

News Release

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COMMISSIONERS MOVE FORWARD WITH SENIOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LOOK TO EXPAND SENIOR PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

FREDERICK, MD – The Frederick Board of County Commissioners today held a public hearing to continue discussion of the needs of the older adult population in Frederick County.

Department of Aging Director Carolyn True informed the board that a needs assessment survey was originally presented to the commissioners on October 17, 2013. Subsequent to the presentation, staff learned that the presentation should have occurred as part of an advertised public hearing since the assessment was funded with Community Development Block Grant funds. Today's public hearing was advertised in the Frederick News Post on February 15 and 22, 2014.

Board President Blaine Young commented, "We commend the Department of Aging and Commission on Aging for their work with regard to the seniors needs assessment. Not surprisingly, the survey found that for Frederick County and the nation, changing demographics are creating the need to plan for a population that is getting older, which will have doubled from 2000 to 2030. These older adults expect their communities to adjust to their longer life spans, provide a variety of choices in key areas of life, support their ambition to work or volunteer in activities that are suitable for their expertise and experience, and accommodate their desire to continue active engagement in their neighborhoods and communities for many years to come.

"We look forward to the next step in this process to develop a business plan that outlines, over a multiyear period, the strategies and funding to implement the recommendations. In addition to the <u>senior initiatives</u> credited to this Board of County Commissioners, we now have the opportunity to utilize the findings in this assessment to further benefit our community.

"In addition, the board voted to set aside \$250,000 as a placeholder in the budget to expand the senior property tax credit for those seniors who are trying to stay in this county but are hindered by the burdensome tax system locally and by the state. Department of Aging staff will report back to the board on this proposal."

(more)

In May 2012, as a result of a request by the Commission on Aging, the board authorized staff to proceed with hiring a consultant to assess the needs of the older adult population in Frederick County. Just Partners, Inc., was the successful vendor and was awarded a contract in late February 2013 with work beginning in early March. Throughout the spring and summer, the consultant held focus groups with senior service providers and other stakeholders, interviewed county staff and municipal planners, asked for input from older adults, caregivers and other interested persons via a hard copy survey as well as an online survey.

Over 1,000 responses were received, which was significantly more than anticipated. The consultant researched best practices in other communities and prepared a <u>comprehensive document</u> and <u>executive summary</u> that included an action plan that sequences the report's recommendations and identifies the lead sectors, recognizing that it will take a collaborative effort on the part of government, nonprofits, and the private sector to ensure that Frederick County continues to remain a senior-friendly community.

In summary, the needs assessment found:

- A talented Department of Aging and committed Commission on Aging, with many local allies exhibiting a strong spirit of collaboration.
- Meaningful county attention to targeted services and supports for older residents of Frederick County:
 e.g., TransIT-plus, senior tax credit, county-subsidized housing, taxi vouchers and support for the
 Department of Aging.
- Existing local plans and actions that are compatible with seniors' priorities and needs, so long as their particular concerns are incorporated: e.g., land trust, transit-oriented development, incorporation of human service considerations into other planning issues and promotion of shared facilities.
- Considerable untapped spending power, entrepreneur potential and volunteer time that seniors have to offer and that the county needs.

For more information about the senior needs assessment, visit www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/aging or contact Ms. True at 301-600-1605 or via e-mail at crue@FrederickCountyMD.gov.