

St. Lawrence County  
**OFFICE FOR THE AGING**

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**St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging  
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes  
September 08, 2008**

Meeting called to order at 9:30am by Vice Chair, Holly Capuro. Members present were: Barbara Hance, Beatrice Woodward, Sister Donna Franklin, Tedra Cobb, Bob Mead, Elaine Porter and Ruth Ayen. Also present were: Pat Rourk, Robert Miller, Sylvia Despaw, Barbara McBurnie and Kathy Skelly. Excused were: Carlton Doane, Diane Burns, Ron Frank, and Gloria Zehr. A quorum was established. Florence Patterson arrived at 10:15.

**Introductions and Welcome:**

- H. Capuro, filling in for Chair F. Patterson, made opening remarks. All members and guests were asked to introduce themselves and tell which organization they represented.

**Public Comment/Correspondence:**

- A letter of resignation was read from Cheryl Madlin. When she accepted the appointment to the Advisory Council she did not realize she could not fulfill her commitment to the Advisory Council. She noted that it was with great regret that she submit her resignation. She hopes to be able to help in the future.

**Approval of Minutes:**

- Bob Mead moved to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2008 meeting. Seconded by Sr. Donna F. All in favor-motion carried.

**Old Business:**

**Office for the Aging Report:**

- Tedra asked about the Morristown dishwasher. Barb said there had been problems with the dishwasher and the fire department not wanting to take it back. They accepted the repaired one on the condition that it would be replaced if there continued to be problems. Unfortunately, the dishwasher continues to have problems so as per the agreement with the fire department, we will replace it in 2009.
- Farmer Market Coupons have been a big success. The 740 coupon booklets (worth \$20 each) cost the Office for the Aging \$808 of the NYS Home Delivered Meal funding and put \$14,800 into the local Farmer Market economy. Coupon booklets will be distributed until Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. If you know of anyone who would qualify please have them call the office first to make sure of availability. We will also meet the "Senior Shopping" bus coming from Edwards/Hermon/DeKalb Sr. Housing on Tuesdays at the Canton Farmer Market to distribute coupons to those who may not have received them. Public Health nurses will also check with their clients to see if they have received them and have agreed to take coupons to anyone who has not gotten them. Tedra also spoke of a Food Stamp program that provides \$5 in extra (Farmer Market) coupons for every \$20 spent at the Farmer Market. This is geared for Food Stamp recipients to get them to buy from the Farmer's Market which can be more economical.

## New Business:

### StateWide Senior Action Report:

- The next meeting of the StateWide Sr. Action North Country Chapter will be on September 19, 2008 at the Russell Fire Department. Greg Olsen from State Office of the Aging and Chris Cowen, Custom Officer Port of Ogdensburg will be the keynote speakers. Also state and local politicians running for office have been invited to speak and be on hand to meet seniors. Elaine Porter will be in charge of the award ceremony. Those receiving awards for St. Lawrence County are Joe Sears, Barbara Hance and Robert Miller with Janet Shatraw receiving hers posthumously. There will also be the election of Officers and delegates for 2009.
- The StateWide annual convention will be held in Albany on Oct 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup>. Bob inquired if the Office for the Aging could cover cost of Advisory Council Chair to attend. Barb said conference attendance and travel is now restricted to mandatory training only, so she could not cover the cost for anyone (including herself) to attend. Bob has arranged for a bus to drive to Albany and people are welcome to use it. Sr. Donna F. plans to attend due to Catholic Charities' subcontract with StateWide.

### AARP Report:

- Carlton D. was unable to be present: no report given.

### St. Lawrence County Council of Senior Citizens Report:

- Sylvia D. wanted to thank everyone who attended the Senior Picnic on July 11, 2008. The picnic is sponsored jointly by the Office for the Aging and St. Lawrence County Council of Senior Citizens. Approximately 225 people were in attendance. She also wanted to thank everyone who helped make it such a great success and provided a copy of her letter of thanks.
- The Council will sponsor lifeline screening on Wednesday, September 10. 5 different screening tests will be offered, including one for cardio. A fee will be charged for the screening: \$45.00 for each test or \$135 for all screenings.
- St. Lawrence County Council's next meeting will be on Sept. 11 at 10:00 - no speaker invited, will be strictly a business meeting. The speakers for the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting will Tammy Finnegan from the Social Security Office and Barb McBurnie will hold her annual Public Hearing on planned services for 2009.

### Veteran's Services Report:

- P. Rourk explained a new law passed that allows Veterans with a medical retirement with less than 20 years of service to receive VA retirement and compensation.
- The new GI bill will go into effect on 8/1/2009 that is very generous. Provides assistance from \$80,000 to \$150,000 per person. NY State Education Department has approved scholarship program for all veterans that will allow them to attend a SUNY institution for free. If they choose to attend a private college, the veteran will receive the equivalent benefit to attending a State school. Included are books, fees and living expenses.

### Winter & Vulnerable Seniors:

- Barb is working with the County Administrator on several "energy" workgroups. One is looking at setting eligibility criteria for the county fuel assistance program (if the legislators choose to fund again) and other ways of helping with longer term energy savings. A set aside for weatherization activities has been discussed by the Legislators as part of the fuel assistance program. One thought would be to install programmable thermostats in senior's homes to help reduce heating costs.
- The other small group is looking to institute a program to keep track of seniors who may be in trouble this winter: problems obtaining adequate fuel, food and medications. They are looking at a way to obtain names of "vulnerable/at risk" seniors and/or disabled. They would be contacted to obtain their consent to participate in receiving regular "telephone reassurance". Their goal is to set up a network

of volunteers within communities to make the calls. Also may want to considerer sharing homes – winterize one home, move in with another and share costs for only one home. People should look at it that they’re taking care of someone. Some suggestions made included contacting Senior Citizen clubs to help keep on eye on their own members; go to all faith organizations for their lists of shut-ins; getting names from Public Health. Other comments: Pat R. said many VA widows with little income want to stay in own homes – don’t want to leave their homes for anything; need to provide daily not weekly check; B. Miller suggested that contacts must be made in person, not by phone. It was also suggested that seniors themselves should be responsible for helping to “talk people into participating” because seniors will take suggestions better from one of their own. The concern for those heating with wood: what if they can’t get out of the house to bring the wood in and what about fire hazards of burning wood improperly?

### **Announcements:**

- The application deadline for the Economic Stimulus Payment is October 15, 2008. We need to continue to get the word out that the money is still there for anyone who is eligible. Some people who didn’t apply for the payment are afraid that they will be audited and owe back taxes if they file for the payment. We need to encourage everyone who’s eligible to file for the payment. For those on SS/VA Pension, the benefit is \$300 for a single person and \$600 for a married couple.
- November is National Caregivers Month: There will be a Caregiver Workshop at the St. Regis Mohawk Adult Center on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **Adjournment:**

- B. Mead made the motion to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by B. Woodward. Meeting adjourned at 10:45 am.
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