

Maryland Commission on Caregiving

September 07, 2023

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting Minutes

Commission Chair: Kate Farinholt, Theresa Robertson, Chalarra Sessoms, Esther Ward, Jennifer Eastman, Patricia Morris, Shalini Arora, Terri Johnson, Theresa Robertson, Trina Townsend, Yetunde Olobatuyi

Guests: Dianne Graves, and Dorinda Adam

Welcome & Introductions- Theresa Robertson, Co-Chair and Kate Farinholt, Commission Chair

Review and approval of September's meeting

Motion to approve September's Meeting Minutes: Yes

Meeting Agenda:

Welcome and Introductions by Theresa Robertson, Co-Chair and Kate Farinholt, Commission Chair

Review and approval of September's meeting minutes.

Motion to approve September's Meeting Minutes: Yes

Kate Farinholt's Appreciation and Approval Process Query: Seeking Input

Kate expressed gratitude for the excellent work done by everyone and emphasized the collaborative effort. She then sought input on the approval process for the meeting minutes. Kate inquired if members had reviewed the minutes individually, pondering the usual procedure of displaying them on the screen for approval. She then asked for suggestions from Yetunde and Shalini on the best course of action.

Yetunde Olobatuyi's Update: Review and Approval Procedure

Yetunde provided an update, noting that the minutes had been distributed to all members on Tuesday. She outlined the customary procedure, which involved checking if everyone had the opportunity to review the minutes. If members had reviewed them, a motion for approval would be entertained. Yetunde explained that the minutes could proceed for finalization with more than two members' approval.

Kate Farinholt's:

Kate started by apologizing, explaining that she was unable to open the attached minutes due to technical issues with the link in the calendar invite. However, she proposed adding Kathy Wehr as an attendee. Kate then asked if anyone had other recommendations or revisions. She

requested those in favor of approval to raise their hands, with a majority agreement being sufficient.

After observing the raised hands, Kate confirmed, "Okay, I believe the minutes are approved." She then moved on to the next item on the agenda, indicating that Shalini would be discussing and reviewing the annual report.

Shalini Arora's Report: Updates on the Annual Report Approval Process

Shalini provided an update on the progress of the annual report approval process. She expressed gratitude to Jennifer for her previous work on the report, incorporating valuable insights from previous years. Shalini informed the group that the report was currently in draft form, awaiting finalization review from Greg.

According to Shalini, Greg had provided feedback, specifically requesting names of team members who contributed as speakers. Shalini mentioned that she had been meticulously reviewing meeting minutes throughout the year, collecting information on topics and dates discussed by the members. She encouraged members to provide dates if they remembered when they had spoken, as this information was crucial for the report.

Shalini emphasized the need to enhance the report based on Greg's feedback, particularly regarding specific dates and topics. Once finalized, the report would undergo a series of reviews, moving through the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Executive Director, and eventually the Office of Legislative Affairs and the Office of Secretaries.

She acknowledged that some adjustments were necessary due to the transition to a new administration, including formatting changes and additional details. Shalini assured the group that these modifications were actively being addressed. She also noted Greg's dedication, mentioning his late-night work on the report and subsequent follow-up questions, which the team discussed diligently to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Shalini shared a proposal with the Commission, suggesting a more efficient way to gather information. She requested permission to ask members to share their speaking topics and dates in the chat if they remembered them. Shalini assured the Commission that this process would not be an additional burden, as members were already familiar with their topics. Jennifer confirmed her agreement with the proposal.

The group collectively agreed to finalize the report promptly, incorporating all necessary information and addressing any remaining questions to complete the process effectively.

Jennifer addressed the group, seeking assistance with a procedural matter. She mentioned that traditionally, the report dissemination occurred after Greg's finalization process. Jennifer shared that historically, once the report was finalized and submitted to the Social Security

Administration (SSA), it was then shared with all members. She indicated that this process might continue.

Jennifer also noted that the Department of Human Services (DHS) preferred conducting internal reviews of reports. She raised this point for everyone's awareness, highlighting the standard practice within DHS, and would appreciate your feedback.

Jennifer informed the Commission about a discussion from the previous meeting. She mentioned the idea of gathering quotes from caregivers or other members regarding their caregiving experiences or their involvement in the Commission. Jennifer specifically asked Patricia Morris if she had submitted any quotes, expressing her gratitude for the contribution, which currently stood as the only testimonial available.

She encouraged attendees to participate by providing their feedback. Jennifer emphasized the importance of these testimonials and welcomed anyone present at the meeting to share their thoughts to be included in the final report.

Yetunde provided updates, emphasizing the urgency of the upcoming deadline. She mentioned the ongoing work over the past two weeks and directed Jennifer's attention to specific questions raised by Greg concerning equipment procurement. Yetunde encouraged brief responses, highlighting the current document length of almost 20 pages. She requested submissions to be concise and sent before 4 P.M., underscoring the importance of timely contributions.

Patricia made a request, asking Jennifer to send her information to Yetunde on her behalf. Jennifer responded affirmatively, stating, "yes."

Kate Farinholt's Comments: Clarification on Roles

Kate raised a point of concern, emphasizing the need for clarity. She mentioned her extensive experience with various commissions and task forces. Theresa pointed out a challenge faced by Maryland, where state employees often find themselves handling multiple roles simultaneously. She expressed gratitude for everyone's hard work, acknowledging the efforts of all involved.

Kate sought clarification, emphasizing the need for specificity. She inquired if the Commission was specifically looking for testimonials that highlighted the value and impact of the Commission's work.

Theresa expressed gratitude, acknowledging the helpful input. She then directed a question to Yetunde, inquiring if she wanted to add her thoughts to what Jennifer and Shalini had shared, emphasizing the need for prompt action due to time constraints.

Yetunde Olobatuyi's Membership Update: Term Expirations

Yetunde provided an update on member applications, informing the Commission that several members were currently in expired terms. She listed the names she had been in contact with,

including Terry Johnson, Larry Bram, Kathy Wehr, and Patricia Morris. Yetunde stated that although their terms had expired in June 2022, she had confirmed with the governor's office that they could continue serving on the Commission. However, she emphasized the importance of being mindful of the expiration dates.

Kathy mentioned that she joined the Commission in December 2022. Yetunde double-checked Kathy's name and confirmed that her membership was secure until 2025.

Theresa Robertson's: Advocacy for the Commission

Theresa expressed recent research findings, highlighting that not every state has a Commission like Maryland's. She emphasized the uniqueness of their approach and achievements. Theresa voiced concerns about taking their existing setup for granted and questioned whether more could be done to ensure the Commission's recognition and prioritization. She raised the advocacy issue, suggesting that efforts might be needed to showcase the Commission's work and importance, urging consideration for its continuous success and impact on its members.

Theresa echoed the sentiment, emphasizing that the importance lies not in titles but in the care they provide to the people they serve. She expressed her concern that the Commission's significance might be overlooked, especially considering that not every state has such a commission. Theresa highlighted the potential risk of the Commission being dismantled and stressed the need to ensure that their work is recognized and valued. She emphasized the importance of conveying to the administration that their efforts make a meaningful difference in Maryland.

Kate Farinholt's:

Kate shared her perspective, noting that participating in such commissions often involves a slow and lengthy process. She highlighted the recent delays due to the change in administration. Kate acknowledged the legislative process, mentioning her involvement in setting up similar commissions and work groups. She emphasized the need for collective advocacy, suggesting that efforts should be directed towards pushing the administration, specifically addressing the administrative challenges faced, rather than getting entangled in bureaucratic complexities.

Kate emphasized the need to highlight the value the Commission adds, ensuring legislators recognize its importance. She stressed the importance of engaging with legislators effectively, not just for personal gain but to demonstrate the positive impact of their work. Kate suggested encouraging legislators to collaborate, highlighting their successes, and ensuring they acknowledge the significance of the Commission's efforts. This engagement, she noted, could lead to increased support and advocacy from legislators. Kate reports that maybe before next month, we can see a discussion in our next meeting.

Dorinda Adam emphasized the historical stability of the Commission, clarifying that it would not be disbanded due to the statute's absence of a sunset clause. She acknowledged the challenges faced by State employees who juggle multiple roles, emphasizing their dedication. Dorinda

praised the ongoing efforts of Yetunde and Shaline, acknowledging the collective excellence of all members.

She highlighted an upcoming event featuring Penne Melnick as a crucial opportunity. Dorinda encouraged members to engage with her, reminding her about the Commission and encouraging her to consider joining. In conclusion, she reaffirmed, "The Commission is not going anywhere," expressing confidence in its enduring presence and impact.

Valerie expressed her need for more information about the home healthcare meeting and admitted her lack of awareness about the Commission's existence. Speaking as a layperson, she emphasized her struggle to understand the Commission's mission and services, expressing a desire for clarity. Valerie shared her experience of searching for services for her sister, highlighting her difficulty in finding the Commission and understanding the available support. Despite initial offers of help, Valerie found it challenging to reach out due to her overwhelmed state. She stressed the importance of improving visibility and understanding of the Commission's work, especially for individuals like her who are in need of assistance, advocating for more transparent communication and accessible resources.

Valerie expressed her willingness to serve as a resource for anyone on the call, emphasizing her proactive approach to seeking opportunities. She shared her struggle in securing Medicaid for her sister, highlighting the complexities caregivers face while navigating services. Valerie passionately conveyed her determination to advocate for others, emphasizing that finding services should not be an added challenge for caregivers. She offered her story and advocacy skills to support the cause, encouraging others to reach out to her as a valuable resource. Valerie's commitment underscored the collective passion within the group to drive meaningful change.

Kate acknowledged Valerie's concerns and highlighted the complexity faced by the Commission as a facilitator rather than a direct service provider. She praised the staff's and Jennifer's ongoing efforts in building resources, such as the website. Kate suggested the need for specific job descriptions for Commission members and attendees, clearly outlining roles and responsibilities based on statutory guidelines.

Kate recalled the origins of the Commission in 2001 and emphasized the importance of communication to ensure people know where to access resources. She stressed the crucial role of Commission members in articulating their struggles, enabling the Commission to address specific needs effectively. Kate revealed plans to collaborate with Theresa and the staff to define clear roles for Commission members, attendees, and partners, aiming for a more structured and understandable approach. She highlighted her organization's warm line, indicating the effectiveness of direct assistance, and expressed the Commission's commitment to providing

clarity in navigating available services. Kate expressed her gratitude to Valerie and then turned her attention to Theresa, considering the time constraints.

Patricia clarified that essential information was being shared there, providing Valerie with a starting point for the discussion. Patricia's input ensured that Valerie was directed to relevant resources efficiently.

Shalini shared the Commission website with Valerie so that she could get familiar with the website. Members thank Valerie for her input towards the meeting.

Kate emphasized the significance of working together and inviting relevant stakeholders, such as Panasonic, ensuring they were informed about the Commission's work and encouraging their participation. She welcomed suggestions for potential collaborators, fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual support among the members.

Jennifer Eastman: Planning for National Family Caregiver Month

Jennifer expressed her gratitude to Theresa and proceeded to share updates from the recent meeting held on the 22nd. She initiated a screen share to display the meeting notes, emphasizing the importance of the upcoming National Family Caregiver Month. Jennifer outlined the three main goals identified by the Commission for the month:

Increase Awareness: The Commission aims to enhance awareness about its existence and services. The focus is on connecting with caregivers and informing them about available resources and support.

Promote Caregiver Survey: An updated caregiver survey, developed in collaboration with the University of Maryland School of Social Work, will be promoted throughout November. The goal is to encourage caregivers to participate and provide valuable insights.

Engage Through Events: The Commission plans to compile a comprehensive list of events and activities scheduled statewide and locally throughout the month. Kathy will coordinate with the Department of Aging and other partners, such as NAMI ARP and Patricia's "Hands OF Hope," to gather event details.

Jennifer highlighted catchy slogans like "You are not alone" and "We care for caregivers Maryland," with plans to promote a video created by Laser Media last year. Additionally, DHS will assist in obtaining a governor's proclamation, utilizing adaptable language from 2021 for this year's proclamation. Jennifer paused to address any raised hands or questions from the attendees. Jennifer presented a proposal, suggesting that November would be an ideal time for their National Family Caregiver Month initiatives. She emphasized that initiating activities in October, preferably at the beginning of the month, would allow them to prepare effectively for the November events.

Jennifer shared a comprehensive plan for National Family Caregiver Month. She suggested soliciting short video responses from caregivers based on prompts related to their experiences. The Commission planned to compile these responses through platforms like Montage and share them on social media. Additionally, they aimed to spotlight individual commissioners by creating profiles with their names, organizations, and personal caregiving stories, accompanied by their responses to the prompts. These profiles and pictures would be shared on social media and the Commission's website. Jennifer emphasized the involvement of legislators who support caregivers. They planned to encourage legislators to create videos responding to the prompts and share them through their communication channels. The videos would also include last year's caregiver campaign video, "You Are Not Alone," to promote the upcoming survey. The Commission intended to brief the legislators about the survey results during the legislative session.

Furthermore, the Commission discussed the development of a Google site as a central hub for these activities. This site would serve as a dynamic platform for sharing information and resources related to caregiving. Jennifer acknowledged the challenges of relying solely on the DHS communications team and emphasized the need for a flexible platform that could adapt swiftly to the Commission's evolving initiatives.

Theresa was invited to elaborate on this aspect of the plan.

Kathy Wehr's Update on National Family Caregiver Month Activities:

Kathy shared her progress, stating that she had compiled an updated list of her counterparts from various regions in Maryland. She informed the attendees about her plan to email them tomorrow, seeking details about their initiatives for National Family Caregiver Month in November.

Kathy sought the Commission's guidance on consolidating this information into a cohesive package that could be widely distributed. She posed two important questions to the group: When would they prefer to receive the input from their counterparts, considering the date was already the 7th, and how soon could they aim to compile and disseminate this collective information effectively? Kathy emphasized giving the jurisdictions some time to respond while ensuring a timely compilation and distribution of the gathered data.

Theresa Robertson's NFC on the Creation of Google Site:

Theresa provided an update on the development of the Google site, highlighting its user-friendly interface and the convenience of real-time updates. She emphasized that creating a website on Google is as simple as crafting a Word document, making it an accessible and efficient option for the Commission's needs. Theresa recommended obtaining a domain name to direct users to the website, ensuring continuous access throughout the year. This approach would allow the Commission to share information seamlessly, not limited to National Family Caregiver Month, enhancing communication efforts across various initiatives.

Kathy raised a valid point, expressing concerns about potential overwhelm with managing the Google site. She acknowledged that many members have experience with Google platforms, emphasizing the importance of distributing the responsibilities to prevent any individual from feeling burdened by the task. Kate highlighted the importance of documenting future action steps and discussion topics, emphasizing their significance. She mentioned the need for upcoming tasks to be clearly outlined in the minutes. Additionally, Kate raised the question of members' preferences regarding future meeting topics and speakers. While not an immediate concern, she suggested including these details in the minutes to ensure transparency and alignment with the Commission's goals.

Theresa, touch base on the holiday get-together, and we will talk more about it in the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 3, 2022, from 10:30-12 pm.