

Cabinet on Aging Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2024, from 2-3 PM (by Zoom)

Welcome and Introductions

Opening remarks

The meeting began with opening remarks by Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, about the State's response to recent storms and floodings and the impacts of climate change. Many of the agencies involved in emergency response work are represented on the Cabinet. Director Pingree spoke about the work of the Maine Climate Council and efforts to support people whose homes and businesses have been damaged and to repair infrastructure. Conversations are happening about both short-term emergency needs and long-term planning. This includes a focus on those who are most vulnerable to adverse impacts, including people who are homebound or otherwise limited in their ability to prepare or respond. This is anticipated to be a major focus for the Governor over the next year, state-wide and agency by agency, and there are opportunities to partner with the Cabinet on Aging in this work, particularly as the state puts together its next climate plan.

Update on Cabinet on Aging Activities

Community Connections Pilot

The Cabinet Coordinator provided additional information on the Governor's announcement of the Community Connections pilot, a \$2.5 million initiative that is under the direction of the Cabinet funded through federal dollars received by the Department of Health and Human Services through Section 9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act.

One of the first things that the Cabinet did after being established was to visit some of the Lifelong communities and hear about activities on the ground where there is a great deal of energy and innovation. This pilot is intended to empower communities in this work and represents a partnership with the Maine Center on Aging, which provides technical assistance to Maine's Lifelong communities.

A key piece of the project is to support community-based navigation programming in about 10-12 communities across the state. It is well known that people find it difficult to know where to go for information and who or what to ask, and that people turn to sources they trust. Pilot communities will be supported through technical assistance, training, volunteer stipends, and program costs to help connect people to available resources in their communities or through other sources.

For those communities that may not be able to pursue this type of programming, the Cabinet is establishing a mini-grant process to support work that aligns with the Cabinet's goals and objectives. The criteria will be developed over the coming months and be made available at a future date. The initiative also expands the ability of Area Agencies on Aging to strengthen partnerships with communities in their service areas. The State is in the process of contracting and work will begin in the next few months.

Maine as an Age Friendly Employer

In keeping with the goals of the state of Maine being certified as an Age Friendly Employer, the Department of Financial and Administrative Services offered training to all state employees hosted by Maine Council on Aging and its Power in Aging Project. The live, virtual 90-minute training was held on January 23rd and included opening remarks by Commissioners Figueroa, Lambrew and Fortman. The training addressed ageism and age-bias and The training was recorded and is available to all employees. Approximately 500 people registered with about 300 participants attending the live session. With a response rate of 25%, 97% of the participants responding to the survey said that the content was relevant to their work or community, and most said they strongly agreed with that statement. 94% of participants responding to the survey reported their knowledge or sensitivity to agism increased.

Presentation: Maine's Statewide Needs Assessment of Older Adults and Caregivers

Every four years, Maine submits a State Plan on Aging to the federal government as a condition of receiving continued funding under the Older Americans Act. To inform development of the plan, Maine sponsors a statewide needs assessment every four years. The needs assessment was conducted in the fall of 2023 by the Cutler Institute, University of Southern Maine. It consisted of statewide surveys of older adults and caregivers, virtual listening sessions, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Data from the needs assessment will also inform the Cabinet on Aging priorities.

Kim Snow and Mary Lou Ciolfi who led this work from USM and UMaine Center on Aging presented findings from the needs assessment. Their presentation is posted with these minutes. The full report was published in January 2024 and is available on the website of the Office of Aging and Disability Services. It can be accessed by this link: [Final Report: Needs Assessment](#)

Closing Remarks

Commissioner Fortman and Cabinet members thanked Karen Fraser for her contributions over the past year to the work of the Cabinet. Karen, as the designated staff member from Maine DOL to the Cabinet, has contributed significant expertise and time. The Cabinet wished her the best in her retirement.

Next Meeting: Monday, April 1, 2024, from 2-3 PM