

Public Policy Committee
January 12, 2017
Minutes

Commissioners Present: John Honig, Stephanie Edelstein, Noelle Heyman, Isabelle Schoenfeld, Mort Faller

CoA Alumni Present: Rudy Oswald, Chuck Kauffman, Jack Sprague

Staff: Odile Brunetto, Blake Dutton, Student Intern

Guests: Leslie Frey, DHHS Legislative Liaison; Blake Dutton, Student Intern

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

State Legislative Issues

Leslie Frey gave a brief report on legislative issues, including:

- The General Assembly convened yesterday.
- Several members of the Montgomery County delegation have leadership positions.
- Del. Will Smith (District 20) was appointed to fill Sen. Jamie Raskin's seat. The newly appointed Dist. 20 delegate is Janelle Wilkins.
- The Governor will present his budget on January 18, 2017.

Bills already filed or expected include:

- HB001 and HB 0065 – (2016 bills were HB580 and SB472) Maryland Healthy Working Families Act. Leslie has not yet analyzed the language of these bills, but it is likely that they will be consolidated or one withdrawn. Both would carve out jurisdictions that already have family leave laws, such as Montgomery County. The Governor plans to introduce his own bill, which is likely to be less generous than those already introduced; it is also expected to supersede existing county laws.
- SB293 – affecting taxes applied to certain military retirement for recipients age 65 and older.
- HB002 – expanding eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit to low income wage earners without children.
- SB047 – to conform current Maryland law regarding mandatory reporting of suspected resident abuse, neglect, self-neglect or exploitation to the requirements of the reauthorized Older Americans Act.
- Attorney General Brian Frosh plans to introduce a package of bills, including one addressing excessive prescription price increases.
- Del. Mark Korman plans to introduce the Nursing Facility and Assisted Living Transparency Act, which would require these facilities to post reports and other documents on their websites so consumers can find them more easily.

Rudy thinks that the Montgomery County State's Attorney's proposed legislation discussed by Assistant State's Attorney Robert Hill at the December PPC meeting, is more likely to be introduced next year due to the additional research that needs to be done. This is the proposal to conform some of the adult protection provisions in the Maryland Code to those dealing with child protection.

Leslie tracks bills for HHS, among her other responsibilities. There is a new state legislative tracking system to which Odile will also have access. Leslie asked for topics that the CoA would like to have tracked. We gave her some during the meeting, and Stephanie followed up with an email and more complete list. We learned that DHHS is the only County department that has a legislative liaison. The other County departments don't have a legislative liaison, rather the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs staff coordinate with the departments.

There was some discussion about assisted living regulation and how consumers can access information on assisted living quality. Odile said that assisted living facilities (ALF) are licensed and regulated by the Office of Health Care Quality, within the State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and they are very short-staffed. It was suggested that the CoA consider a summer study on assisted living, that would follow up on the summer study on nursing home (NH) quality. It was also suggested that we raise the budget issue with Secretary Kramer, for the next state budget cycle. The Montgomery County LTCO webpage has detailed information about both ALF and NH.

Noelle will attend the next meeting of the Maryland Caregiver Support Coordinating Council. The council meets monthly in Baltimore. The next meeting will include discussion of legislation.

Chuck and some other CoA members/alumni are planning to attend the January 25 USM forum, and will report back at the February meeting.

Noelle encouraged the CoA to look for ways to collaborate on legislative issues with other BCC's.

County Budget and Legislative Advocacy

Council Bill 42-16 is still being considered. Rudy reported that the County Council's Government Operations Committee will consider it at its meeting on January 20. The bill provides 5-year property tax relief for citizens over 65 who have lived in their homes 40 years or more, or are retired members of the Armed Forces. But the bill limits eligible properties to those valued at \$500,000 or less. The Commission is on record urging that the property value be raised to \$700,000. Such a change may allow more seniors to age in place.

There was discussion about the County Executive's FY18 budget forums. The CoA will be represented at each of the five forums. After discussion about the two forums that had already taken place. The Committee decided that it would be best to (1) provide a brief description of COA; (2) focus on the overarching issue of affordable housing at each forum, rather than trying to go through the entire list of budget priorities in a very short time or split up the list among

forums, which loses consistency and can weaken the message; and, (3) ask a different question of the County Executive related to affordable housing, at each forum. The downtown Silver Spring forum will focus on availability of affordable rental units. Stephanie will draft revised talking points and questions for use at the upcoming forums.

There was additional discussion about housing and homelessness among older adults, and the housing elements of the Age Friendly Strategic Plan. There was also discussion about the possibility of affordable housing options as a topic for Summer Study.

Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs Director Clarence Snuggs will be the guest at the next AIPCPC meeting. It was decided to meet at a different date in February in order to accommodate Mr. Snuggs availability.

The meeting ended at 11:15 a.m.

Submitted by Stephanie Edelstein