

Minutes/Notes

April 4, 2023

Blacksburg Recreation Center

Attendees: Don Creamer, Terry Wildman, Leslie Pendleton, Jerry Niles, Pam Knox, Fred Piercy, John Burton, Pat Hipkins, Nola Elliot, Joy Herbert, Beth Grabau, Wilma Dotson.

President Leslie Pendleton called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

The minutes: The March 2023 board meeting minutes were considered and approved.

AARP VA Update: Leslie provided the most recent update from AARP VA which is appended to these minutes.

Officer Reports: None

Events:

Past.

- On April 1st, Leslie and Wilma attended a Barter Theater play, “The Last Romance” and, following the play, participated in a “Barter Connects” conversation with the audience. The conversation centered around the importance of connection during the senior years. Given that the Abingdon Chapter has disbanded, the Barter Theater invited our Chapter to participate in the event. AARP VA Associate Director, Brian Jacks, encouraged Leslie and Wilma to speak to the audience about volunteer opportunities with AARP VA. Following the event, Barter Theater staff hosted Leslie and Wilma for dinner at the Martha Washington Inn. Both believe that the Barter Theater is a good potential partner.

Upcoming. Ben and Leslie shared the following events and dates:

- April 13, NRV Leading Lights at the German Club, 5:00-7:30 pm. Judith was nominated by Ben and selected to receive an award.
- April 22, Montgomery County “Broomin and Bloomin” event. Details below.
- May 13, first Mt. Tabor Ruritan Fish Fry, 5:00-7:00 pm with DJ Earl Brown. (Other dates are June 10, July 8, August 12, and September 9.)
- May 19th, Community Cancer Event, Christiansburg Recreation Center, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.
- June 9th, Annual Elder Abuse Conference, “Elder Justice: Keeping Seniors SAFE (Seniors Avoiding Financial Exploitation), Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Abingdon, 8:30 am-3:30 pm (\$40.00)

- June 22nd, Chapter Picnic, home of Terry and Sue, 5:00 – 7:00 pm. (Ben and Jerry volunteered to assist Terry with planning the event and also investigate possible food providers starting with Bluegrass Barbeque in Pembroke).
- September 19th, Senior Care Fair, Christiansburg Recreation Center, 8:30 am- 12:00 pm.
- September 27th (tentative) for an Oktoberfest event at Eastern Divide.
- TBA (sometime in the Fall) RSVP Walk-A-Thon Fundraiser in support of “Supplies for Seniors”. Nola volunteered to follow up with Mandy Hayes. This event could be a “day of service” for our Chapter.
- November 8th, Veterans Resource Fair, Christiansburg Recreation Center, 9:00 am- 1:00 pm.

Sponsorship Requests:

- August 11, Warm Hearth Village, “Cheeseburger in Parrot-dise” (\$500 was approved in the budget for this). Wilma and Nola agreed to attend and represent AARP Blacksburg.
- April and May: Fine Arts Center of the New River Valley (FACNRV): “Together We Rise Pulaski.” (Lots and lots of painted ladders arranged as sculpture). They are asking for ladders to be loaned to the show. Each will be labeled and returned. The artist in charge is a senior. (Will support with \$250 from AARP VA \$500 donation received in October 2022. At Ben’s suggestion, Leslie will ask AARP VA to provide matching funds.)
- November 8th, Veterans Resource Fair, Christiansburg Recreation Center. (Will support with the remaining \$250.00 from AARP VA).

There was a discussion about the notion of annual budget support for the arts. It was decided to table the conversation until Judith Jones returned.

Chapter Project/Community Service:

- Don reported on the progress of the “Pathways to Successful Aging” project. Don, Leslie, Pam, and Wilma are serving on the *Ad Hoc* Planning Committee. A total of 16 representatives from local non-profit organizations are participating. The goal of this project is to determine what programs already exist, what programs are being planned, and the potential needs within the community, specifically, how the 16 organizations can cooperate together. They are planning to establish workshops (Leslie and Jerry are already involved in workshops/classes through LLI). There will be two major meetings in May.
- Pat H. reported on her conversation with the county Adopt-a-Highway program director and found that there are openings for volunteers along Prices Fork Road. The former “Darth Vader” stretch along Rt. 460 is also available. VDOT provides vests, bags, and signs, but no pokers. Blacksburg has its own program and Pat will contact them. We will revisit this in May. Ben described the Ruritan experience working on Prices Fork Road (positively). Beth

raised an excellent point about liability for falls, cuts, puncture wounds, snake bites, rabid animals, etc. Pat will ask.

- Leslie reported on the April 22nd Montgomery County “Broomin’ and Bloomin’ Litter Cleanup Event and suggested that the event could provide an annual service opportunity for our Chapter. Leslie will create a message for posting on Mailchimp in an attempt to recruit volunteers.

Opportunities:

- Leslie presented the Community Foundation of the NRV (CFNRV) Responsive Grant Program, (up to 4K in operating support that opens May 31st and closes July 21st). Information can be found at: <https://cfnrv.org/grants/>. Ben suggested that our Chapter establish a fund with the CFNRV and also encourage our Chapter members to be involved.
- Leslie mentioned the Hacksburg maker space in the CRC and it was suggested that we may want them to do a presentation to the Board and/or submit an article for a fall newsletter. Hacksburg provides limited space and access to tools including welders, lathes, machining, etc. as well as classes. The space can be used for everything from making lightsabers to candlesticks to Christmas Ornaments and from engineering to art.

Committee Reports:

Programs. Pat Hipkins reported that the Fall programs are set with the addition of presentations on the Virginia Tech Prisoner Book Program (September), update from Kim Thurlow on the Town of Blacksburg’s ARPA-funded projects (October), and Backyard Birders (November). The recent survey of the Board conducted by Wendy and Pat indicates interest in memory and cognition (Ben Katz); climate change (and solar energy); pre-cycling, recycling, and politics; senior safety, and dialogue on race.

Membership. Wilma attended another meeting of the Blacksburg Newcomers Club and a meeting of the Retired Teachers Association. The Montgomery County/Radford NAACP Chapter seems to be inactive at this time. There is an opportunity for us to recruit new members. They would be interested in a presentation from AARP Blacksburg.

Newsletter. Fred and Pam have not decided on a publication date for the next Newsletter. Ben mentioned again that we should put hard copies of our Newsletter in the local libraries. Leslie agreed to follow-up with library directors.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.

AARP VA March Advocacy Volunteer Update
By Jessika Eglin, Associate State Director for Advocacy and Outreach
(Received by email on March 29, 2023)

1. General Assembly Advocacy Update
 - Redistricting and Retirements
 - Legislation
 - Budget
2. Federal Advocacy Update
3. Valuing the Invaluable: 2023 Update Strengthening Supports for Family Caregivers
4. The End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
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General Assembly Advocacy Update
Redistricting and Retirements

The General Assembly is expected to face unprecedented turnover this year with all 140 seats up for election. The spring primaries and conventions will mark the first time that Virginians cast their ballots in state districts drawn based on the new bipartisan redistricting constitutional amendment adopted in November 2020. Notably, the new maps were drawn without consideration of incumbent residency, thereby pitting numerous sitting delegates and senators against each other, and leaving various seats with no incumbent. As a result, a growing number of lawmakers have chosen not to seek reelection. Below are all the legislators who have announced their retirements so far:

Senate

John Bell (D-Loudoun)
John Cosgrove (R-Chesapeake)
John Edwards (D-Roanoke)
Janet Howell (D-Fairfax)
Lynwood Lewis (D-Accomack)
Steve Newman (R-Bedford)
Tommy Norment (R-Williamsburg)
Dick Saslaw (D-Fairfax)
Jill Vogel (R-Fauquier)

House

Tim Anderson (R-Virginia Beach)
John Avoli (R-Staunton)
Rob Bell (R-Charlottesville)
Jeff Bourne (D-Richmond)
Kathy Byron (R-Bedford)
James Edmunds (R-Halifax)
Eileen Filler-Corn (D-Fairfax)
Wendy Gooditis (D-Clarke)
Mike Mullin (D-Newport News)
Kathleen Murphy (D-Fairfax)
Ken Plum (D-Fairfax)
Margaret Ransone (R-Westmoreland)
Roxann Robinson (R-Chesterfield)

Members of the General Assembly must declare by April 6 in which district they plan to run; for lawmakers who plan to move districts, this means that they must have their new address by that date. However, once a delegate or senator announces an address in a new district, they must vacate their current seat, as the Virginia Constitution requires that lawmakers live in the districts they serve.

Legislation

All eight of the bills that AARP worked on during the General Assembly session that passed both chambers (below) have now been signed into law by Governor Glenn Youngkin. AARP Virginia formally supported each of the newly enacted laws below, except for the nursing home staffing standards bill.

Bills signed into law

- HB1446/SB1339 – Nursing home staffing standards
- HB1409 – Hypodermic needle access for diabetics
- HB1860 – Guardianship or conservatorship; primary health care provider of respondent
- HB2027 – Guardianship; procedures for restriction of communication, visitation, or interaction
- HB2029 – Public Guardian and Conservator Advisory Board; member terms
- SB1144 – Guardian ad litem; appointment, requested information, records, or reports
- SB987 – Guardianship and conservatorship; periodic review hearings
- HB2028 – Guardianship; duties of guardian, visitation requirements

Budget

After hearing an ominous economic report from Secretary of Finance Steve Cummings, the lead budget negotiators from the House and the Senate have agreed to delay making final budget decisions until they have a clearer idea of whether a recession may be looming. Therefore, we remain stuck in budget purgatory waiting to see what ultimately gets funded and where money is allocated. It is unclear at this point when those decisions will come, but the new fiscal year begins July 1, so the clock is ticking.

Federal Advocacy Update

- **Social Security:** On February 28, 2023, AARP sent a letter to the Social Security Administration (SSA) regarding customer service challenges at the agency. SSA's operating plan asserts that the already-unacceptable average call wait time of 33 minutes will be longer this year, increasing to 35 minutes, and people trying to call the agency will get a busy signal 15 percent of the time, more than double the rate last year. AARP expressed several concerns regarding SSA's projected decline in phone and disability customer service for the upcoming year.
- **Rx Pricing:** On March 15, 2023, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services released the names of 27 Part B prescription drugs whose prices increased faster than the rate of inflation in 2022. Under the Inflation Reduction Act and starting April 1, beneficiaries could pay less out of their pockets for these drugs than they would have before the new drug law. Many of the drugs identified are used to treat chronic kidney disease, cancer or the aftereffects of chemotherapy or organ transplants. According to CMS, Medicare enrollees who need one of the 27 Part B drugs identified could save between \$2 and \$390 per average dose of these medicines. Learn more here.
- **Social Security:** On March 20, 2023, AARP endorsed two bipartisan Social Security bills sponsored by Sens. Cassidy (R-LA), Kaine (D-VA), Collins (R-ME),

and Coons (D-CT). The first bill, S. 692, would improve the terminology the Social Security Administration (SSA) uses in relation to retirement benefit claiming ages. The second, S. 664, would ensure American workers receive more regular statements from the SSA in the mail than is currently practiced. A copy of the letter for S. 692 is available [here](#). The letter for S. 664 is available [here](#).

Valuing the Invaluable: 2023 Update Strengthening Supports for Family Caregivers

AARP's new *Valuing the Invaluable* report highlights trends in family caregiving, explores the growing scope and complexity of family caregiving, and discusses actions needed to address the financial, social, and emotional challenges of caring for parents, spouses, and others. In 2021, the estimated economic value of family caregivers' unpaid contributions was approximately \$600 billion, up from \$470 billion in 2017. In Virginia, there are about 980,000 caregivers who provide more than 920 million care hours' worth \$14.3 billion. Learn more [here](#).

The End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE)

The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) brought sweeping policy changes to long-term services and supports (LTSS) across settings, including service availability, operations, and financing. The PHE has also prevented states from disenrolling most enrollees from Medicaid, including those receiving Medicaid LTSS. The pause on Medicaid disenrollment will end on April 1, and the White House announced that the [PHE will end](#) on May 11. Together, these policy shifts will begin a process known as the "unwinding" of pandemic-era policies as the federal government, states and providers begin to transition back to pre-pandemic policy and operations. Older adults and their family caregivers should know about these changes and what they could mean for the LTSS they currently receive or could in the future. Learn more [here](#).

Advocacy Volunteer Opportunities and Events

Below is a list of upcoming AARP advocacy-related events for the month of March for volunteers to join or get involved in.

Tuesday, April 4, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.

AARP Volunteer Teletown Hall Call

Join to learn about AARP's education and outreach around fraud, as well as our support for fraud victims. The call will also provide a Government Affairs update on the Earned Income Tax Credit relating to age discrimination.

Call-in Number: 877-209-3531 (toll-free and no PIN required)

If you have a question feel free to submit it in advance by emailing volunteer@aarp.org

Wednesday, April 5, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

AARP Virginia State Advocacy Team Retreat

Current members of AARP Virginia's State Advocacy Team will gather in Richmond (and via zoom) for a General Assembly debrief and offseason planning discussion. The meeting will focus on recapping the work and lessons learned during the General Assembly session, team structure and new roles, and planning offseason outreach and relationship-building with legislators.

Wednesday, April 19, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

AARP Virginia Advocacy Volunteer Open House

Join AARP Virginia for a virtual Advocacy Volunteer Open House! Come meet staff members, learn more about AARP's advocacy priorities for the year, share your thoughts as an advocacy

volunteer, and learn all the ways to get involved in advocacy in 2023. If you are a new volunteer or someone who's been on the team for years, this Open House will provide you with all the resources needed to succeed this year! [Register here.](#)

Thursday, April 20, 2023, from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Q&A on End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Join AARP Virginia for a telephone town hall with Dr. Laurie Forlano, Deputy Director of Epidemiology at the Virginia Department of Health, on the impact of lifting the public health emergency on COVID vaccines, testing and treatments. [Register here.](#)



Advocacy Volunteers on March 7, 2023, during a district meeting with Congressman Griffith's staff to discuss AARP's footprint in his district. (From left to right: ASD JessiKa Eglin; Advocacy Volunteer Ben Crawford; AARP Blacksburg Chapter President Leslie Pendleton; Advocacy Volunteer Nola Elliot; and ASD Brian Jacks)