does not do that for us.

**♦New Business** – Updates as follows in reports below.

**County Legislator’s Report** – *(Larry Denesha)* The governor proposed a new budget. FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentage) – Money from the federal government to the state to offset Medicaid. The governor proposed not sharing that money with the counties. The Assembly and Senate seem to be in agreement that this would not be a good idea. This would cause, roughly, a 6% increase in all property taxes, if this goes through. Right now, we have the lowest tax rate since the 80’s. We recommend that you contact your state reps. The county budget goes out October 1st but the state budget is April. Proposal to raise income for Medicaid eligibility. Roughly, 50% of the state could be eligible. The county has received ARPA funds. 3 million of the funds went towards broadband development. 611 households that don’t currently have broadband would be able to once this is set. 5 million will go to upgrading emergency services radio communication. $200,000 will go towards small businesses. 3 million will go towards sewer and water for municipalities. Money was also given to the Clifton Fine Hospital.

**Public Health Report** – *(Jolene Munger)* Rabies schedule is out and posted. This is a free service. We will be offering shingles vaccines in the office within the next couple of weeks. We still have the COVID vaccine. People that are high risk may be offered another booster. People who are high risk could have now had 5 shots. If you haven’t yet had the bivalent vaccine that is what you should have now. They are working towards an annual vaccine, similar to the flu. If there are any new recommendations, Public Health will issue a press release. The federal emergency expires on May 11th. We are still purchasing test kits and masks and displaying them on the table in the lobby downstairs. At-home test kits are great but the numbers don’t usually get reported so the data is not taking into consideration all of the tests done at home. Local hospitals have access to Paxlovid, some local doctors may be able to get it, as well.

**County Council of Senior Citizens Report** – *(Brenda Sanderson)* In process of planning awards ceremony on May 6th at the Methodist church in Canton in the basement. The senior picnic will be August 17th, at the Morristown fire department. We will have bingo, lunch, and music. The Golden-Agers are back. Today, county council is presenting Myrtle Regan with a plaque for senior awards.

**StateWide Senior Action Council Report** – *(Barb McBurnie)* Next meeting is Thursday, 4/6 at 10am at the Lobster House. Mary, from Hospice, will be there doing a presentation. Scams are still in full swing. Pay attention when you go to the doctor and look at the codes that are put on your Medicare Summary. There was a data breach for Medicare last year. On the dark web, a credit card number is worth $5, a social security number is worth $100, and a Medicare number is worth $1000. Be cautious. Don’t ever give out numbers. Seniorama will be July 24th at the bingo palace.

**Veterans Services Report** – *(Mike Boprey)* Pensions can give opportunity for home health care. Comprehensive home health care expanded to any vet on October 1st, 2022, Must be 70% disable. An eligible family member to be a primary caregiver and be paid.

**AARP Report** – *(No Rep)* No Report.

**Members Updates** – *(Russ Backus)* ARC Jefferson-St. Lawrence has a new CEO, Lynn Pietroski. We are still running and providing normal services.

**Office for the Aging Report** – *(Andrea Montgomery)* April 16-22nd is volunteer appreciation week. Thank you all for your service to this group. We are celebrating our volunteers in our nutrition sites with individual gatherings at our sites. We used to do a big celebration here in Canton but it is more convenient for the volunteers at the sites that they work in.

May is older Americans month and the theme for this year is Aging Unbound. Proposing a resolution to the board proclaiming May as Older Americans Month. Senior Awards will be May 6th. 2023 nominations will be open soon.

There will be a presentation on April 17th to the new board members explaining what we do here. Many people don’t think about our agency until they need us and most of the time we can help before that.

Tai Chi started in Canton. We have to have a certified educator through Cornell Cooperative Extension. To use our health promotion funding we have to have an evidence based class.

One the second Tuesday of each month, we will be hosting a caregiver support group. We will have snacks.

We have been sending out social recreational surveys and are trying to push for events at the nutrition sites. Congregate numbers are way down and home delivered meal numbers have been way up. We also have high numbers for grab & go. Canton nutrition center is also going to be getting a new stove.

We have been partnering with Hospice for their Roadmaps for the Journey’s End. We will be having evening presentations in May. We are also sending books out to the home delivered meal clients.

We have lots of summer plans. May through September we will be having Medicare 101. Farmer’s Market Coupons will be here no earlier than July 1st. Public Transit will be partnering with us for farmer’s market trips. They pick up at the senior housings and travel to the farmers markets. We also provide a bagged lunch for these trips. We will be at health fairs and the St. Lawrence County fair. Seniorama, senior picnic, and Potsdam Pride in the Park.

Dr. Gary Berk will be joining us as part of the advisory council.

The CDPAS program is a program where family members may get paid to care for loved ones.

Grade 7 for civil service is being proposed to get a raise that starts at $15 per hour. The next grade is grade 13 and is roughly about $10,000 more. Hopefully this will be approved by the board. We have 4 temporary openings at our nutrition sites and currently have 4-5 permanent employees actively seeking other jobs. Permanent employees receive health insurance and NYS retirement. We have 23 home delivered meal routes and 18 part time staff. We have 2 temporary staff. The waitlist contains 50+ people currently. The board has approved for temporary employees to receive some benefits.

**♦Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn by K. Skelly, seconded by R. Backus, all in favor. R. Bennett adjourned meeting.

**♦Next Meeting** – Monday, June 5th, 2023 at 10AM

*(Electronic Meeting Minutes respectfully submitted by Kelly Zakarauskas)*