

Minutes

Legislative Committee Governor's Commission on Senior Services January 26, 2007 Department of Human Services

Attendees: Bob Lawrence (Chair), Chris Flammang, Charles Kurtz, Peggie Beck, John Brenne

Excused/Absent:
Guests: Marjorie Reuling, Joan Staley, Kay Kirkbride, Lucy Morgan, Remona Simpson, Patty Brost

Staff: Morgen Brodie

Called Meeting to Order 8:35 am

Review Agenda: No additions or deletions

Approval of Minutes: Accepted by consensus.

Review of Bills

Bob Lawrence distributed copies of the "Dear legislators" packet that was recently passed out at the Capital, along with a list of all of the senators and representatives and their contact information. He reported that the information was well received, and that members made valuable contacts with many legislative staff members. GCSS members also attended the legislative forum and reception.

Bob Lawrence also passed out copies of the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force 2007 State Legislative Agenda and the AARP legislative agenda. The issue of property tax relief has come up nationally, and allows the county to freeze taxes for seniors. AARP is working on this, as well as affordable housing.

Yesterday Bob gave the GCSS mental health proposal to AARP and asked for their support. They are checking to make sure that it fits their national priorities.

Bob passed out the proposed GCSS legislative agenda as a working document that may be modified as the session progresses. The committee will remain flexible about this.

Bob noted that GCSS had been interested in the restoration of General Assistance (GA) as a way of addressing the financial needs of people caught in a backlog of applications for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). If GA could be restored at \$11 million, people

awaiting determination of eligibility for SSI could have a secure financial base as well as a medical card. A summary of the process used by the Presumptive Medical Disability Determination Team (PMDDT) was distributed and summarized for the group. Staff was asked to find out how long it takes for a financial eligibility determination to be made once a case is returned to the local office. Bob suggested that if we can't get a full blown restoration of GA, perhaps an interim goal could be the establishment of temporary assistance to people pending their SSI determination.

A discussion ensued about whether this issue (the restoration of GA) should remain a priority 2 for the Commission, and whether we should do more than write letters of support and be available to testify if needed. Since GA restoration is not in the Governor's budget, it could possibly be included in Ways and Means. If budget notes are disallowed, we may have to go for a bill. Newspapers have noted lack of GA as a key element in people with mental health issues being homeless.

Decision: the committee would like more information from James about the cost of restoration. Specifically, what would be the cost to reinstate GA for people whose disability determinations are pending? How many people are denied by PMDDT and/or by the local office? What is the total wait time between an application for disability determination and the final decision on eligibility by the local office?

John Brenne gave a brief summary of Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP programs. RSVP volunteers are aged 55+ and serve as general volunteers in the community, in public and private agencies. Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion volunteers are aged 60+ and have low incomes. Foster Grandparents help young people as tutors, mentors, etc. Senior Companions serve as friendly visitors to help adults aged 55+ who need light in-home services, companionship, or respite services. Started in 1971, there are about 15 RSVP, 6 Senior Companion, and 6 Foster Grandparent programs around the state. They get grants from Senior Volunteers, but need additional funds, so are seeking help from the state. A legislative concept is being put together for up to \$300,000 for each program over the biennium. Most funds are used for program support, transportation and stipends: a very limited amount is used for administration. All volunteers receive a stipend of \$2.65/hour, plus mileage and training and recognition activities. John acknowledged Bob Lawrence, Representative George Gilman and the GCSS legislative committee for their strong support.

Elaine Barrett said that RSVP has already been receiving state funds of about \$250,000 for about 7 years: this would raise the amount to \$300,000. Bob noted that this would be a General Fund (GF) program.

Charles raised the question of whether this fits with the GCSS priorities, and members responded that the program has a positive impact on mental health, abuse reduction and caregiving issues.

Bob reviewed the bill on the proposed GCSS legislative agenda and the group agreed on priorities for each bill to be included. (See attachment.)

Bob distributed a handout on housing issues in Cornelius. He has met with Senator Avakian and Representative Krummel, and they feel that GCSS could provide support for affordable housing and mobile home park issues. Charles questioned whether this is a priority for GCSS as the coalition has come to agreement on the bill.

Adjourn: 9:55