

***Final MINUTES***  
**New Hampshire State Commission on Aging**  
**Monday, October 17, 2022 10:00 a.m.-noon**  
**NH Employment Security, 45 South Fruit St., Concord, NH**

**Present in person:** Polly Campion, Chair; Carol Stamatakis, Vice Chair; Roberta Berner, Clerk; Rep. James MacKay; Rep. Charles McMahon; Richard Lavers, NHES; Sunny Mulligan Shea, DOJ; Lynn Lippitt, NH Housing Finance Authority; Shelley Winters, DOT; Susan Buxton, Long-Term Care Ombudsman; Wendi Aultman, DHHS; Eduardo R. Fernandez, DOS; Appointed by the Governor: Susan Ruka, Suzanne Demers, Susan Denopoulos, Beth Quarm Todgham, Daniel Marcek, Rep. Lucy McVitty Weber, Kristi St. Laurent, Laurie Duff  
Rebecca Sky, Executive Director; Chris Dugan, Communications and Engagement Director

**Present via teleconference** Rev. Susan Nolan, Roxie Severance

**Absent:** Sen. Ruth Ward; Janet Weeks, DOL; Harry Viens, Doug McNutt

**Guests present in person:** Ilana Illsley, Jessica Eskeland

**Guests present via teleconference:** Shawn Jones, Jennifer Rabalais, Carole Boutin, Heather Carroll, Joan Marcoux, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Melodie Mere', Martha McLeod, Marianne Jackson, Brenda Murray, Christina FitzPatrick, Arnold Newman, John Wilson, Peter Burke, Christian Seasholtz, Kathleen Vasconcelos, Heather Smith, Becky Bryant, Jen Delaney, Steve Workman

**I. Welcome, Attendance, Review of Minutes**

Chair Polly Campion provided an overview of the agenda and welcomed the Commission members and guests to the meeting.

Today's meeting was held concurrently in person at NH Employment Security and via teleconference.

Clerk Roberta Berner took attendance, noting which Commission members were attending in person or remotely. With 20 Commission members attending in person, a quorum was present.

Chair Campion asked for a motion to approve the September Commission meeting minutes. Rep. Jim MacKay made a motion to approve the September minutes; Susan Denopoulos seconded the motion. By roll-call vote, members approved the minutes with Rich Lavers and Rep. Lucy Weber abstaining.

**II. Meet and Greet AARP and Alzheimer's Association State Director Christina FitzPatrick**

Chair Campion welcomed Christina FitzPatrick, who was attending via teleconference, and asked her to introduce herself as the new State Director of AARP. Ms. FitzPatrick moved to New Hampshire from Maryland (the DC area), where she focused on financial security issues for AARP, specifically working on the development of AARP's position on Social Security. She said that she was especially

interested in the State Director position here as a way to be closer to the membership. She also said that she appreciates working with partner organizations, such as the Commission, and volunteers, who extend the impact of AARP-NH's work. She said that AARP-NH is working on issues around improving long-term care options in the state, the affordability of prescription drugs, aging in place, and development of age-friendly communities with affordable housing, transportation options, and green spaces. Her e-mail address is [cfitzpatrick@aarp.org](mailto:cfitzpatrick@aarp.org) and she welcomes communication.

### **III. Review and Vote on Draft Annual Report**

Chair Campion asked Executive Director Rebecca Sky to present the draft Annual Report. The draft Report and Executive Summary were attached to materials sent in advance of the October Commission meeting. The Report must be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by November 1 each year.

At the September Commission meeting, the four Commission Task Forces reviewed their portions of the draft report and provided summaries of their recommendations. Today, Executive Director Sky focused on the overall recommendations outlined in the Report:

- Strengthen our Long-Term Supports and Services System of Care;
- Grow the Direct Care Workforce;
- Advance Age-Friendly Policies, Systems and Environments

#### **A. Strengthen Long-Term Supports and Services System of Care**

The report points out that many areas of the state have significant gaps in services and that the system of care is not cohesive, either for those paying privately or utilizing Medicaid's Choices for Independence (CFI).

New Hampshire spends a low percentage of its long-term care dollars on home and community-based care, and in fact, in recent analyses is rated 50<sup>th</sup> in the country for proportion spent on such care. Medicaid rates for CFI direct-care are low and the gap in reimbursement between CFI and nursing facilities is significant. Rate increases in SFY20 helped narrow the gap a bit.

Commission recommendations include:

- Create a long-term supports and services system of care structure;
- Increase access to home and community based care;
- Invest in retaining the workforce.

#### **B. Grow the Direct Care Workforce**

The Commission report advances six key recommendations from the round-table meeting held last summer by NH-Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner Lori Shibinette. The importance of affordable housing, transportation alternatives, and access to childcare is emphasized as critical to maintaining and increasing the direct care workforce.

**C. Advance Age-Friendly Policies, Systems and Environments**

In addition to the importance of accessible and available housing and transportation, the report highlights the importance of civic engagement and recommends amending the “Right to Know” statute to allow remote access for providing testimony and voting in public bodies. The report also includes a recommendation to support senior nutrition programs in parity with the support they received during the first years of the pandemic.

**D. Small Group Discussion and Acceptance of the Report for Submission**

Those in the meeting room and on-line broke into small groups to discuss the report and its recommendations. They then reported back to the full group.

Rep. McMahon said that his group felt that home and community based care needed to be a primary focus and noted that county nursing home systems are stressed. He suggested that numbers be added to the report to show the savings that could be realized by providing more care within the home and community. He also discussed licensing rules that could be adjusted to allow for more cross-state employment.

Rep. Weber commended the report and said it does a great job of showing the interrelationships between the issues.

Susan Denopoulos said that she knows of situations where benefits are affected if a direct care employee works too many hours. She would like to see legislation to address the issue. Chair Campion noted that she understands that a third of direct care workers benefits from the SNAP (Food Stamp) program and a substantial percentage receives other direct state assistance, including Medicaid. Carol Stamatakis added that there is a need for capable benefit counselors to assist direct care workers so that they do not endanger their benefit eligibility. She suggested that family caregivers and adult day care programs be included in the system of care portion of the report.

Rich Lavers said that the Department of Employment Security has seen substantial loss in jobs in the areas of health care and direct care, with increased employment in the financial, professional, and technical sections. He said that the reasons are related both to wages and opportunity for advancement.

Rep MacKay applauded the report for its comprehensive approach, including mental health concerns. Rep. Weber added that when the report addresses health care, it should explicitly include mental health care.

Rep. Weber made a motion to accept the Annual Report of the Commission with minor changes, as suggested. Lynn Lippitt seconded the motion. By roll-call vote, the Commission approved the acceptance of the Annual Report with Sunny Mulligan Shea abstaining since she arrived after the discussion about amendments to the report.

Chair Campion praised the report and commended Executive Director Sky for her excellent work in compiling it. She thanked all Commission members for their part in the work.

#### **IV. Accept Nominations for Chair and Review Leadership Transition Schedule**

Polly Campion has served as Chair of the Commission since its first meeting in September 2019. Her term is coming to an end in 2022 and a new Chair needs to be nominated and elected, to begin serving in January 2023. Chair Campion's term on the Commission continues until April 2024, and she will be available to provide support to the new Chair.

Chair Campion thanked Vice Chair Carol Stamatakis and explained that Ms. Stamatakis does not want to move up to the Chair's position. Her role as Vice Chair will continue through 2023. Chair Campion also thanked Clerk Roberta Berner, who will continue in her position until the Commission's summer break in 2023.

Chair Campion asked for nominations for the position of Chair of the Commission. Sue Buxton nominated Susan Ruka, Director of Community Health at Memorial Hospital. Ms. Ruka has served on the Commission since its inception. She is a registered nurse with a doctorate in geriatric nursing. Laurie Duff seconded the nomination. Ms. Ruka said that she would be honored to accept the nomination and added that she is proud of the work that the Commission has done over the past three years.

Chair Campion asked for additional nominations. There were none, so a roll call vote was taken and was unanimous in support of the nomination of Susan Ruka to be Chair of the Commission, beginning January 2023.

#### **V. Public Input**

Shelley Winters asked to distribute information about the Commission at a post-election Legislative Get-Together at the NH-Department of Transportation.

Rep. Weber suggested that during orientation of new Legislative committees, the committees that address issues involving health and human services could benefit from information about the Commission.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 in order to honor outgoing Chair Campion and celebrate the work of the Commission.

**The next Commission meeting will take place on  
Monday, November 21, 10 a.m.-noon  
New member orientation will follow the November meeting.**