



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION ON HEALTH

Thursday, January 18, 2024

This meeting had a quorum.

The Commission on Health for Montgomery County, Maryland convened via Zoom on Thursday, January 18, 2024.

Present

Susan Emery (chair), Betty Smith, Tatjana Meerman, Cesar Perez, Brent Berger, Laurel Fain, Rashida Dokes, Gabriela Lemus, Yingxi Cimo Chen, Milan Patel, Joey Nichols, Adam Finkelstein, Venchele Saint Dic, Arthur Summerville, Beth Barrows

Absent

Crystal DeVance-Wilson, Marcela Campoli, Donna Cawley, Dr. Davis (non-voting member), Tara Clemons Johnson (non-voting member)

DHHS Staff

Dr. Christopher Rogers, Meghan Sontag

Guest

Grace Pederson

Agenda

Call to Order & officer report

- A. Welcome
 - a. The meeting commenced with a welcome from Susan Emery
- B. Mini Celebration
- C. Quorum and Approval of December Minutes
 - a. It was noted that a quorum of commissioners was present. The December minutes were approved by the commissioners.
- D. Commissioner training reminder



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- a. Meghan Sontag provided information on required training for commissioners. This training is mandatory for all commissioners and volunteers associated with the county.

Montgomery County Budget Process – Grace Pederson, Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Office of Management and Budget

Grace Pederson provided insights into the Montgomery County Budget Process.

- A. Overview and Fiscal Outlook of County Budget
 - a. Grace presented an in-depth overview of the county budget. The discussion covered understanding the operating budget, the steps involved in building the operating budget and outlined the process steps.
- B. Priorities of the County Executive and Council in previous years were discussed, along with highlights from FY 2024. Meghan had previously distributed relevant publications to the group.
- C. It was highlighted that the county operates with two budgets – the operating budget, which funds services, and the capital budget, allocated for facilities.
- D. Grace encouraged commissioners to submit specific requests to the County Executive as early as possible, even in the fall.
- E. Slides available upon request.

MCDHHS Chief of Public Health Services’ report - Dr. Christopher Rogers, Acting Chief

- A. Dr. Rogers introduced himself to the committee.
- B. In the later part of 2022, the county experienced staffing changes and split the Health officer and Chief position. Historically, Chief of Public Health Services and Health Officer were one position.
- C. Public Health Serves has 5 core divisions:
 - a. School Health Division
 - b. Maternal and Child Health Division
 - c. Licensing and Regulatory Services
 - d. Communicable Disease and Epidemiology Team
 - e. Community and Population Health Division

County Medical society representative on the COH – Dr. Brent Berger, Commissioner

Dr. Brent Berger, Commissioner and County Medical Society Representative on the COH, shared insights and concerns regarding emergency room with the committee.

- A. During a listening session last fall, it was revealed that the county experienced the longest wait times in the ER room in the country.



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- B. Dr. Berger discussed the workforce crisis, emphasizing staff shortages and a significant number of physicians retiring.
- C. Challenges and concerns were discussed, particularly on long wait times in the ER and the need for conversations to address the lack of care for those in critical need.
- D. Possible evaluation of what the county does well and identifying areas for improvement in serving residents were discussed.

Next Steps

- A. Advocacy letters
 - a. Environmental group letter is ready to send to county council.
 - b. Access to care group letter is ready to send to county council.
 - c. Public health administration group letter is in progress. Tatjana will share the letter with the group for comments, aiming to approve it at the next meeting.
- B. Discussion on retreat planning sub-committee
 - a. Members include Laurel, Beth, Cesar
 - b. Working items include deliverables for the Council by October 2024, with a budget request for December 2024
 - c. The retreat outcome is to identify two to three priority areas for COH to focus on in the next fiscal year. The Retreat Planning Committee will present next meeting regarding potential guest speakers, preferred location, and logistics for the retreat
 - d. The group will work with Meghan to coordinate a meeting time
- C. County council advocacy sub-committee
 - a. Members include Gabriela (head), Venchele, Brent, Yingxi, Rashida, Arthur
 - b. There are 11 council members, 7 of whom are district council members; The committee will decide on the appropriate council members to send requests
 - c. The committee will submit suggestions for appointments with council members, reasons for these appointments, and identification of the commissioner attending
 - d. The group will work with Meghan to coordinate a meeting time
- D. The Montgomery Care Advisory Board is seeking a representative from the COH to join for the next three years. COH is encouraged to consider participating in this opportunity.

Adjourn

ACTIONS

Motion to approve minutes. A MOTION was made by Laurel Fain to approve the December 21st meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Betty Smith. The minutes were unanimously approved by all present Commissioners (12). Three Commissioners joined after this action.

Motion to adjourn the meeting. A MOTION was made by Gabriela Lemus to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Betty Smith. Chair adjourned the meeting.