

February 22, 2016

Mr. Joel Evan, Chair
Charlevoix County Board of Commissioners
10448 Lord Road
East Jordan, Michigan 49727

Dear County Commissioners:

You may not have been aware that the Commission on Aging has taken steps that have significantly decreased the availability of senior home-care/personal services to the Beaver Island community. Census statistics indicate our island population is older, 10 years older on average than most of Charlevoix County, with roughly 31% over the age of 70, versus 16% on the mainland. Many no longer have children living on the island that can assist in providing the care necessary to "age in place". Islanders have another unique issue in that we are frequently unable to partake of county services due to our geographic isolation.

We urgently need to protect the current and future services for our elders to ensure that they can receive necessary care on the island. Some of the services the COA provides deal with assistance for daily tasks such as light housekeeping, laundry, medication reminders, providing nutritional meals, and personal care. COA's trained caregiver allows our elders to receive valuable services and care at home. Many studies have shown that the ability to remain in one's home significantly increases longevity and quality of life. Without the availability of these vital services year round, we will lose the ability for people to viably retire and successfully live out their lives on Beaver Island.

"Aging in Place" is an important economic issue for the Beaver Island community and Charlevoix County as a whole. The "Baby-Boomer" generation is changing the landscape of the desired and required services on all levels. This will be an important issue in the upcoming Senior Millage Renewal on the ballot this year. All of us on Beaver Island pay Senior Millage taxes to ensure that elder-care and in-home services are available throughout Charlevoix County through the Commission on Aging. Beaver Island sends more than \$75,000 to Charlevoix in Senior Millage taxes. These taxes collected from Beaver Island more than offset the cost of in-home services, according to Shirley Gillespie, Executive Director of the Charlevoix County Commission on Aging.

If Beaver Island is no longer attractive to those over 60 choosing to retire and pay taxes here, it has long-range implications for not only the Island's economy, but that of Charlevoix County. We respectfully request that the Charlevoix County Commissioners provide assurances that all taxpayers in Charlevoix County be treated equally and that year-round adequate COA services be available to Beaver Island residents. We are requesting that commissioners postpone any decision to further decrease senior services by the COA until a more thorough review of the COA's budget and plan is discussed with the Beaver Island townships and community.

Sincerely,

Concerned Beaver Island Citizen