

**Date:** June 27, 2016

**B/C/C:** Commission on Aging (COA)

**B/C/C Representative:** Noelle Heyman, Chair, COA

### **Quarterly Report – Second 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. It continues to focus on the quality of life for older adults and dovetails with the Senior Agenda and the goals and the 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 recommendations from the 2015 Stakeholder Meeting, and the 2015 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 engaged in substantial and effective advocacy during the FY 2017 budget cycle, with budget priorities informed by the Age Friendly certification and Summit on Aging recommendations.

#### **I. FY 2017 Budget Priorities: Health and Wellness, Aging in Place and Public Policy**

The Commission was pleased to support the County Executive’s FY17 Senior Initiative budget enhancements including: increase in funds for Medical Daycare subsidies for additional clients to attend Adult Day Care program; additional funds for mandated Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) evaluations; new funds for a Senior Fellow position to support the County’s Age-Friendly Communities initiative. The budget also included additional funds for operating and staffing a full senior program at the new North Potomac Community Center; additional funds to support Victory Crossing, a mixed-income senior development in Silver Spring; enhancing the Call-n-Ride program by decreasing the minimum age for eligibility from age 67 to 65; additional funds to provide low-income immigrant seniors with in-center and educational field trip activities, and an increase in funding for home delivered meals and two new staff for the States Attorneys office.

#### **Health and Wellness: Protection of Vulnerable Adults**

- a. Advocated for additional subsidies for Respite Care and Medical Adult Day Care.
- b. Advocated for increased funding for a Full-Time Caregiver Support Coordinator.
- c. Advocated for increase funding for Case Management - Social Services to Adults Program, for one full-time social worker position.

## **Aging in Place**

- a. Provide support within the County government structure to implement the Age Friendly Montgomery initiative.
- b. 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.
- c. Exempt people over 65 years of age from the property tax increase if their income is less than three times the federal poverty rate.
- d. Track monies due from Transportation Services Fund to ensure their arrival and use to motivate providers to purchase/retrofit accessible vehicles.
- e. Reviewed WMATA proposal to initiate AbilitiesRide, which will enable riders to use smartphones to make same day reservations. CoA drafted a letter of concern indicating the proposal benefits those with financial and technological means.
- f. Advocated for additional funds to support the ongoing work at Victory House.
- g. Advocated for reducing the free RideOn age limit to increase access to County seniors.
- h. Advocated for additional staff to address senior programming needs at the North Potomac Community Center.

## **Public Policy**

- a. Continued advocacy on behalf of seniors with County, State and Federal legislators, in consultation with other CoA committees and community partners, and taking into account CoA priorities. Specific detail below.

### **a. Commission on Aging Activities and accomplishments since the last Quarterly Leadership Meeting that support the priorities listed above.**

- Supported Strategic Planning Workgroup efforts to create a plan for Aging In Montgomery County.
- Actively participated on the Senior Sub Cabinet; advocated for implementation of the WHO/Age Friendly framework to support County strategic planning efforts.
- Advocated throughout the FY 2017 budget cycle, with budget priorities informed by recommendations from the Summit on Aging and the Age Friendly certification process (see Budget Priorities).
- The 2015 Summit on Aging convened in December, 2015. The Report, Recommendations, and background and other materials are available at [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/senior\\_summit/summit-2015.html](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/senior_summit/summit-2015.html).
- The 2015 Annual Report of the Commission on Aging was completed and is available at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAAnnualReports.html>.
- Committees moved forward as appropriate with implementation of goals developed during the first quarter in accordance with COA priorities.

**The work of the CoA is accomplished through committees. During the second quarter of 2016, committees engaged in the following activities in furtherance of COA priorities:**

## **Health and Wellness**

The 2016 goals of the **Health & Wellness Committee (H&W)** included examining dental health services for underserved seniors, exploring mental health outreach and education, and improving the quality of long term care.

This quarter, H&W began planning for the 2016 Stakeholders Forum, scheduled to take place in October with a focus on priorities from the 2015 Senior Summit and the WHO Age Friendly Community initiative.

Committee co-chairs met with a representative of Frederick County Department of Aging to discuss similar goals/interests and possible ways to collaborate.

H&W also researched and developed a Summer Study proposal on the topic of dental health. The Study will determine how the COA could work with other County committees and commissions with a common interest of dental care/oral health promotion for individuals in need, as well as explore best practices in other communities. The proposal was accepted, and planning has begun.

### Second Quarter Plans

H&W will convene a Summer Study, “Expanding and Enhancing Dental Health Services for Older Adults Residing in Montgomery County.” The Study will include presentations from county dental programs and providers, discussion of ideas and opportunities to enhance and expend dental services to low-income county seniors, and development of a plan/recommendations. The Study will result in a report to the COA.

## **Public Policy: Protection for Vulnerable Adults**

The **Public Policy Committee (PPC)** continued its advocacy on behalf of seniors with County, State and Federal legislators, in consultation with other CoA committees and community partners, and taking into account CoA priorities. Members testified on various bills, arranged meetings with legislators, and wrote letters supporting issues of concern to seniors at County, State and Federal levels.

At the state level, two bills on which PPC members testified during the first quarter were passed by the legislature and signed into law. They include (a) HB 718, allowing the Attorney General to take civil action on behalf of exploited seniors, in order to recover stolen funds; and (b) SB 336/HB 1277, requiring hospitals to train lay caregivers in taking appropriate steps to care for discharged patients. Two other bills on which the PPC testified were not successful. They were (c) SB 472 and SB 580, which would have required employers of 10 or more to provide basic medical leave; and (d) HB 819, which would have provided for a tax credit for independent living expenses.

The PPC also submitted letters of support on several bills to the respective state legislative committees. One of these bills passed: HB 262/SB 805, increasing funding of Senior Centers. Other bills that we had supported were unsuccessful, including (a) HB 495, which would have increased penalties for offenses against vulnerable or elderly adults; (b) HB 244, which would have provided for six months' notice prior to the closure of assisted living facilities; and (c) HB 805, which called upon the state Department of Aging to develop a comprehensive state plan for dealing with senior issues. One bill, SB 242/HB 886, which the PPC had supported in previous years and which encourages telemedicine, passed.

The PPC also wrote to the Governor, urging him to sign HB 445/SB 758, raising the floor for SNAP benefits for low-income households.

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. In late June, the PPC urged the State Highway Administration to construct sidewalks along Norbeck Road in the area of Leisure World and Hampshire Village Senior Apartments, to facilitate safe access to buses and other services for residents. These advocacy efforts resulted from discussions with advocates for persons with disabilities.

At the County level, the PPC coordinated and provided supporting materials for April CoA member visits to County Council members. Commissioners met with all members of the County Council to solicit their support of increased funding for a number of senior programs in the county budget, as well as a special tax deferment for lower income property owners. In addition to meetings with Council members, CoA members held additional meetings with Council staff, and the CoA sent letters and made telephone calls to members and their staffs. The Council approved increased funds for (a) respite care services, (b) adult foster care, and (c) case management-social services to adults. The Council also approved funding for staffing for the Age-Friendly program, and a caregiver coordinator.

After learning towards the end of the budget cycle how staffing shortages were limiting the capacity of the Office of the State's Attorney to prosecute elder abuse cases, the PPC wrote to the Council requesting funding for two additional staff members in that office. As a result, the Council added funding during budget reconciliation for two positions - a legal assistant and an assistant state's attorney, in the Crimes Against Seniors and Vulnerable Adults unit.

The PPC wrote to the Council in support of using funds generated from assessments on UBER and Lyft, for the transportation needs of seniors with disabilities.

And, the PPC wrote in support of Bill 19-16, development of a strategic plan to end food insecurity in the County.

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. After years of delay, the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2016 was enacted by Congress, and signed into law by President Obama on April 19, 2016. However, funding of senior programs took a blow in the recommendations of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The budget would eliminate the SHIP program that allows Medicare & Medicaid recipients to receive counseling on the often confusing medical programs. The PPC will urge our representatives in Congress to do all that they can to retain this vital program.

### Third Quarter Plans

PPC does not meet in July and August, but will monitor federal, state, and county legislative and policy developments in collaboration with other CoA entities and community partners, and respond as appropriate.

### **Aging in Place**

The **Aging in Place Committee (AIPC)** continued to monitor major areas of need identified in the Senior Agenda, with a focus this quarter on transportation and housing/services.

In March, the AIPC discussed the accessibility of taxis and ride programs such as Uber and Lyft. Discussion focused on the pros and cons for seniors of transportation options such as Uber and Lyft. These transportation network providers are not bound by traditional transportation regulations. In addition, and similar to taxis, they lack the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles needed to transport older and disabled residents. To help offset these costs, the County Council has created a Transportation Services Fund. Transportation Network Service providers will collect a .25 surcharge that will be disbursed back to the County quarterly and used to motivate providers to purchase/retrofit accessible vehicles. AIPC also discussed WMATA policies and MetroAccess. Limitations of MetroAccess (cost and consumer satisfaction) were acknowledged. AIPC learned of a WMATA proposal to initiate AbilitiesRide, which will enable riders to use smartphones to make same day reservations. AIPC expressed concern that the proposal benefits those with financial and technological means.

AIPC also spent time discussing affordable and other senior housing options that promote aging in place. Guest Leslie Marks described Nexus Montgomery, a pilot partnership funded by the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission to provide case management and wrap-around services designed to decrease hospital visits, prevent falls, and reduce medication interaction problems for residents of low-income housing. Another program being developed will provide financial assistance for home modification and construction for seniors who own their own homes. Other programs are being considered, including home sharing and preservation of older housing. AIPC received a list of current construction projects that included nature of the project, location, number of units and cost estimates. Discussion followed on gaps in services to seniors who are homeowners, co-housing, housing for adults with disabilities, and the role of technology in senior housing.

The other topic discussed this quarter was Summer Studies. AIPC decided not to present a proposal this year, but endorsed the H&W Summer Study proposal on Dental Services.

### Third Quarter Plans

AIPC does not meet in July and August. Members will be involved in other CoA business and in supporting the Age Friendly Montgomery initiative.

### **Communications and Community Outreach**

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

As the County moves forward on implementing recommendations from the 2015 Summit on Aging and Age Friendly Montgomery, communications will play an important role. This quarter, CCO members attended the SSC communications meeting, and has begun discussions on how best to align the COA CCO activities with the Age Friendly domains.

The COA is also well aware of the need to collaborate with partners and alliances to address the issues and challenges faced by older adults. This quarter, the CCO supported discussions with several community partners and the County Executive concerning a widespread outreach campaign to raise awareness of senior services among county residents.

The guest speaker at the May CCO meeting was Jim Resnick, Program Manager for Senior Outreach and Education, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue. Chief Resnick shared his department's efforts to educate seniors, especially those who are homebound or otherwise isolated, about safety issues.

The CCO co-produces the County cable television show, "Seniors Today", which can also be viewed on line at any time, and which continues to present relevant and engaging programming. Second quarter topics included the Commission on Aging and its priorities, the Design for Life tax credit program, Metropolitan Washington Ear's reading and other services for people with vision impairments, property tax credits for seniors, Maryland Legal Aid's free senior legal helpline and other legal assistance for seniors, Heritage Montgomery sites and activities, the Maryland Senior Olympics, and the Neal Potter Path of Achievement Award winners. The CCO congratulates host Austin Heyman and director/producer Michael Bruen for this successful and important program.

### Second Quarter Plans

The CCO does not meet in July and August. However, we will collaborate with other CoA committees and with the County and other partners to develop a strategy for informing county

residents about Age Friendly Montgomery and County services for seniors, including through social media.

Seniors Today will continue to explore issues of importance to county seniors.

**b. Collaboration with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees**

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