

Attendees:

David Engel, Co-Chair
Kathleen McGuinness, Co-Chair
Marie Sloan, Co-Chair
Vernell DeWitty
Dixie P. Butler
Elizabeth Barnes
Linda Bergofsky, Co-Chair, CoA

Staff:

Jennifer Long, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Staff

Roll Call

David Engel took the roll and asked for approval of the December 2024 minutes. The minutes were approved.

Introduction of Attendees

David gave a brief history of the Communication Committee. The Committee initially was named the Communications and Outreach Committee. It went through a period of inactivity due to Covid 19. It was reinitiated by Beverly Rollins and Jean Dinwiddie with the implementation of the Ambassador Program. David then asked attendees (for the benefit of new CoA members) if everyone would introduce themselves, give a little background on themselves and their impression of the CoA.

Vernell Dewitty is retired from the American Association of College Nurses, where she developed nursing standards that are being used nationally. She has also worked with AARP on nursing standards. She and a group recently started a program entitled "Living in Place Villages," which is similar to the Village concept in Montgomery County. She has been attending different committee meetings to learn more about CoA, what it does and then determine which committee she'd like to be a part of. She said she has seen a lot of great work the CoA has done and the many resources it has access to.

Dixie Butler stated this has been a fascinating experience and she's learning a lot regarding older adults, long-term care, and aging in community; but hasn't decided which committee she'd like to join.

Jennifer Long is staff of the Montgomery County Aging and Disability Resource Unit and is the liaison to the Communications Committee. Aging and Disability Resources provides assistance, referrals to services and specific information to seniors, people with disabilities and caregivers via phone (staff handles approximately 20,000 calls/year) and in person. It's the primary point of entry for most of the services within Aging and Disability Services. Staff also attend fairs and expos, giving presentations, meeting with clients at senior

centers and community centers and making home visits as needed. David proposed that we coordinate the Ambassador Program with Jennifer's Unit in making presentations.

Linda Bergofsky recently appointed co-chair of the full Commission on Aging with Wayne Berman. Linda has been on the CoA for one and half years. Linda thanked Jennifer Long for her unit's role assistance in arranging for staff to host a table at the Rockville Health Fair, as well as other community events. She also discussed the use of the helpline (240-777-3000) which should be included on all resource sheets and guides. David also emphasized the importance of the number's use in the Ambassador Program and its connection to the 311 service for older adults. Linda encouraged new members to attend all committee meetings to find their best fit.

Elizabeth Barnes said she is appreciative that Montgomery County is forward thinking, and she can't wait to see what it will do next. She announced that she recently was appointed to a new position at Good Counsel as Director of Operation.

Kathleen McGuinness said she is an extrovert and enjoys being out. She is owner of a multi-million-dollar home care company. She was awarded the 2024 Humanitarian award for her service to the community. She will be conducting an Ambassador Presentation on January 30th HOSTED by Friendship Heights Neighbors Network and Little Falls Village, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Marie Sloan will conduct the listening session. This group is part of the WAVE (Washington Area Village Exchange). Kathleen stated she has also conducted 7-8 Ambassador presentations.

Ambassador Program

There was a question as to when we could begin to fully advertise the Ambassador Program. Linda stated that she will be meeting with Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging and Disability Services and will discuss with her when we can start in earnest advertising this program. Thus far we have responded to requests only. We must ensure we have resources properly in place for these presentations. However, David stated that we must ensure we have resources properly in place before we begin advertising. We've had much success using this tool and when we didn't advertise, unfortunately, there were no attendees. David discussed the need for a structured approach to sustain the Ambassador program for sustainability. He mentioned the creation of a list of phone numbers and links for presentations, and the need for a method for tracking requests for presentations. He stated that Marcia Pruzan had prepared a list of contact numbers listed on the slides to be distributed to participants. Vernell asked if there was a package which could be given to anyone desiring to become an ambassador presenter. She suggested something like a "tool kit." David agreed with the need for a toolkit for new ambassadors, and the importance of standardizing the process and content. As a result, he felt we

should not take on a lot of presentation until the process is standardized. He suggested the creation of an internal website to share information. Additionally, David mentioned the need for a communications committee session to discuss feedback forms and the need for partnerships with other organizations. He is convening a small group to create an outline for the program's path forward.

Library Liaison Program

David and Jennifer discussed the library liaison program, with each library (30) being assigned to a commissioner. However, they found the administrative details overwhelming. Beverly and Jean sent materials to all the regional library contacts for the libraries in their regions. The need to streamline the process of checking in with the libraries and requesting the new Library Head to attend a Communications meeting was discussed. They agreed to work on establishing standards with Patrick, a regional manager, and to work with Jennifer Long and Peter Illig on inventory. They also discussed the need for current and appropriate information for the library liaisons, and the possibility of having someone periodically check in at the libraries. It was decided to table more work on the library liaison program for now.

Updating Key Messages and Handbook

The group discussed updating key messages that concisely explain the Commission's role. David proposed revising or adopting previous key messages to provide a consistent "elevator speech" for commissioners to use. The committee also plans to determine its focus on internal versus external communications. Additionally, it was discussed distributing the updated Orientation Handbook, potentially working on the Commission's website content, and collaborating with other groups to disseminate information through channels like the Senior News. Linda emphasized the tremendous amount of work Beverly Rollins has spent on revising the Orientation and Briefing handbooks. She has agreed to continue working on these books to keep them updated. Jean Dinwiddie will continue to work on 50+. She also announced that Reframing Aging will not be a public forum this year. David has started working on the website trying to update content.

Next steps

- David to send the key messages document to all committee members for review and input.
- Linda to check with Beverly on the status of the updated Orientation Book and coordinate with Tremayne to distribute it to commissioners before Thursday's meeting.
- David, Kathleen, and Marie to meet as a small group to create an outline for the Ambassador program's path forward and report back to the Communications Committee.

- David to follow up with Patrick (regional library manager) to establish standards for the library liaison program.
- David to work with Jennifer and Peter on inventory of materials for libraries.
- Communications Committee to work on revising or adopting the key messages for the Commission on Aging.
- Communications Committee to consider creating a fact sheet on ageism.
- Communications Committee to discuss how to structure internal and external communications work.
- Kathleen to conduct the Ambassador presentation on January 30th, with Marie as the listener.
- Communications Committee to seek volunteers to help with the Commission on Aging website content.

The meeting adjourned 11:27 a.m.
