

APPROVED NOVEMBER 28, 2023

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Zoom Meeting
October 24, 2023

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Elaine Carballo, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Denise Fredericks, Jeffery Johnson, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Pamela Luckett, Evelyn Okutu, Lisette Orellana Engel, Myriam Paul, Timothy Robinson, Claudia Simmons, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Jones

CAA Staff: Charlene Muhammad, Aizat Oladapo, and Leah Goldfine

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm.

Consent Agenda

Claudia moved to approve the consent agenda. Timothy seconded the motion and all present voted in favor. The consent agenda included the September 26, 2023 meeting minutes; September 26, 2023 meeting evaluations summary; Head Start Report; Head Start Quality Improvement Plan; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison's Report; Budget reports; TESS and Navigation reports; VITA report; CAB testimony – County Council HHS Committee Meeting with Boards, Committees, and Commissions; and CAI Pre-Program Survey results summary.

CAB Updates

Board members received a detailed written report from the staff liaison ahead of the meeting, which included updates on various CAB activities. Staff shared that the CAI orientation went very well earlier in the month and Dr. Johnson did an excellent job facilitating the session. The first formal workshop, facilitated by Erika, would take place on November 4. All board members were invited to attend. Staff also noted that there was a very well-attended CAI alumni workshop earlier in the month about senior services. Denise did a great job leading that session.

The rollout of the new Self-Sufficiency Standard report was underway. Lisette presented on the SSS before a crowd of 100+ people at the City of Gaithersburg's annual meeting for school counselors and principals. Staff presented on the new report at the County Executive's weekly meeting with DHHS leadership. A press release would be issued and there were plans to host an event about the SSS at the Council Office Building.

For the upcoming legislative session, staff would like to establish an advocacy committee that would take the lead on drafting testimony. There would be more details to share at the next meeting.

Staff informed the board members that the Council Office of Legislative Oversight was working on a report about civic engagement for minority communities in the County. As part of this process, OLO

staff reached out to the CAA to request information, including the demographics of our board. Board members were asked to complete an optional survey asking about their race/ethnicity, where they live in the County, and their gender.

Executive Director's Report

Board members received detailed written reports with updates on the agency's programs and budget. Charlene shared that a staff survey was conducted to gather feedback from the team about what they are looking for in a new Executive Director. This will help in the selection process.

The CSBG annual report was submitted following some technical difficulties staff encountered. A VITA planning meeting was held to discuss plans for the upcoming tax season and look at the eligibility requirements for the program and potential exceptions. Charlene requested the assistance of board members to discuss this topic and provide feedback on how the program might develop guidelines for these exceptions. Lisette, Denise, Zelda, Lisa, Timothy, and Myriam all volunteered to participate in the discussion on November 14th at 5 pm.

Charlene shared an update on the SSS presentation for the County Executive. There seemed to be a lot of concern about how the data was presented. The concern was that the amounts presented are so high because they are for families with young children, but child care costs decline as children get older. Board members felt very strongly that the presentation should not be changed because it reflects the challenges that many in our community are facing.

Head Start

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the Head Start program. Charlene thanked the board members who had participated in the Head Start federal monitoring visit meeting with the CAB. She noted that our agency was the first to go through this process using a new tool. There were some challenges along the way, but staff did a fantastic job providing information to the monitoring team and answering numerous questions.

The Head Start Quality Improvement Plan to address the second elopement this year when a child was left unattended at a bus stop was shared with the CAB ahead of the meeting. The plan indicates that staff will need to work with bus drivers to ensure they understand the protocol. Staff met with the transportation team to discuss how Head Start/PreK children will be identified. They will now have a tag on their backpacks so that drivers know they need to be released to a parent or caregiver. Denise moved to approve the Quality Improvement Plan and Zelda seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Contracts

CAB members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency's contract partners. Aizat reminded the board members that the annual contract partners' meeting would be held on November 8th. Participants will hear from Rafael Murphy, who oversees the new Office of Grants Management, along with presentations about the SSS, CAB/CAI, and updates from the agency. All board members were invited to participate.

Aizat noted that additional FY24 funds for Manna Food Center for the Farm to Food contract have been processed. The Mobile Kitchen contract will stay with CAA in FY25, along with the Weekend Food contracts. All the others will be moving to the Office of Food Systems Resiliency. The FY22 CSBG Annual Report Review Memo and amendments to the report were submitted to DHCD. The report was supposed to include both CSBG-funded programs and CARES Act-funded programs, but the agency had not received the CARES funding at the time of the initial submission.

Aizat shared that she and Navigation Manager Monica Rivera-Goldberg attended the Maryland Community Action Partnership's annual retreat. A lot of the discussion focused on succession planning within agencies.

Announcements

Mike brought up a recent bill that would eliminate the tipped minimum wage in the County. Currently, tipped employees (mainly service staff in restaurants) earn less than the minimum wage based on the assumption that they will earn enough in tips to make up the difference. The Council bill would ensure that these employees receive the minimum wage and could continue to receive tips. It was recommended that the board table this discussion until a future meeting so that more information can be gathered and shared with board members.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 7:04 pm.