

**Minutes of North Carolina Coalition on Aging Meeting
Friday, January 24, 2020 (10:00 a.m.)**

Room 104, Brown Building (801 Biggs Drive on Dix Campus)

Persons in Attendance:

Tracy Colvard – Board Chair, Association for Home and Hospice Care of NC
Allison Costanzo – Executive Director
Chad Walker – Treasurer, Transition LifeCare
Harold Barnette - Board Member, Institute for Family Caregiving
Mary Bethel – Interim Secretary, Board Member
Martha Fowler – Board Member, State Employees Association of NC
Adam Leggette – UnitedHealthcare
Alan Winstead – Meals on Wheels NC/Wake Meals on Wheels
Alicia Blater – NC DAAS
Ames Simmons – Equality NC
Ashlynn Ehrler – Meals on Wheels Intern
Bill Lamb – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care
Breea Hughes – Campbell Senior Law Clinic Intern
Christelle Ndong – Music Maker Relief Foundation
Ellen Schneider – UNC – Chapel Hill (Speaker)
Frances Messer – NC Assisted Living Association
Gina Upchurch – Senior PharmAssist
Jamie Philyar – UnitedHealthcare
Dr. Jan Busby-Whitehead – UNC – Chapel Hill (Speaker)
Jo Paul – NC SHIIP
Jonathan Williams – Clarity Legal Group
Joseph Wheeler – SAGE Central NC
Kent Earnhardt – NAMI NC
Kezia Scales – PHI
Lauren Zingraff – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care
Lee Campbell – NC Senior Living Association
Les Geller – SAGE/Resources for Seniors
Margaret Toman – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care/Consumer Advocate
Martha Lamb – Individual Member/Cameron Commons/Friends or Residents in LTC
Melissa Church – UnitedHealthcare
Michael Gonzales – UnitedHealthcare
Michael Patterson – Durham Center for Senior Life
Pam Palmer – NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse/Triangle J COG Area Agency on Aging
Pamela Atwood – NC Housing Coalition

Paola Learoyd – Randolph Cloud and Associates
Preston Craddock – Greene County Dept. of Social Services
Quanisha Collins – NC Housing Finance Agency
Rebecca Freeman – NC DAAS (Speaker)
Rick Messemer – Carolina Estate Counsel (Individual Members)
Roger Manus – Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging/Campbell Senior Law Clinic
Rosalyn Pettyford – AARP NC
Salona Lutchminarian – Cameron Commons Intern (NC State)
Sandy Gregory – NC BAM
Selena Royal – NC DAAS
Shazia Keller – NC Bar Assoc. Elder Law and Special Needs Section
Steve Hahn – AARP NC
Timothy McDonald – Friends of Residents in Long Term Care Intern (NC State)
Tony Davis – NC Div. of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Valerie Arendt – NASW NC
Wayne Campbell – NC Continuing Care Residents Association/LeadingAge NC
Willetha Barnette – Institute for Family Caregiving
2 Interpreters

Joining by Phone

Ray Riordan – Board Member, The Carolinas Center
David Rhew – NC Public Transportation Association
Elaine Whitford – Center for Volunteer Caregiving
Haley Williford – Community and Senior Services of Johnston Co./NC Senior Center Alliance
Heather Burkhardt – Resources for Seniors
Karen Appert – Southern Gerontological Society
Laura Martin – Aging Family Solutions
Laura Schlabach – NC DOJ Medicaid Investigations Division
Lisa Riegel – AARP NC
Nancy Ruffner – Navigate NC
Teresa Evans-Hunter – NC Retired School Personnel

Opening remarks were provided by Tracy Colvard, Board Chair, and **introductions** of those in the room and on the phone were provided. Tracy thanked Bill Lamb, who is rotating off the Coalition’s Board, for his service on the Board and for the leadership he has brought to the Coalition over the years. He reported that Mary Bethel has agreed to serve on the Board and will be assisting in this period of transition for the Coalition. Tracy noted that Kezia Scales from PHI who was in attendance for the first time has authored a just released report entitled “It’s Time To Care: A Detailed Profile of America’s Direct Care Workforce.” The report is the first in a year-

long series that provides a comprehensive current-day analysis of the direct care workforce and its critical role in the long-term care system in the United States. (note: A copy of the article was e-mailed to those on the Coalition's distribution list on January 27).

Tracy **introduced** Allison Costanzo, the **new Executive Director for the Coalition**. Allison provided brief remarks noting her background and passion for aging and her excitement for being hired for the Executive Director position.

Approval of Minutes from December 6, 2019 Meeting – Motion by Harold Barnette to approve. Seconded by Chad Walker. Approved by all.

Treasurer's Report – Chad Walker, Treasurer reported a balance in the bank of \$48,788.11 (copy of report was distributed). He noted there was a carryover of \$32,081.87 from last year. Approximately \$3,000 was raised for the December 12 holiday reception/retirement recognition of Mary Bethel, \$20,000 has been received for the partnership agreement with UnitedHealthcare, and membership dues for 2020 are beginning to come in. The amount for contract services includes payment to Mary for December 2019 and for Allison for the first month. We received a \$50 refund from the NC Secretary of State's office for the solicitation license fee. He encouraged everyone to submit their dues payment for 2020. He called attention to the fact the Coalition has a hardship provision for those unable to pay the full dues amount.

Announcements of Partnership Agreements – Chair Colvard and Treasurer Walker provided background on the new partnership opportunities that the Coalition has initiated and talked about how this new initiative will provide resources to help enable the Coalition to have full time staff and to expand our footprint. Opportunities are available at the three levels (premium, prime, and champion). Treasurer Walker reported that, to date, three partnership agreements have been developed. He announced the agreements and introduced representatives from each of the partners who provided remarks. They are as follows:

- Premium Partner: UnitedHealthcare (represented by Melissa Church)
- Champion Partner: Collaborative effort between NC Assisted Living Association (represented by Frances Messer) and Poyner Spruill (Ken Burgess was absent but Frances Messer offered remarks in his behalf)
- Champion Partner: Collaborative effort between Association for Home and Hospice Care of North Carolina (represented by Tracy Colvard) and Transitions LifeCare (represented by Chad Walker)

In speaking, each representative provided background about their organization, commented about their reasons for entering into the partnership arrangement with the Coalition, and noted their support for helping to strengthen the work of the Coalition. Melissa Church with UnitedHealthcare extended an invitation to Coalition members to participate in their member

orientation events that will be held at ten locations in the state in late January and February. Treasurer Walker thanked each partner and added that partnership opportunities are still available. If interested in perusing a partnership agreement with the Coalition, see him.

Activities and Updates Since December Meeting – Mary Bethel, former Executive Director and new member of the Coalition’s Board, reported on several things:

- Much of the work in December and January has focused on ensuring that there has is a smooth transition with the new Executive Director and that the Coalition does not skipped a beat relative to our work.
- The General Assembly did not take any action relative to expanding access to health care, one of our priority issues, when they came back into session on January 14. Care4Carolina held a press conference after the session, which included local officials, to discuss the need for expanding access. The Coalition will continue to work through Care4Carolina to push for expanded access.
- The NC Institute of Medicine’s Task Force on Serious Illness Care asked the Coalition to consider taking the lead on a recommendation coming from the Task Force to convene stakeholders to develop resources (programmatic, policy, etc.) which will support employed caregivers. The Coalitions Board has agreed to undertake this effort. It will be later in the year before this is initiated.
- We are continuing to work with a diverse group of agencies and organizations to develop a plan for advocacy related to seeking expansion of the homestead property tax relief program or other means to help people who lack the resources to pay their property taxes stay in their home. Mary noted that paying for property taxes is a challenge for many older adults and persons with disabilities in rural as well as urban counties in the state.

Allison Costanzo, Executive Director, reported that the annual meeting will be held at the NC State University Club again this year. The date of the meeting is September 25.

Update from the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) – Rebecca Freeman, Healthy Aging Specialist with DAAS, shared information about a Healthy Aging Task Force proposal that the Division is working on. She noted that the Division has been very actively involved in efforts over the years to address falls. There is a Falls Prevention Coalition that has brought together many stakeholders around this issue and there has been a five year plan to decrease falls in the state. There is a realization that more needs to be done to address this issue as well as other aspects of healthy aging in the state. Based on this desire to do more, there are discussions ongoing with the NC Institute of Medicine about convening a Task Force on Health Aging that will address four components: falls and injury prevention, nutrition and food security, mobility, and aging in place. Key partners to be involved in a Task Force have already been identified and funding to support the Task Force is

being pursued. (note: a copy of Rebecca's PowerPoint presentation was e-mailed to those on the Coalition's distribution list on January 27). Alicia Blater, Dementia Services Coordinator/ Lifespan Respite Project Director with DAAS was recognized and she spoke briefly about the Dementia Capable North Carolina State Plan and noted that she would be glad to attend a future Coalition meeting to provide an update on the status of accomplishing Plan recommendations and on other efforts relative to addressing dementia support. Alzheimer's is the fourth leading cause of deaths in the state.

Update on Federal and State Developments – Chair Colvard provided an update on the current budget impasse and the one day meeting of the legislature on January 14. He noted that there is still no new state budget for this year although a series of mini-budgets were passed starting in October. On January 14, the Legislature did not address the budget, health care access or any of the other issues we have been tracking. Because of the budget impasse, there is not funding for DHHS to move forward on many of their efforts including Medicaid transformation. Tracy shared that Governor Cooper is saying that Medicaid expansion is not an ultimatum. The short legislative session convenes on April 28 and there is a lot of speculation it will only be several weeks long. Allison joined him at the legislature on January 14 and had the opportunity to meet with several key legislators on the HHS Committees. Questions/comments were raised by those in attendance about Medicaid transformation and whether Medicaid recipients are confused with the delay in implementation. There was feedback from those present that there is confusion since letters have gone out. There is also confusion between Medicaid expansion and Medicaid transformation. Bill Lamb asked if the election will impact plans to move forward with managed care. Tracy speculated that it will probably happen at some point.

Mary Bethel provided an update on two items. She reported that at the end of the year, Congress was busy with a variety of bills that include aging issues. The bills incorporate the final appropriations for FY 20, including funding increases for a number of aging services programs. NCOA organized 71 diverse national organizations representing seniors, people with disabilities, and health care providers to sign a letter urging Congressional action on Medicare and Medicaid issues including preventing a rise in prescription drug costs and making the expiring Medicaid home and community-based services program permanent. Congress has decided to extend most expiring programs only until May 22, 2020, when a broader package of Medicare and Medicaid reforms will be addressed. Mary also reported that on December 12, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3 (The Lower Drug Cost Now Act) which caps Medicare Part D prescription drug out-of-pocket spending; strengthens the Low-Income Subsidy program; and expands Medicare coverage for dental, vision, and hearing services, and eligibility for other low-income assistance. It is hoped that the Senate will take up this bill next year. Gina Upchurch noted that this bill is named after recently deceased representative Elijah E. Cummings.

Other information shared included the following:

- Ames Simmons with Equality NC commented about the importance of participation in the upcoming census, which will be digitally based, as this determines the amount of federal funding the state gets for many programs as well as our representation in Congress.
- Chad Walker with Transitions LifeCare noted that there are misconceptions about people getting help to fill out the census form. Caregivers can assist with completion of the form.
- Mary Bethel reminding everyone that an I.D. is not needed to vote in the March primary.
- Gina Upchurch with Senior PharmAssist commented that the Medicare Plan Finder still has many problems which raises the possibility of fraud. Jo Paul with NC SHIIP echoed Gina's comments about the problems with the Plan Finder. CMS is to appear before Congress to discuss the problems. Jo reported there is a special enrollment period if a person has problems resulting from issues related to the Plan Finder. Kent Earnhardt touted the good resource that SHIIP is for people in our state.
- Gina added that she went to the MedPAC (Medicare Payment Advisory Commission) meeting last week. The Medicare drug benefit is being redesigned and will probably include a cap limit. There is a plan to cut home care and hospice benefits. The PT benefit has already been modified. There will be consolidation of Medicare Advantage plans based on quality measures.

Speakers – Dr. Jan Busby-Whitehead and Ellen Schneider with UNC Chapel Hill provided a presentation on the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program Grant (GWEP) that has been received by the UNC Center for Aging and Health. UNC was one of 48 sites in the country to receive funding. During the presentation, Dr. Busby Whitehead with assistance from Ms. Schneider, described the program and provided information on program initiatives. A copy of Dr. Busby-Whitehead's PowerPoint presentation was e-mailed to those on the Coalition's distribution list on January 27. During the presentation, Dr. Busby-Whitehead fielded questions from those in attendance about the specifics of the proposed grant initiatives and who is being targeted. Several of those in attendance spoke to the need for training for family caregivers and direct care workers although they are not specially target groups for training. It was suggested by Kezia Scales that working with primary care providers could be a way of reaching these groups. Dr. Busby-Whitehead shared that the Center for Aging and Health has many partners as they seek to improve and transform the care for older adults in the state with the grant. She encouraged Coalition members to let them know if they see opportunities for working together to meet the grant's goals by 2024.

Report from Financial Sustainability Committee – Chad Walker, Committee Chair, stated that he had no additional information to share.

Sharing by Coalition Members

- Kent Earnhardt expressed concern about a looming crisis in housing. Tax credits are being converted.
- Joseph Wheeler with SAGE Central NC reminded everyone of the Pride Life Expo that will be held at McKimmon Center in Raleigh on April 4. It will include a senior showcase. Registration is open for sponsors and exhibitors.
- Mary Bethel asked that those in attendance let Allison know of items to be added to the calendar of events that is posted on the website.
- Pam Palmer with the NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse announced that the Partnership’s annual meeting will be on May 20 at Wake Tech. They are partnering with law enforcement on the meeting.
- Chad Walker with Transitions LifeCare shared that they have received a grant from the Association for Home and Hospice Care to do more training that impacts direct care workers.
- Karen Appert with the S. Gerontological Society noted that the deadline for submitting proposals for the S. Gerontological Society annual meeting is February 14. The meeting is April 14-18 in Norfolk, Va.

Tracy reminded everyone that the February meeting will be on February 21. This is a week earlier than usual, and was scheduled for that date due to the unavailability of the meeting room on Feb. 28.

Other Business – Additional Coalition Meeting Dates for 2020 were noted. They are as follows:

Marcy 27	May 29	September 25 (annual meeting)
April 24	June 26	October 23
	August 28	December 4

Meeting Location, Time, and Call-In Number: All meetings except for the September annual meeting will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in room 104 of the Brown Building on the Dix Campus (801 Biggs Drive) in Raleigh. The call in number for those who are not available to attend in person is (1) 425-436-6365; passcode: 335101. The location of the September meeting is the NC State University Club.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Bethel, Interim Secretary

