

**THE FUTURE OF SENIOR LIVING IN MONTPELIER
MSAC ROUND TABLE
Thursday, May 13, 2010**

Participants included staff and Advisory Board members of the Montpelier Senior Activity Center (MSAC), Central Vermont Council on Aging (COA), Senior Meals Program/Meals on Wheels (MOW), REACH program, Gossens Bachman Architects, and Montpelier city officials including Council members, Assistant City Manager and Director of Planning & Community Development.

DISCUSSION ON SENIOR NEEDS

The group viewed a chart of psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs; each member identified needs among Montpelier seniors which they feel are important and not currently being fully addressed.

Most frequently mentioned were issues related to meals and transportation.

These needs overlap for seniors who have mobility issues which limit their ability to shop for groceries and prepare meals—which in turn suggests the need for outreach services to identify such vulnerable seniors.

Other and related concerns included the following:

Level 1, physiological:

- Pain management
- Medication affordability
- Housing and residential services
- Exercising and activities that promote health and vitality
- End-of-life care
- **Food and nutrition:**
 - Meals to seniors on Meals on Wheels waiting list and others who haven't been identified
 - Cooking for one
 - Visiting nurse assistance with nutrition education
 - Outreach on all of the above for those not getting basic needs met

Level 2, safety and security:

- **Mobility:**
 - Getting around on one's own power
 - Accessibility
 - Accessible transportation
- Vision, hearing and ambulation
- Day care and ADL assistance for frailer elders
- Substance dependency
- Over/under-medication
- Cost of living

Level 3, social needs:

- Senior activity in general/remaining active
- Sense of being an important part of community
- More meeting spaces for senior interest groups
- Interesting opportunities for those who don't get out of their homes
- Outreach to those who don't want to or are unable to go to MSAC
- Socialization via common meals and activities
- Space for social connection to combat isolation and alienation
- Connection to younger generations, especially kids and teens
- Intergenerational (including within 50+ group) skill-sharing

Level 3 and above:

- Setting a good example
- Elders as both givers and receivers of services and learning
- Volunteering

Levels 4 and 5, community contribution and self-actualization:

- Intellectual stimulation
- Mentoring for youth
- End-of-life care
- Artistic/creative opportunities

Important background information for discussion:

- Montpelier has three times the national proportion of residents over 85
- Nationally, the ratio of those under to those over 85 has declined in last century or so from 27/1 to 6/1.

Discussion: aspects of the term "Activity" as it relates to MSAC

- Changes in MSAC governance structure have created a new paradigm; MSAC's former status as a part of the Montpelier Recreation Department would have biased its mission towards more narrowly defined recreational programs
- By-laws call for MSAC to "enhance quality of life for seniors via activities through opportunities to enhance physical, mental, social and cultural well-being." Are the by-laws potentially limiting in light of changed circumstances?
- Meals vs. activities has been a resource issue; MSAC hasn't had capacity (space, staff, and funding) to do both
- Meals and nutrition are a part of MSAC's current activities
- MSAC is NOT day care or nursing home; space and staffing don't allow this
- Bringing activities to people could be part of "activity"; offering resources for people who can't come to a center

- Senior companions can bring people to MSAC and help them participate in activities

What values should guide decisions about MSAC's future?

- Inclusiveness
- Affordability
- Equity: municipal resources serving all, used equitably
- Accessibility for all sorts of disability, e.g. have hearing-accessible equipment in new center
- Navigation assistance and connection to resources
- Sustainability: economic, environmental, energy, safety, community
- Tolerance/acceptance
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Community
- Coordination/collaboration
- Holistic: addressing needs of mind, body, spirit
- Optimization: organizations each do what they're best at and have capacity for
- Spectrum/continuum of services

Target clients: who does MSAC serve, and who should be served?

- Eligibility: currently age 50+
- Age range currently concentrated in MSAC programs: 60-85
- CVCOA eligibility: elders 60+ and their family members
- May need to raise minimum age of MSAC
- Co-housing in new building may change participation; units will include younger people with disabilities as well as elders
- Person's economic level affects needs and interests
- Current situation/perception among some: a 'club' for people who can afford it
- Younger people currently participating as volunteers, senior companions, instructors, program assistants

Current membership breakdown:

- Montpelier: 355
- Outside: 240±
- Some sense on City Council and in community that MSAC should "right-size" to Montpelier-only membership

MEETING CONSENSUS: MAINTAIN MEMBERSHIP FOR RESIDENTS OF NEIGHBOR COMMUNITIES AS WELL AS MONTPELIER.

Discussion: aspects of accessibility

- Outreach/accessibility of services for seniors is a major issue, beyond one organization
- For those for whom membership and program fees are financial barriers: consider setting up a scholarship fund
- REACH could take activities out to people who can't/don't come to Center
- Member-volunteers are already engaged in Center-based activity
- Outreach opportunity: TECHNOLOGY. Webcams, Skype, Internet etc. could help people participate 'live' in programs without being at the site itself
- BUT: significant benefits come from the incidental interactions people have by coming to the Center itself

PARKING LOT: issues for further consideration

- Could there be a case manager/outreach person stationed at MSAC?
- Fastest growing budget segment for MSAC is fees and membership dues; there's no fundraising going on as yet, as many other senior centers do.

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MEMBERSHIP BREAKOUT GROUP**

Participants: Jim Sheridan (City Council) and Rachael Rice (REACH)

Goals/objectives/desired results identified for this area:

- Keep a sustained number of members
- Keep/enhance MSAC as an inclusive, affordable, diverse community via affirmative recruitment and outreach

Decisions made about how to go forward towards goals:

- Have no membership restrictions except age
- Include neighboring residents as members but maintain advantages for Montpelier members, e.g. lower fees and early signups for programs
- Identify and maintain a strong base level of membership, remaining affordable, flexible and adaptable as "younger" seniors with different interests and priorities mature into MSAC membership
- Develop outreach strategy using direct personal contacts, social networks, partnerships with other entities, advertising, publicity, sponsorship opportunities
- Expand existing public/private partnerships, e.g. First in Fitness, Twin City Lanes
- Examine possibilities for other communities' increasing their contributions to MSAC
- Offer navigation assistance and subsidies for services and programs where needed

- Regularly seek input from members, potential members and partners via surveys, suggestion boxes, focus groups
- Develop reciprocal use agreements for members of other/related organizations

Responsible party/parties for taking the goals forward:

- MSAC Board and Committees, MSAC staff, individual members
- City government (Council members, Assistant City Manager, Planning Department)
- REACH volunteers, AmeriCorps, interns

Resources needed to accomplish objectives:

- City tax appropriation, Corry Fund, reserve fund (secured)
- Fundraising: annual donations and planned giving, business support (to be developed)
- Program partnerships with private sector (e.g. Twin City Lanes, First in Fitness; secured)
- Volunteers, e.g. for rummage sale, voter outreach including other communities; grant writing (secured)

Additional means to secure resources:

- Bartering, businesses, ReachUp, Vermont Associates, fundraising, donations

Next steps:

- Ask MSAC advisory board for direction on where and how to reach out.
- MSAC advisory board to create membership committee and partnership committee; Jim Sheridan will take issue to board.

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SERVICES BREAKOUT GROUP**

Jeanne Kern of CVCOA reporting for group that included MSAC Advisory Board members (Mary Alice Bisbee, Elizabeth Dodge), REACH staff (Suki Ciappara), CVCLT (Eileen Peltier, Executive Director) and Meals on Wheels (MOW) staff

Discussion focus: Montpelier seniors and the services they need

Goals/objectives/desired outcomes identified for this area:

1. The nutritional needs of all Montpelier seniors are being met, especially the urgent needs which are currently not being met; this includes basic transportation needed to accomplish the nutrition goal (e.g. deliveries to home, or transportation assistance for grocery shopping)

2. In addition to its own activities, MSAC becomes the "open door" for all seniors in the community to find and access services, functioning as an intake outpost and navigation center for health and social service providers

Current situation:

1. There are urgent, unmet needs among seniors for meals, e.g. breakfast and dinner
2. No outreach by Meals on Wheels at present because extra demand could not be met
3. NECI can provide 1,000 meals, but distribution infrastructure is lacking, e.g. drop-off to fridge or freezer at central location, delivery van
4. Yearly funding allocation from Older Americans Act limits number of meals that can be funded and reimbursement is only half of actual meal cost

Decisions made about how to go forward towards goals:

1. Conduct city-wide senior needs assessment
2. Improve collaboration and service connections among entities committed to ensuring that all seniors who need meals get them (CVCOA, DCF, CVHHH)
3. Identify missing links in chain of service and see where MSAC could play a role, especially in area of meeting seniors' needs for meals
4. Work with REACH to identify coordinator for effort

Responsible party/parties for taking the goals forward:

- CVCOA: Jeanne Kern
- Montpelier MOW
- REACH: Suki Ciappara
- ReLIEF Essential Goods Program
- NECI
- Interfaith Council
- Foodworks
- Neighborhood CAN groups

Next steps:

1. Agency representatives wishing to set up outreach functions at MSAC before a comprehensive plan is in place will contact Cindy McCloud to make arrangements
2. By July 1, 2010, Suki Ciappara will convene a meeting at the REACH office of representatives from above agencies and groups to accomplish the following:
 - Review nutrition and transportation systems and gaps therein
 - Identify resource needs (e.g. vans, freezers)
 - Identify funding sources (e.g. Senator Sanders)
 - Make plans for how MSAC will become intake center for essential senior services, including how functions are staffed, what agency leads, what collateral materials (brochures, etc.) are available in addition to live staffing

Identified resources

- Pooled resources of all agencies named above

How can further resources be obtained?

- Seek additional grants

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FACILITIES BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT

Participants:

Cindy McCloud, MSAC Program Director

Gregg Gossens, Gossens Bachman Architects

____, MSAC Advisory Board member

Expanded mission:

- MSAC is a gathering place and resource center for positive aging

Goals/objectives/desired results identified for this area:**Overall:**

- More welcoming sense of community
- Energy efficient
- Healthy indoor air quality
- Clearly defined, marked, & enforced parking
- Outdoor multigenerational space (in association with playground)
- Recreation Department building becomes an asset, providing additional space for senior activities

Ground floor:

- Redesigned outside/entrance area (remove vestibule)
- Reception area
- Senior Center staff office
- Senior services resource center with an office near entrance; shared office for service providers
- Elevator
- Large open room which can be used for activities and meals, giving sense of community
- Redesigned, improved office and bathroom space
- Keep basic kitchen structure; who will run the kitchen is undetermined
- Kitchen access for loading, deliveries
- Increased freezer capacity
- Internet café near kitchen

Upstairs:

- Large room for quiet activities (e.g. yoga)
- Wellness room for health professionals
- Classroom, which could be used by Osher and other groups
- Loop system in classroom and large downstairs room for hearing-impaired
- L-shaped game/billiards room
- Small raised stage
- Cushioned floor for dancing and movement activities

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FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT**

Participants:

Beverlee Pembroke Hill, Assistant City Manager
Bill Doelger and Jane Osgatharp, MSAC Advisory Board
Sarah Jarvis, Montpelier City Council

Goals/objectives/desired results identified for this area:

1. Costs to taxpayers are stabilized and contained
2. Expanded programs and services are available to Montpelier seniors
3. MSAC has a stronger revenue stream from fees for services and programs
4. Partners are secured for food service at MSAC

Decisions made about how to go forward towards goals:

1. Seek operational efficiencies, e.g. interactive website to reduce costs and streamline access to programs and services
2. Encourage more membership and classes to generate more revenues
3. Develop and launch capital campaign
4. Begin annual appeal letter and public relations effort
5. Partner with NECI and CVCOA (Montpelier) on meal site issue
6. Sublease space/kitchen capacity
7. Investigate program grants
8. Advisory Board to provide support to Program Director for more articles in local media

Responsible parties for taking the goals forward:

- Beverlee Pembroke-Hill to begin discussions with NECI re partnership
- Jane Osgatharp to launch annual appeal and/or seek additional professional support
- Cindy McCloud to investigate interactive software for program registration, with PayPal or equivalent available
- Cindy McCloud (with help from Advisory Board members) to place more articles in local media and do outreach through CVCOA and others

Are resources already available?**If yes, identify:**

- Capital resources in existing MSAC endowment and help from MSAC director and advisory board

If not, how can resources be obtained?

- Secure donation for a capital campaign consultant
- Raise \$50,000 for new facility via capital campaign and/or grants