

Town Hall Meeting on Aging – NEMO

Meeting Date: February 29, 2024

Sponsoring Agency: Northeast Missouri (NEMO) Area Agency on Aging

Location: Monroe City Senior Center, 314 S Main St., Monroe City

Attendees: 37

Total Comments:

Main Topic	Comment Counts
Daily Life and Employment	105
Family Caregivers	108
Housing and Aging in Place	101
Long-Term Services and supports	87
Safety and Security	83
Transportation and Mobility	87
Whole Person Health	75
TOTAL:	646

Purpose:

The purpose of this town hall meeting hosted by the NEMO Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in Monroe City, Missouri was to gather input from older adults, caregivers, and other stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of aging in Missouri. The feedback will be used to inform the development of a state Master Plan for Aging (MPA), which aims to improve the quality of life for all generations of Missourians as they age.

The focus of discussions during the town hall centered on the overarching goal of Missouri's MPA that all Missourians, regardless of age or ability, will have access to person-centered programs and services necessary to help them age in their environment of choice in a safe and healthy manner.

Key Themes/Challenges/Identified Needs by Topic:

The town hall meetings consisted of a brief presentation on the Master Plan for Aging initiative, followed by facilitated discussions on seven main topics: daily life and employment, family caregivers, housing and aging in place, long-term services and supports, safety and security, transportation and mobility, and whole person health. The key themes, challenges, and identified needs from the discussions are summarized below:

- **Daily Life and Employment:** Participants discussed several communication problems and fears from older adults, especially in smaller towns, leading to isolation. Also, the elderly may have problems keeping pace with updated technology in use for daily tasks/appointments/activities. Participants identified a current need for increased support and resources for older adults in the workforce, including addressing age discrimination.
- **Family Caregivers:** Participants are concerned about the limited support and resources for family caregivers, leading to exhaustion and burnout. Additional financial support and assistance is needed for caregiving responsibilities. Participants would like additional training programs and education for caregivers. There are challenges for those in the “sandwich generation” taking care of both parents and young children being pulled in different directions. Participants also discussed how finding respite care options (e.g., adult day care) is very difficult.
- **Housing and Aging in Place:** Participants discussed that there are limited affordable options for housing with accessible features/modifications. There are also challenges in home upkeep/maintenance as individuals age. Participants were concerned that there may not be enough assisted living or skilled in-home care to support the larger senior population. Assistance is needed for home modification to increase comfort level, accessibility, and safety for older adults (universal design). Participants offered that they need safer communities to ensure the well-being of older adults.
- **Long-Term Services and Supports:** Participants pointed out that the affordability of long-term care plans/services is a barrier to access. Participants identified the need for increased funding/supports/training for in-home care providers/caregivers and nursing home facilities/staff. They also discussed the need for a business model to support long-term services and supports and keep people in their homes longer.
- **Safety and Security:** Participants are concerned about the vulnerability of older adults to scams, financial exploitation, abuse, neglect, theft, etc. There is a need for stronger penalties/enforcement against fraudsters/scammers targeting seniors, including exploitation from family members. Participants identified the need for an improvement in safety measures at home/public spaces and easier reporting for fraud/abuse.
- **Transportation and Mobility:** Participants discussed the limited transportation options in rural areas affecting mobility/independence of aging adults living there. There is a greater need for more accessible transportation services as older seniors can no longer drive themselves or afford to own, maintain, insure, and operate a vehicle. Participants identified several different transportation options like mass transit, private buses,

Lyft/Uber, taxi, and volunteerism that could be used for employment, medical appointments/activities, shopping, church, etc.

- **Whole Person Health:** Participants stressed the importance of integrating physical, mental, emotional, spiritual well-being into healthcare/support services. Participants thought that more education/promotion of preventive care programs will keep people stronger so that they can stay in the home. There is a stigma associated with mental health that prevents many older adults from being open to help. Participants want in the future a senior center that serves as a hub with all medical services in one spot. Participants also want an increase in specialty medical care to support rural areas because having to travel long distances is a challenge for the aging.

Next Steps:

The town hall meeting is one of several ways to provide input for Missouri's Master Plan for Aging. Other methods will include online surveys, focus groups, and written submissions. The feedback collected from various sources will be analyzed and synthesized by the Master Plan for Aging Advisory Council and Sub Committees, which consists of representatives from state agencies, local governments, and community organizations. The Advisory Council and Sub Committees will develop a draft Master Plan for Aging by the end of 2025. The goal is to create a 10-year framework that supports senior communities and empowers older adults and individuals with disabilities to live safely and independently in their chosen environment.

For more information on the Master Plan for Aging, please visit [the official website](#) or contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 573-526-4542 or MoStatePlanonAging@health.mo.gov.

Thank you for your participation and contribution to this important initiative.