

PUBLIC HEARING 2010
Division of Senior Services
Held at Sparta Senior Center
Sparta, NJ
June 3, 2010

Mary Lou Schnurr, Director of the Sussex County Division of Senior Services opened the Public Hearing at 1:31 pm. She provided an overview of the Division of Senior Services and purpose of the hearing, which is mandated through the Older Americans Act. The total in attendance was 67 which consisted of providers, seniors, senior club representatives, Advisory Board members and other interested parties. The Division of Senior Services is a mandated office under the Older American Act, which requires that an Area Plan Contract be completed based on our needs assessment. The Public Hearing was advertised in the New Jersey Herald, Star Ledger and Strauss Newspapers and via flyers. The purpose of the hearing is to receive input for the development of the area plan. Needs assessments and focus groups are other methods of gathering information on senior needs. Funding is received from federal, state and county grants to support needed services. Funded programs are for those age 60 plus and/or their caregivers and are meant to provide assistance and support enabling frail and vulnerable elderly persons to remain as independent as possible in their homes and communities. All programs are monitored both fiscally and programmatically to ensure the standards of the program and services are adhered to. The Division of Senior Services has an Advisory Board that assists with the process.

The Division of Senior Services solicits proposals and issues contracts to selected agencies to provide the necessary services such as legal services, transportation, congregate nutrition, home delivered meals, home health aides, evidence-based health promotion programs (which include Project Healthy Living, Matter of Balance, Move Today, Project Healthy Bones and Diabetics Self-Management), outreach and case management. Several sub-grantees that provide these contracted services were present and introduced at the hearing. A handout describing the services and programs offered was distributed and reviewed. Programs and services not funded through the Older Americans Act were also discussed. Some of the other supportive programs administered by the Division of Senior Services are the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, State Health Insurance Program (SHIP), and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). Special events sponsored by the Division include Older Americans Day in May, Senior Day at the Fair, Caregiver Expo, Senior Healthy Living Festival, and the Annual Salute to Military Veterans. The Division collaborates with a variety of other agencies and organizations including Skylands RSVP and Volunteer Resource Center, Municipal Alliances, Sussex County Homestead Balance Center, Skylands Ride, local hospitals and more, to cost-effectively deliver services. Volunteers are recruited to serve as SHIP Counselors, VITA Tax preparers and leaders of Health Promotion Programs.

At this time the hearing was opened to the public for questions and comments:

An email from **George Merchant from Sparta** was read and included the following issues:

Lower real estate taxes for all seniors regardless of income, especially if homeowners perhaps freeze them at 2005 levels or a 2% cap per year. Control of and lower school budgets (which lead to higher taxes). Sparta rejected the school budget by 70%. The Council cut only a modest \$600,000 of a 61 million budget. The schools need to live within the cap. Perhaps consolidation of all county school systems at the County level. Advantage for teachers too as they will have county wide tenure. Rail transportation from Sparta or Newton to NYC. Two grocery stores in Sparta. A more equitable distribution of County taxes. Mayor advised that Sparta bears much more than its share because county bases it on real estate assessment. Should be on the % of people in towns or on the % of people in the towns who uses the services such as Vo-Tech, College etc,

Mary Lou Schnurr – Responded that many of the issues addressed are beyond the scope of the Division of Senior Services.

Anthony Cavallo – Sparta – Will information be provided on how to contact the Division of Senior Services?

Mary Lou Schnurr – Yes, contact information included on all handouts available at the Division of Senior Services table.

Dan Tavaves – Westwind Manor, Franklin – What is the connection to transit and social services.

Mary Lou Schnurr – Transportation services are provided under the Division of Social Services. The Division from Senior Services funds senior transportation.

Molly Whilesmith - Sparta – Wants to be aware of the Division of Senior Services and what seniors from Sparta need and want.

Karen Magill – Frankford Township – As an Advisory Council member asked if anyone has suggestions on how to we can get the word out to more seniors about events and programs that could be beneficial to them?

June Eisenecker – Hardyston Township– Stated she distributes flyers at grocery stores, churches, post office etc. She places them wherever flyers can be posted.

Joan Shaw- Sparta – Encourage seniors to get out and join senior clubs and groups.

Mary Lou Schnurr – Senior Club presidents have been asked to spread the word to their members.

Carol Lafrada -Sandyston – Some municipalities will assist with mailings, web sites, etc.

Flossie Meyers – Sparta – Information on upcoming events can be provided to local

churches for publishing in weekly bulletins or newsletters.

Mary Lou Schnurr – The Division of Senior Services already had a database of names and currently provides information to local churches.

Janet Dennis – Branchville – Has the idea of sending newsletters been considered?

Mary Lou Schnurr – A newsletter could be emailed, but the actual mailing of a newsletter would be very costly.

Wally Woreck – Sparta – The Township Recreation Director position has been eliminated which will impact many of the recreational programs for seniors in Sparta.

Michael Vandenberg - Sparta – Are any monitoring or security services available that can watch seniors houses when they are away?

Molly Whilesmith - Sparta – Responded that this service exists through a volunteer program in Lake Mohawk, which is located in Sparta.

Rita Thorpe - Lafayette – Sussex County has many programs and services, unlike Texas.

Mary Kelly - Sparta – Does the information on upcoming programs and events get into the local papers?

Mary Lou Schnurr – Yes press releases are sent on all events and programs to the local papers, radio and cable TV station along with being posted on the County of Sussex website.

Walter Spinks – Hampton – When literature is distributed the return rate is very small. Seniors best way to obtain information would be to contact the Division of Senior Services.

Andrew Dedinsky – Stanhope – Stanhope Senior club distributes a sheet of “Happenings” at membership meetings that includes all upcoming events.

Elaine McDougall – Byram - Some municipalities will provide a senior page on the municipality website to promote information on upcoming programs.

With no further comments from the public, the hearing was adjourned at 2:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane M. Friedberg
Sussex County Division of Senior Services