



Massachusetts PATRIOT

Massachusetts Life Care Residents' Association (MLCRA) SUMMER 2017

The Residents' Advocate—Management's Friend www.mlcr.org

2017 Annual Meeting Was A Great Success

MLCRA members from across the Commonwealth met on May 24, 2017 at Overlook in Charlton. About 50 people attended the meeting with a scattering of Overlook residents looking on during the public session. We were greeted by Kathy Berg, MLCRA Board member and organizer of the 2017 Annual Meeting, and by Maureen O'Toole, Executive Director of Overlook.

The keynote was a joint speech by three representatives of the Attorney General's Office, Mike Firestone, Mary B. Freeley, and Rodrigo Plaza, who talked about the ways their work might affect the lives of MLCRA members. Mr. Firestone spoke in general about activities that are important to all Massachusetts citizens such as the Attorney General's opposition to President Trump's proposed travel ban, and the opposition to the proposed "repeal and replace" of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). On a more positive note, he talked about their support of the clean energy sector of the economy, noting that there are more people working in clean energy in Massachusetts than are employed in the coal industry nationally.

Ms. Freeley spoke primarily about their work in consumer protection, especially the scams that are promoted through telemarketing, many of which target older folks. The

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Hearing from the Attorney General



Mike Firestone, Mary B. Freeley, and Rodrigo Plaza representing MA Attorney General Maura Healey *Photo: Marvin Ungar*

Attorney General's office has an elder issues working group which:

- provides one-on-one assistance though its hot line to both address consumer issues and to refer, when appropriate, to other state agencies;
- is involved in enforcement actions in consumer protection such as predatory lending activities, home improvement schemes, and illegal debt collection;
- is deeply involved in investigating and prosecuting Medicaid fraud;
- is concerned about the abuse of elders, especially in long-term care facilities.

Ms. Freeley also spoke of the office's interest in education of elders so that they have the skills to avoid being enmeshed in scams and in advocacy work. Another aspect of their work is the feedback they (*cont'd on p. 2*)

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Mary B. Freeley, and Rodrigo Plaza

provide on proposed legislation, especially around issues such as long-term care insurance and scams that target older home owners.

Mr. Plaza spoke about the Consumer Advocacy and Response Team. This part of the Attorney General's office does outreach to vulnerable folks and especially those groups often targeted by scammers, which certainly describes the older population. Who among us has not suffered through countless phone calls from those who want to improve our homes in some way (even though we no longer own homes), or send us on a vacation that we have somehow "won" or sell us some "miracle" product?. He also talked about the Attorney General's office stepping in when there is a consumer issue and trying to resolve it in a friendly manner so as to avoid a complaint in court. If they see a pattern of bad behavior on the part of a merchant or provider of services, they will investigate and perhaps prosecute.

The group then opened the floor for questions. Among the questions asked, these answers should be noted:

- One can call the AG's office anonymously and ask questions about what is and is not legal in a situation but it should be noted

that it is hard for the AG's office to follow up on an anonymous complaint;

Generally, it is best to write out your problem, even if it needs to be written in a language other than English. However, it is possible for the office to take information verbally for those who do not write easily;

- They are happy to do community trainings about Attorney General services
- One can google the MA Attorney General Office and fill out a complaint online. One can also link to the "Savvy Seniors" information which will answer many questions for you.

After this interesting and energetic presentation, the trio stayed for a few minutes answering further questions, and then we moved into the business portion of the meeting. Will Holton was absent from the meeting, having just undergone surgery the proceeding Sunday. His speech, read by Sheila McMahan, focused mostly on thanking members of the Board for their work during 2016-2017 including:

- expanding the website to make it more useful to members with links to other organizations;
- developing a "rack card" that will be useful in membership drives;
- working with the EOEA on a guidebook for people interested in living in CCRCs;
- holding two successful Area meetings (at Brooksby Village and Southgate), which led to a list of priorities that will be addressed later in this meeting; and
- the interest of two Board members (Lauren Hale and Kathy Berg) to take on more responsibility.

Jeanne Stolbach gave an interesting Treasurer's report that showed that our *(cont'd on p. 9)*

Annual Meeting (cont'd from p. 2)

Treasury is expanding (largely due to people paying dues on a multi-year basis) and that our total assets are \$76,239.70.

Sheila McMahon gave the *Patriot* report asking that more people from the membership suggest ideas for articles or produce articles themselves. George Erickson was absent so there was no webmaster's report.

The meeting went on to the election of officers. The following MLCRA members were elected:

President:.....Will Holton
 Vice-President for
 Advocacy & Projects:.....Lauren Hale
 Vice-President for
 Membership & Areas:.....Kathy Berg
 Treasurer.....Jeanne Stolbach
 Corresponding Secretary:.....Meg Kerber
 Recording Secretary.....Jerry Lyle
 Members at Large: George Erickson
 Mary Louise Eggiman
 PollyTraina

This expands our Board by three new members, who will hopefully bring new energy and different approaches to problems that will help us move ahead productively.

The meeting then broke into small groups that looked at the priorities that were developed in the area meetings and tried to re-prioritize them with the understanding that the Board could do justice to only a few this year. The issues that were chosen were:

- Issues of Continuing Care, including the transition from independent living to assisted living, and the use of private aides by IL residents.

- Financial, including entrance fee policies, financial disclosure, reserve funds, and a resident finance committee.

- Communications with the Board

With the choice of these priorities, the meeting came to a close.●
