



December 10, 2019

*Respectfully submitted to the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners by  
the Johnson County Commission on Aging.*

### **Executive Committee**

Karen Weber, Chair  
Pam Shernuk, Vice Chair  
Paula Hurt  
Eugene Lipscomb  
Chuck Nigro

### **Members**

Stephanie Clayton  
Rob Givens  
Katy Hoffman  
Andrea Leavitt  
Kim Mann  
Chris Morrow  
Gina Ortiz  
Rusty Ryan  
John P. Smith  
Dale Warman

### **Board of County Commissioners Liaison Commissioner**

Janeé Hanzlick

### **Area Agency on Aging**

Dan Goodman, Director

### **Area Agency on Aging**

11811 South Sunset  
Drive Suite 1300  
Olathe, KS 66061-7056  
913-715-8860/ Phone  
913-715-8825/ Fax

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Commission on Aging (COA) was created based upon mandates of the Older Americans Act to have an advisory council on aging services under a local governing board. Every Area Agency on Aging has this structure. The key role of the advisory boards is to provide input, advocacy and advice in implementing services at the local level.

Furthermore, “**The COA** is a voluntary group of individuals appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to provide information, guidance, advice and support to the Johnson County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and to serve as a liaison to the BOCC concerning the needs of older county residents and services to meet those needs.”

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND COMMUNITY SURVEY**

In January 2019 the Johnson County BOCC declared the following strategic priorities:

***The Board of County Commissioners has identified the following top priorities for 2019-2020:***

- 1. Complete/advance existing projects approved by voters and the Board of County Commissioners with efficiency and effectiveness.*
- 2. Strengthen and finance the appropriate level of service to meet the needs of the county’s vulnerable populations, pursuing innovative strategies.*
- 3. Develop a creative and innovative vision for a transit plan that is financially sustainable.*

Additionally, results of the most recent community survey conducted on behalf of the county show that residents identify mental health services and aging services as the top two areas where Johnson County should devote additional resources (*2018 Johnson County Community Survey, final report, conducted by ETC Institute*).

## **SUMMARY**

Johnson County currently has more than 130,000 senior adults living in its community. By 2030, that number is expected to top 170,000. It is imperative that the county be proactive in responding to this rapid growth pattern and empower Johnson County AAA to prepare for this growth, which will ultimately result in an increase in the demand for services. As evidenced by strategic priority #2 and results of the community survey, strengthening and funding services necessary to meet the needs of this increasing segment of our population is paramount.

On October 21, 2019, the Johnson County Commission on Aging sponsored an Aging Forum at the Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center which was attended by more than 100 people. The purpose of the forum was to identify and discuss current and future needs of the aging population in Johnson County. Those in attendance included state, county and local officials, various faith community members, business leaders, medical experts, and many members of Johnson County's older adult population. Prior to the forum, over the course of several months, AAA Director Dan Goodman conducted 11 additional focus groups with various segments of our population. The results from these focus groups, as well as feedback from those who attended the forum are included in our findings and recommendations.

By January 2022, the kitchen currently utilized by AAA's nutrition services to provide more than 218,000 hot meals to Johnson County residents per month will become obsolete. It is incumbent on the BOCC to identify and implement a suitable replacement kitchen prior to this date so there will be no interruption in this critical service. It is also important to note that these meal deliveries provide much more than a well-balanced meal; they provide daily well-being checks for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

## **FINDINGS**

As a result of the Aging Forum held on October 21, several areas of need were identified including:

- 1) Increasing community awareness regarding services provided by AAA;
- 2) Enhanced funding of the Senior Care Act service;
- 3) Building a new, bigger kitchen to accommodate increasing demands on our nutrition program and Meals on Wheels services;
- 4) Increasing our in-home mental health care counseling services; and,
- 5) Creating an on-demand, point-to-point transportation system specifically to accommodate older adults in our community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission on Aging recommends the following:

- 1) The BOCC needs to ensure that Aging Services is visible and accessible from the county's home web page, with easy access to aging issues, information and assistance. The County should continue with the quarterly publication of *The Best Times*, delivered to county citizens age 60 and over;
- 2) The BOCC should provide \$270,000 additional dollars for Senior Care Act services, which would allow AAA to serve an additional 112 clients;
- 3) The BOCC should provide approximately \$2.5 million to build a new kitchen to accommodate the county's Meals on Wheels program and other nutrition services and programming. Including the kitchen in the newly proposed building scheduled to be built adjacent to current AAA offices would save money, provide necessary expansion for the future, is centrally located and makes sense. We understand the need to explore every possible option and to look under every rock for a solution, but to overlook the obvious seems short-sighted and fiscally questionable. This building is a one-time cost, with \$67,000 being an annual cost to facilitate a volunteer recruiter and necessary county expansion of services;
- 4) The BOCC should provide \$8,500 in matching funds for mental health counseling to double the existing Older Americans Act funding in order to increase the reach of this service;
- 5) The BOCC should provide \$112,000 to initiate and launch a coordinated transportation system specifically for older adults and provide a transportation/service coordinator, and;

A grand total of less than \$3 million would allow our AAA to meet the current needs of this vulnerable population, while preparing for the imminent growth anticipated within the next decade. While this might require a dedicated, annual line item allocation, it would not require a mil levy increase or any other type of tax increase. *It would simply require a redirection of existing funds from within the current budget.* It is our hope that the county budget for 2021 will reflect alignment of county and community priorities by funding the Johnson County AAA with enough money to serve and assist those who desperately need it.