

**Date:** March 28, 2016  
**B/C/C:** Commission on Aging (COA)  
**B/C/C Representative:** Noelle Heyman, Chair, COA

### **Quarterly Report – First Quarter, 2016**

The Commission on Aging believes that Montgomery County can become a Community for a Lifetime as envisioned by the Montgomery County Council resolution adopted in 2012, and it continues to focus on the quality of life for older adults. With support from the County Executive and the County Council, the COA's advocacy has resulted in adoption of the Senior Agenda; continued funding of essential supports and services such as the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and Senior Center Services; as well as the hiring of a Transportation Coordinator, a Village Coordinator, and a part-time Caregiver Support Coordinator. Most recently, the COA's efforts in collaboration with the County Executive and the County Council, led to the County's invitation by the World Health Organization to continue the process toward becoming a certified Age Friendly Community.

In 2016, the COA is focusing on activities that support the goals of WHO Age Friendly Community certification, recommendations from the 2015 Stakeholder Meeting, and the Summit on Aging. We also continue to support and monitor implementation of the Senior Agenda and recommendations from our Summer Studies, "Commonalities and Differences in Local Government Approaches for Aging in Community" and "Long-Term Care and Supports: Nursing Home Quality." We continue planning for the FY 2017 budget cycle, with budget priorities informed by the Age Friendly certification and Summit on Aging recommendations.

#### **I. FY 2016 Budget Priorities**

The COA advocated for funding for the following priorities in the FY 2016 budget:

##### **1. Health/Mental Health**

- a. Provide Additional Subsidies for Respite Care and Medical Adult Day Care.
- b. Increase Funding for a Full-Time Caregiver Support Coordinator.

##### **2. Protection for Vulnerable Adults**

- a. Expand the capacity of APS/Police and State Attorney's Office to meet the increased demand to protect older and vulnerable adults from abuse and financial exploitation and to intervene for protection and redress within current legislation and the justice system with three positions.

### **3. Aging in Place**

- a. Create a MNCPPC staff position with requisite expertise to ensure that Age-Friendly community features are incorporated in the work of the MNCPPC for Montgomery County planning efforts.
- b. Create a small pool of funds to assist with the start-up operating costs in developing new Villages in low income and diverse communities in the County.
- c. Increase Rates for Adult Foster Care Small Group Homes, which represents a multi-year effort to increase payment rates for providers of Small Group Homes.

### **II. Activities and accomplishments since the last Quarterly Leadership Meeting that support the priorities listed above.**

- Stakeholder Meeting convened in October, 2015. The report and recommendations are in the final stages of publication.
- The 2015 Summit on Aging convened in December, 2015. Recommendations were developed, and a report is being drafted.
- Montgomery County was invited to become certified as an Age Friendly Community by the World Health Organization. This certification will inform the Commission's priorities going forward.
- 2015 COA Annual Report is being prepared for publication.
- Committees have developed goals in accordance with COA priorities, along with action steps and measures as appropriate.
- Preparations began for the FY 2017 budget cycle, with budget priorities informed by the recommendations from the Summit on Aging and the Age Friendly certification process.

**A large proportion of Commission on Aging work is accomplished through its committees. During the first quarter of 2016, committees engaged in the following activities in furtherance of COA priorities:**

#### **Health/Mental Health**

The **Health & Wellness Committee** adopted the following goals to advance the age-friendly interests of the COA and the County Executive:

In the area of dental health services, the Committee will (a) advocate for increased funding for dental health care; and (b) increase awareness of existing subsidized dental health programs in the County; and (c) pursue public/private partnerships to increase capacity to meet the dental health needs of the County's underserved senior population. The Committee will also recommend that the COA undertake a summer study of dental health services that involves community stakeholders, Commission on Health, HHS decision-makers, dental clinic administrators, private practice dentists and/or their administrators, and the Maryland State Dental Association.

In the area of mental health services, the Committee will build on previous COA work on mental health needs and services by establishing a work group to address stigmas, educate the public, and ultimately reach more people in need of services and care.

In the area of geriatric workforce development, the Committee will advocate to improve the quality of long term care (skilled nursing, assisted living, and group homes). In its 2014 publication, the advocacy organization Voices for Quality Care reported that Maryland Nursing Homes received a quality rating of D+ for each of the previous three years. To address concerns raised by this report, the Committee will endeavor to (a) increase skills, competencies, credentials, and compensation of geriatric health care professionals; and (b) influence the prestige of geriatric caregiving and nursing, and public esteem for geriatric health care professionals. The Committee will also recommend that the COA undertake a summer study of geriatric workforce issues that involves community stakeholders, providers, schools, students, geriatric caregivers and nurses.

### Second Quarter Plans

In addition to working towards the goals described above, the Health and Wellness Committee will take the lead in planning for the 2016 Annual Stakeholders Forum. The Committee will develop a plan for this inclusive event that addresses priorities from the 2015 Senior Summit and the WHO Age Friendly Community initiative.

### **Protection for Vulnerable Adults**

The **Public Policy Committee** reviewed hundreds of bills filed in the state legislature, along with some relevant federal legislation, taking into account COA priorities. PPC members testified in support of four bills before the state legislature. These bills include: (a) HB 718, which allows the Attorney General to take civil action on behalf of exploited seniors, to help recover stolen funds; (b) SB 336 and HB 1277, which would require hospitals to train lay caregivers in taking appropriate steps in caring for discharged patients; (c) SB 472 and SB 580, which would require employers of 10 or more employees to provide basic medical leave; and (d) HB 819, which provides for a tax credit for independent living expenses.

On five bills, the PPC submitted letters to the respective committees hearing the issues. We praised HB 495's attempt to raise the penalties for offenses against vulnerable or elderly adults. We urged passage of HB 244, which provides for six months' notice prior to the closure of assisted living facilities. Increased funding of Senior Centers was addressed in letters supporting SB 98, HB 262, and SB 805. We also wrote in support of HB 805, which calls upon the state Department of Aging to develop a comprehensive state plan for dealing with senior issues. The PPC also sent a letter to the Maryland Public Service Commission, calling for improved regulations for disabled passengers using ride services such as Uber and Lyft.

On the federal level, the PPC sent letters to the County's three Congressional Representatives urging them to advocate for reauthorization of the Older Americans Act by the House of Representatives. We also sent letters to the two Maryland Senators calling for increased funding for Older Americans Act programs.

Some members of the PPC attended the United Seniors of Maryland legislative forum on March 3, 2016 in Annapolis.

### Second Quarter Plans

The PPC will coordinate and provide supporting materials for April CoA member visits to County Council members; will continue to monitor federal, state, and county legislative and policy developments, and respond as appropriate; will work with other CoA committees to implement COA goals; and will identify potential outside partners and collaborations as appropriate to specific policy issues.

### **Aging in Place**

The **Aging in Place Committee** continued its discussion of housing options appropriate and affordable for the 90% of seniors who want to remain in their homes, which is a critical component of an Age Friendly Community. The Committee had been briefed on the County's tax incentive program for home modification at an earlier meeting. Discussion focused on the reasons why only 21 permits were issued in 2014/2015. Issues raised included the practicality of this law for contractors and consumers; how to communicate the law's provisions in multiple languages; the process for amending a law; enclosing a notice of the tax incentive program with the tax bill; meeting with or interviewing contractors who have obtained permits and completed projects for which customers obtained a tax incentive; and writing a letter on behalf of the COA pointing out issues and concerns. Also discussed was the extent to which the Permitting Department perceives that there is an awareness problem and whether they are relying on the forthcoming website revisions to resolve the issues.

The February AIPC meeting was canceled due to snow and its agenda was carried over to March. A major discussion topic was establishment of short terms goals that AIPC might accomplish this year. The chair proposed four goals: (1) increase use of the home modification tax incentive program; (2) work with civic associations and other appropriate partners to coordinate state and county pedestrian cross-walk markings so that they are consistent; (3) alter policy so library and recreation center meeting rooms can be used at no cost by villages and other defined groups; and (4) expand Village Rides program and foster ride sharing. Goal 3 was eliminated as it was determined to be more appropriate for Villages to address.

The AIPC was briefed on efforts to implement the Age Friendly Community initiative. The work of the Strategic Plan Working Group was summarized and discussed, including roles of the Planning Board, the Senior Sub-Cabinet, and leadership for the initiative.

## Second Quarter Plans

The AIPC will continue to work toward the goals described above. The committee will develop and recommend performance measures for these goals.

### **Communications and Community Outreach**

The **Communications and Community Outreach Committee** collaborates with other COA committees and the County to facilitate communication about issues and resources of relevance to the senior community.

The CCO committee was unable to meet in January and February due to weather conditions.

The committee continued discussion of opportunities to reach out to older adults and to increase communication with diverse communities through such avenues as the County website, town hall forums, stakeholder outreach, e-newsletters, direct mail, and social media. As the County moves forward on implementing recommendations from the 2015 Summit on Aging and the Age Friendly Community initiative, communications will play an important role.

The CCO held its first COA alumni breakfast, which introduced former and current COA Commissioners and led to an energetic discussion about the potential for collaboration and mentorship on COA activities/projects. COA alumni are beginning to engage in current COA activities. The COA is well aware of the need to work jointly with partners and alliances to address the issues and challenges faced by older adults.

The cable television show, "Seniors Today", continues to present relevant and engaging programming. First quarter topics included the Senior Summit, transportation services; the 50+ Employment Expo; issues around ageism; the Village movement; hospice; Arts for the Aging; and housing options. The CCO congratulates host Austin Heyman and director/producer Michael Bruen for this successful and important program.

## Second Quarter Plans

The CCO will collaborate with County agencies and other interested partners on an in-depth examination of the County website, and will make recommendations to the County on ways to make the website more user friendly for older consumers. The CCO will also provide support to the COA and the County in the implementation of recommendations from the 2015 Senior Summit and the Age Friendly Community initiative.

We will continue to invite liaisons and County officials to share successes and opportunities to work together. Future speakers include Jim Resnick, Program Manager for Senior Outreach and Education, Montgomery County Fire Rescue. Chief Resnick will share his department's efforts to educate seniors about safety issues and how to reach diverse communities. The COA looks forward to supporting these efforts.

Seniors Today will explore free legal services for seniors; reading and information services for people who are blind, visually impaired or have physical disabilities; financial literacy resources; property tax relief; and health literacy, among other topics. Guests are also expected to include DHHS Director Uma S. Ahluwalia, COA Chair Noelle Heyman, and the recipient of the 2016 Neal Potter Path of Achievement Award.

### **III. Collaboration with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees**

The COA welcomes representatives of other boards and commissions at its meetings and as members of its committees. These representatives are invited report on their B/C/or C's activities at COA meetings.