

COMMISSION ON AGING ANNUAL REPORT - 2019

The mission of the Commission on Aging is to ascertain the needs -- both met and unmet of the seniors in our community and to also educate (update) our selves on changing senior demographics. For example, from research we have found that we also need to also view seniors as an economic driver.

Accomplishments - one of our long term projects "The Senior Resource Guide" has been completed and is on the Norfolk Taskforce for Aging website and also the City's website. Since it is a living document Brandi Smith (Comfort Keepers/Norfolk Task Force on Aging and Krista Fulton (Norfolk Commonwealth Attorney's office) will update the Senior Resource Guide every six months. This document came about when it was discerned that when seniors needed resources neither they nor their families know where to turn. The Senior Resource Guide is a compilation of input from different agencies and other services providers obtained at a symposium at which these entities attended.

In order to ascertain other met and unmet needs of seniors we invited several guest speakers to our meetings. The speakers and their topics and suggestions are listed below.

- Nicole Davis, Executive Director of the Endependence Center. Discussion included on how the Endependence Center can collaborate with community agencies regarding aging issues to include services for the disabled of all ages including seniors. Unmet needs that were identified were: employment, housing and transportation.
- Shirley Confino-Rheder, Chair, Commission for Persons with Disabilities also stated that transportation and housing were major unmet needs for both seniors and persons with disabilities. Also discussed was accessibility for seniors in order to be more involved in social activities such as book clubs, discussion groups, travel, exercise groups. Also a need to get seniors involved in using their experience to help others such as grand parenting, reading/math assistance at local schools.
- Donna Mills, Chief Housing Officer with Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority discussed the St. Paul's area redevelopment and plan. Her focal points were: resident engagement, demographics, Choice Neighborhood, resident case management services, People First program, healthcare program and relocation options and benefits.

Ms. Mills informed us that People First is a 3.5 million grant to assist with phase 1 of the redevelopment of the St. Paul's redevelopment area. The initiative is to provide follow-up wrap around services to NRHA residents once they relocate. The annual commitment includes case management, service delivery, and sustainability of services.

She shared that NRHA residents participate in community engagement – discussions regarding the plans, input and buy in, information hotline available, and four residents participate on the Advisory Board. Feedback from residents surveys highlight that most residents want a Hosing Choice Voucher and education classes.

- Steve Zollos, CEO with Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia (SSSEVA) highlighted his thoughts on senior needs – housing, increase need to help seniors in their homes, increase need for food assistance, increase desire for seniors to remain in their homes, access to education, arts and community resources. Most important is a strong advocacy group for seniors as there is a decrease in funding for seniors, little or no focus on seniors and the need to build understanding of the value of seniors.
- Michael Paris, Business Development Manager, City of Norfolk Economic Development discussed why we have an aging workforce. Number one is that people are living longer, seniors enjoy working, financial need as 20% of seniors do not have retirement/pension plans and the increase in healthcare costs.
- George Homewood, Director of City Planning, City of Norfolk's focus was on the City Plan for Seniors 2020 and beyond. Needs are, senior housing, transportation, assisted living and nursing care facilities, St. Paul's area revitalization. Design units should serve everyone's needs including seniors and the disabled. Multi story units need elevators.

Plan 2050: serve individuals of all ages and all stages of life, universal design, a design for all. Shared that Civic Leagues and the community in general need to be involved.

- Jacqueline Johnson, Division Head, Recreation and Leisure Services City of Norfolk, and Darrell R. Crittendon, CPRP Director, Recreation Parks and Open Space, City of Norfolk informed us that she oversees 18 community recreation centers. They have done a needs assessment and the feedback they received from seniors on the types of programs they would like offered are: more excursions with friends to include daytime and overnight trips, staycations and the opportunity to be active. Jacqueline outlined some of activities offered were a 1 day trip to Luray Caverns, also the arts – pottery oil painting and ceramics. Other activities are transportation and meals, employment presentations loneliness and social interaction, awareness of scams, healthcare, etc.
- Darrell Crittendon, CPRP Director, Recreation, Parks and Open space outlined the things seniors can contribute to the community such as: volunteering, being a mentor, reading to the youth. He also stated that “seniors know life and have the skills to reach children.”

He viewed the biggest challenge is dwindling financial resources and an increase in capital funds is necessary to build new infrastructure. He also feels it's essential to develop unique collaborative partnerships and "we need to create energy and put seniors at a high priority."

- Steve Zollo, CEO, Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia by sharing a Power Point presentation he created on the need to view seniors as an economic driver, not a burden. He said seniors represent the "Longevity Economy." By 2030 seniors 50+ will account for 70% of disposable wealth, as many will still be in the workforce and will also have saved/inherited wealth.

Localities need to invest in "senior infrastructure" to keep this wealth in their locality, as well as address the social determinants of health that will keep these seniors productive and healthy. While the senior population in most South Hampton Roads cities is increasing and will continue to do so, funding for services and infrastructure has remained constant, which equates to a reduction in per-person funding. Mr. Zollo is sharing this information with local taskforces and other partners so lawmakers and other funders hear a consistent message.

Overall Findings

From the above speakers we learned that housing, transportation, socialization are unmet needs, and most important funding for seniors has been reduced for many of these senior services. We also learned that by 2030 seniors 50+ will account for 70% of disposable wealth and invest in "senior infrastructure" to keep this wealth in our localities.

Future Steps

We plan to hold a Community conversation roundtable discussion to develop a public strategy to deal with the aging population. Quote: "whatever you do for a senior, you do for everyone."

We will continue to follow-up on the St. Paul's Quadrant project and its services to seniors.

As to the funding issue we plan to invite representatives to our meetings.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Z. Murphy
Chair, Commission on Aging/Long Term Care