

**MINUTES OF THE
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS WORK GROUP
OF THE SENIOR CITIZENS/AGING IN PLACE TASK FORCE MEETING
FEB, 16, 2022**

The work group on information and communications for the Senior Citizens/Aging in Place Task Force met on February 16, 2022 at the Royal Oak Senior Center, 3500 Marais.

Present: Work group members Sharlan Douglas, Cindy Goodaker, Michael Lawrence, Mary Mills, Ilene Orlanski, Robert Sidelinger, Janice Wagman. Guests: Sandy Irwin, Royal Oak Public Library Head Librarian; Erin Koch, City of Royal Oak Senior Center Interim Coordinator; John Fedele, Royal Oak Recreation Director; Oakland County Commissioners Kristen Nelson, District 5, Penny Luebs, District 16, and Dave Woodward (commission chair), District 19; Jeff Payne, local news editor, Media News Group; Lt. Patrick Stanton, Royal Oak Police Department, and Judy Davids, Royal Oak Community Engagement Specialist.

Minutes: Motion by Mills, seconded by Orlanski to postpone approval of January 26 minutes to the next meeting; approved unanimously.

Presentations by subject matter experts:

Sandy Irwin

Shared a handout about what they do at the library (attached)

Erin Koch

Royal Oak Senior Essential Services Program (ROSES). Providing a variety of supportive services to Royal Oak residents age 62 and over. Workers who qualify are paid a subsidy and get an hourly wage. Have had some adult children reach out to us about parents' needs. Also have turned into welfare checks when the customer can't be reached. <https://www.romi.gov/387/Royal-Oak-Senior-Essential-Services-ROSE#:~:text=R.O.S.E.S.,qualify%20for%20the%20subsidy%20assistance>

AARP tax preparation – 400 appointments. About 40% capacity – Working with Judy Davids to make sure people know it's free. Have a coordinator, Carolyn Marsh, who sets up appointments. If a senior calls and has a need but doesn't know what's available, she'll meet with them. Also does educational things at the center around a topic.

We also have guest speakers and helped coordinate vaccines at Beaumont for flu and COVID. Info is in *Insight* seasonally – when seniors see it they call us.

Publish *The Monthly Times* – March just came out. Before Erin came on board, it had 89 members. Took away the 10-cent fee and now 279 are mailed out. Also available electronically. 150 copies are dropped off at Royal Oak Village. Put copies at Barton Towers and Royal Oak Manor before COVID but haven't wanted the extra foot traffic during the pandemic.

Other items:

- Active aging focus group

- Random Acts of Kindness group maintains a loan closet with walkers, all kinds of other things.
- Have a woman for tech support – bring your phone, tablet, e-reader. She'll work with you for an hour for \$35. Used to have group classes but weren't as effective because of different ability levels.
- Hosting our first tech fair on March 1.

John Fedele

Insight has all the programming and contact info for police, fire, etc., other departments. Goes out to 33,000 addresses set up by Post Office.

Reaching out in a timely manner is an issue for things like the Nature Society and library programs. The city's Facebook page has over 1,800 followers. Post senior events and recreation news there, hours of closing. Have a cancellation hotline – snow emergency for example. Working on a text number where citizens can reach out get a response back. For example, if a bench is broken, someone can text, say what's wrong, and a questionnaire will be generated.

We want to improve on rapid data and information. The long-term hope is to bridge the gap between print and digital – the price of paper is going up.

Long term want to bridge the gap between print and digital – the price of paper going up

Kristen Nelson, Penny Luebs and Dave Woodward

Three demographics of seniors: Active; those who don't drive at night and use cable TV instead of social media; and those who are dependent on someone.

The Oakland Together Lifeline Program has been piloted at select senior living residences across Oakland County to reduce isolation among seniors during the pandemic. Through the program, residents were given Amazon Echo Show devices and trained on how to use them for basic tasks. Participants use the devices to speak with and see family members who may be unable to visit, ask Alexa for information, and more.

The Oakland County IT department had an individual who had done work with his parents before the pandemic so he had first-hand experience on teaching his parents – rolled in a teaching and learning component for anyone interested in joining the pilot.

Last year, the bipartisan Healthy Aging Ad-Hoc Committee, which will meet on March 1, began to look at what we can do to serve seniors. The ultimate task was looking at what we're doing today that enhances the life of seniors. How do we increase the capacity of volunteers for things like home chores? There's an elder-abuse task force. There's a huge issue of direct-care workers and we're also looking at senior centers. There are some amazing ones across the county, but they have different needs.

The idea is to take 10 recommendations and boil them down to four workgroups. – do quality of life, housing, and volunteers, basic needs, county role (Will there be a senior department, for example?)

Douglas asked what communication tools the county has. Those include a senior advisory committee that meets monthly with a representative from each district. The representative goes to senior centers

and provides information plus social media. The Health Department has been “doing a lot”; there have been senior town halls; also do U.S. mail because seniors like to get something tangible. Information is on the website but can be difficult to find.

The county just created a communications department to coordinate strategy across departments – pushed out more mailed materials, ads in papers – there’s also now a text line where you can get news on pressing events. We know that the more we communicate and overcommunicate the better it is. Home programs complement local efforts.

It’s also good to have the website in multiple languages – some people are not as fluent as we think.

Wagman attended meetings during isolation and was impressed at how fast you responded. The Amazon Echoes program is still up and running – all the devices are now accounted for. Has collaborated with two American Houses but extended to four – all one hundred are used. Issues remain about what happens to the devices if people leave or die.

Ultimately there will be a report on the pilot program.

Jeff Payne

Most days the number of unique visitors, page views on the websites outstrip print, but print still has viability. *Royal Oak Tribune* publishes four days a week covering all of Southeast Oakland but more than half of circulation is in Royal Oak. There’s a finite amount of space in print, so there are many things that are on the website that never make print.

About five years ago replaced a publication called *Senior Living News* with one called *Vitality* that comes out the second Thursday of the month – 136,000 copies in Macomb and Oakland counties. It’s inserted in the *Tribune*, *Oakland Press*, and *Macomb Daily*, as well as senior centers, assisted living centers, etc. No. 1 vehicle for disseminating information. Info on career and education – money, health and fitness. Information comes from local contributors, senior centers and organizations, the Associated Press. They have a contract with NextAvenue, a PBS digital platform for seniors.

Patrick Stanton

We deal with incidents ongoing investigations, information on arrests, open houses, snow emergency notification. We traditionally put out information to local media services, snow emergency phone line, emergency text notifications, scrolling marques, senior centers. We update the website and social media; U.S. mail where appropriate. We have had trouble communicating with Royal Oak Manor but now have a liaison who spreads info throughout the building. Just starting to push out the ROPD brand. Facebook, Twitter – Facebook pushing out brand – Twitter more of a real-time information system – can put stuff out right away.

Civic Ready System can send out alerts. You can sign up for text and email alerts. Can push it onto social media – if it’s significant we’ll knock on doors if it’s immediate public safety.

We’re slowly learning how to most effectively reach seniors – Judy Davids has been a big help. Upgrade to Civic Read now gives the ability to send voice messages to landlines.

Police Department is the Intake for a tremendous number of contacts by seniors because we’re staffed 24 hours. You’d be amazed at how often the requests come to us, but we’re able to help them. We’ve

become customer-service oriented. In 2001, We've been out to homes and helped with heating systems and changed smoke detector batteries. We feel that seniors feel comfortable contacting us.

Judy Davids

We know from customer service surveys that 75% of people want something in the mail. We've upgraded the city website over several years. It wasn't mobile-friendly, but 80% of traffic is cell phones. 40% of Royal Oakers say they visit the website weekly. Department of Public Services and Farmer's Market have their own branded pages.

I work a little with WROK. Demographics show that of people 65+ only 4% are on social media, and only 2% of men are. We've tried water bill stuffers and have done robocalls, the latter, especially for things like flooding. Have a couple of pages in each *Insight* magazine.

Have done some direct mail with assistance from the Royal Oak Post Office. No one knows you better than your mail carrier – I've talked to letter carriers who were willing to do some specialized delivery.

We don't do much advertising – sometimes have asked stores to put something in their windows. Surveys. Town halls. There's never been a senior to call my office and not get what they want – have dropped off face masks, driven people to food banks, etc.

Police officers mowed lawns when you couldn't have a lawn service but those things aren't scalable. So can't put it out on Facebook.

Civic Ready can call your landline without permission. Need permission for cell phones. People with landlines don't have to do anything.

Police have access to geofencing and limit alerts to affected areas.

Public comment: There was no public comment

Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m. Next meeting, 6:30-8 p.m. March 9, 2022