

Governor's Council to Address Aging in Massachusetts

Monday, May 8th

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

McCormack Building

One Ashburton Place - 21st Floor Conference

Room - Rooms 1 & 2

Boston, MA 02108

In attendance: Co-Chairs Secretary Sudders and Eileen Connors; Secretary Alice Bonner, Gerard Brophy, Bill Caplin, Joe Coughlin, Rosanne DiStefano, Beth Dugan, Kevin J. Dumas, Assistant Secretary Kate Fichter, Tom Grape, Betsy Hampton, Laura Iglesias Lino, Steven Kaufman, Nora Moreno Cargie, Ruth Moy, Alicia Munnell, Brian O'Grady, Tom Riley, Janina Sadlowski, and Amy Schectman.

Not present: Secretary Ash, Secretary Walker, Dan Henry.

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am by Co-Chair Eileen Connors, who welcomed all Council members and visitors. Council members introduced themselves and shared why they were excited to participate. Co-Chair Secretary Marylou Sudders discussed the importance of the Executive Order and her interest in addressing how Massachusetts can support healthy aging.

Sec Bonner offered that the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) is an agency that is not just about older people, but focuses on families, caregivers and communities. EOEA works across many agencies and with numerous organizations to promote aging in every policy.

Secretary Sudders introduced John Sclarsic from the Attorney General's office to review requirements of the Open Meeting Law. All Council members were instructed to certify that they have reviewed and understand requirements of this law within the next two weeks. Additional information included:

- **Ensure that work of the Council is transparent, that deliberations are open.**
- **Meetings have to be noticed 48 hours (business hours) in advance and topics must be posted.**
- **Any subcommittees of the Council are public bodies.**
- **Meeting minutes must reflect votes taken.**
- **Meetings require a quorum physically present (majority plus one).**
- **The Council may vote to adopt a policy to allow participation of some members by phone, as long as a quorum is physically present at the meeting.**
- **There is a hotline answer questions regarding the Open Meeting requirements as well as to file complaints related to Open Meeting Law - Call 617-963-2540 or email openmeeting@state.ma.us**

Secretary Bonner informed the Council that staff from EOEA would provide administrative support for the Council. Secretary Sudders stated that the Council could vote to allow members to join via teleconference. Nora Moreno Cargie made a motion to allow participation by teleconference, subject to the requirements of the law, and Bill Caplin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Secretary Sudders reviewed the expectations of the Executive order. Members have been appointed for two years and a report is due to the Governor in April of 2018. Ideally, the Council's work will allow for a preliminary blueprint or high level summary to be available by December of 2017. Secretary Sudders continued by saying that the Council does not have a sunset date and has some flexibility in terms of the timeline to develop a finalized list of recommendations.

Secretary Sudders suggested that the Council think about adopting a guiding framework to help think about the work similar to the approach taken by the opioid taskforce. She shared some strategies from the opioid taskforce, including:

- Adoption of a framework to guide the work
- Initial meetings to identify issues
- Setting the stage for engagement and broad conversation, including:
 - opportunities to hear from others (4 listening sessions in different areas of the state)
 - Opportunities to hear from expert panels.

Council members discussed ways to consider organizing their work:

Nora Moreno Cargie suggested that there are already 10 categories from the EO, why not start with those? What does it take to make MA communities livable?

Amy Schectman suggested considering current barriers. She listed five:

- 1) Ageism
- 2) Bootstrap mentality/individualism, collective versus individual responsibility/sense that sharing services or shared living is failure
- 3) Gaps
 - a. Income versus costs of living--driven in MA by high housing costs, with 53% of older persons paying more for housing than they can afford at the expense of food and health care; housing costs driving us to be ranked #49 in Elder Economic Security Index
 - b. Frailty versus accessibility--with 2/3 households with member over 85 with some physical disability and 1% of New England housing stock being accessible
 - c. Transportation – services need to be easily offered and accessible. location of where people live versus where services are easily offered--with majority of baby boomers in suburbia and virtually no public transit--and even where transit exists weather interferes plus people don't shovel sidewalks and that's an impediment--and home care is proportionally more expensive when distances between clients is far.
 - d. Loneliness
- 4) Program eligibility gaps –mismatch of housing and services (almost no overlap between eligibility for state-funded home care services and affordable housing)

5) Race, ethnicity, language, class.

Amy Schectman asked if the budget should be taken into account when policy suggestions are being proposed. Secretary Sudders suggested that policy should drive fiscal decisions, as was the case with the Opioid Taskforce, and not vice versa.

Joe Coughlin added that policy ideas should embrace public-private partnerships, since “government can’t do it all.”

Rosanne DiStefano proposed that the Council should think about improving education – how society perceives getting older, including a curriculum for high school students to get them thinking about their own aging. How would they describe a life well-lived? She encouraged Council members to think about issues from the perspective of ‘us’ (since we are all aging) not ‘them.’

Tom Riley offered that actually hearing the voice of the older person and caregivers is critical, and advises that the Council do more than ‘study the issue.’ He said that in his company’s experience, caregivers are vital to elders care.

Kate Fichter reported that having outside speakers was helpful to DOT, in particular it helped with developing a common language.

Bill Caplin said that it’s important to hear from seniors themselves – to have them come in and talk to the Council.

Alicia Munnell believes that policy should make use of the one asset people may have – their house (and also possibly their income) to prevent poverty and promote healthy aging.

Rosanne DiStefano mentioned that we shouldn’t “skirt around the issue – it’s ok to say ‘we’re old!’”

Eileen Connors liked the idea of travel teams and listening sessions around the state.

Beth Dugan stated that some communities with similar demographic profiles find older people are aging better than others. The Council should attempt to understand factors leading to those differences.

Betsy Hampton suggested that the Council might prioritize perceived barriers to aging in community – then go out and listen on those topics.

Secretary Sudders suggested that the meetings in September and October could be held in different parts of the Commonwealth. If the meetings are well-publicized, they should attract people from various sectors and with different needs. She believes we will get a robust response, based on EOHHS’ experience with the opioid listening sessions.

Joe reflected on the great diversity of topics in aging. While he agrees that listening in the field is necessary and important, he also offered that “innovation is rarely achieved by asking people what they want.” He suggested a matrix with topics down the left hand side, and across the top headings such as: government, business, NGOs, partnerships, caregivers.

Laura Iglesias believes that data is critical. Knowing things such as who has a health care proxy, who receives care at home, etc. Secretary Bonner suggested building on UMass Boston’s work, determining which data and data sources we have, and where the gaps are.

Tom Riley said that generally, we don’t have data on family caregivers.

Secretary Sudders stated that aging/innovation/technology would be an important expert panel to consider.

Secretary Bonner suggested that the Council could also consider a panel comprised of caregivers, and one from the interfaith community.

Kevin Dumas shared that as a mayor, it would help to know the attributes that promote health in older people and that promote healthy communities. Which places are more versus less successful (including models from Europe)? He mentioned mayors wanting to learn more about healthy eating, reasonable taxation policies, housing needs, spiritual needs.

Several Council members suggested comparing work being done in other states or other countries to work here in Massachusetts.

Amy Schectman mentioned that The Netherlands is considered a leader in affordable housing and that their policies should be reviewed as well. Tom Grape agreed and said the council should learn about other parts of the United States as well as ‘Blue Zones.’

Steve Kaufman asked if the Council should have workgroups, and how to prioritize to get down to 2-3 things?

Secretary Sudders offered that the opioid task force developed a mission and several core principles. They did their work in 3 months. She asked if by the next (June 15) meeting, we could take the 10 statements from the EO and prioritize them to create a preliminary top 5?

Ger Brophy asked the Council to consider constructing a 2x2 matrix with impact versus achievability.

Ruth Moy questioned whether geographic and cultural diversity are represented on the Council. Secretary Sudders responded that two African American members of the council were not able to attend today; two Council members are Latina, and all regions of the Commonwealth are represented.

Nora Moreno Cargie proposed that we may collect data, but still need to move ahead. Diversity takes many forms, including how far advanced communities are or where they are starting in terms of age-friendly work. We should honor what is already happening.

Eileen asked what kind of panel the Council would want to hear from to address loneliness and isolation.

Brian O'Grady mentioned 3 themes: housing, transportation, and isolation ("isolation kills").

Secretary Sudders pointed out that people can be isolated in the middle of a city, not just in rural areas.

Beth Dugan shared that the average age of entrepreneurs is mid to late 50s; the Council should think about the opportunities with that cohort.

Rosanne DiStefano described the cost savings of no longer driving. Uber and similar services now 'make it easy' – we can adapt innovation for elders of today. Amy Schectman added that *Go Go Grandma* and similar services already exist – and agreed we should build on those ideas.

Alicia Munnell stated that 'People need more money. There's an easy, realistic way to do it,' and she would like the Council to consider property tax deferral plans at a subsequent meeting.

Janina Sadlowski said that more affordable housing is the most important factor to support aging in community. Technology can also help, especially for caregivers.

Steve Kaufman encouraged the group to set realistic priorities.

Kevin Dumas said that he is looking forward to effecting change in a positive way; through public private partnerships

Joe Coughlin suggested that the council should be more anticipatory – start thinking about people age 45 and older. In order to retire, you need a certain amount of resources. These are also the caregiver years – either as a user or buyer of aging services. There are hot zones of successful aging – in a 2016 Gallup poll, MA was #32 for well-being in aging. We should find the ways that successful aging is currently evaluated or measured.

Betsy Hampton proposed that the Council consider issues related to remote caregiving, caregivers who may not live here. How do people get the home care they need?

Ruth Moy talked about low income elders – and how we provide services for them.

Bill Caplin also mentioned addressing socioeconomic issues and the needs of low income elders.

Tom Grape commented that the Council should not narrow topics too quickly; he recommends a SWOT analysis, likes the idea of a listening tour and thinks we may need to do that first then prioritize. He believes the Council should address ageism and that terminology is important. "If

we did that alone, it would have a huge impact. And without doing it, the rest of our work may be less effective.” He also believes workforce is a big issue.

Laura Iglesias stated that addressing social problems will lead to improved health. People and caregivers need access to home care and palliative care. Health care clinicians need information about in-home care.

Ger Brophy concurred that background about programs from other countries (such as Sweden) will be helpful. He suggested an iterative process to narrow down topics, such as SWOT or benchmarking, so we know what success looks like.

Tom Riley said that innovation needs to be both diverse and practical. He mentioned models of young people and older people living in housing together.

Amy Schectman shared that JCHE’s mission is: *to provide every older person the opportunity to age in community--to live a full life of connection and purpose in a dynamic, supportive environment.* She offered that the Council could start with those or similar principles and craft its own vision/mission statement.

Nora commented that philanthropy can take bigger risks than government can – for example, it can help understand which government policies are not working, find where innovation is happening, and spread those innovations in a culturally competent way. She reiterated that we should honor what’s already happening in communities, and take innovation to scale.

Tom Riley said that intergenerational collaboration is vital. He mentioned that when he was at the MIT Age Lab, he met two students who discussed developing combined housing for college students and elders. He ended his statement by saying that remote caregiving will be a problem for this generation to solve.

Nora Moreno Cargie added that some communities in New Hampshire are developing master plans around their communities’ priorities as they age.

Brief Summary of Topics Discussed by Council Members:

- **The importance of language and terms we use to describe aging**
- **Education about aging beginning at an early age**
- **Identifying communities with best practices in healthy aging and age-friendly programs and services**
- **The role of innovation**
- **How to leverage public/private partnerships**
- **Economic security**
- **Leveraging a home/property to finance aging in community**
- **The importance of family caregiving**
- **The importance of in-home services and supports**

- Integration of health care with community-based services
- Best practices and inspiration from other countries and other states
- Recognition of the needs of diverse communities
- Loneliness and isolation
- Affordable, accessible housing
- Affordable, accessible transportation
- The role of philanthropy
- The specific age (e.g., 45, 65 or other) to include in the Council's work.

Based on today's discussion, Secretary Bonner and her team will develop a framework for the co-chairs to review, and will present to the Council at the next meeting.

Eileen Connors began the closing remarks by saying that it is important for the Council to set priorities. She said that she would like the Council to invite people who have a variety of needs, healthcare coverage, and types of support to speak to the Council.

Secretary Bonner asked each Council member to think about what they would like to be different in Massachusetts in 2027 to promote aging in community.

Secretary Sudders asked members to submit their ideas for what the Council should focus on to Elder Affairs staff along with contact information and any materials that should be shared with the rest of the Council.

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 15th from 9:00 to 11:00 am in rooms 2 & 3 – McCormack Building, 1 Ashburton Place 21st Floor Boston, MA 02108.