



**Commission on Aging  
Communications Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
July 21, 2025**

**Attendees:**

Commissioners: Katie Smith, Linda Bergofsky, Marie Sloan, David Engel, Kathleen McGuinness, Virginia Cain, Yvette Monroe, Vernell DeWitty, Candy Schimming, Al Woodward, Lisa Sun, Kamilah Mantle, ChiQuita Battle, Yvette Monroe, Robert Cosby, Renee Randall, Betsy Carrier, Laurie Pross, Elizabeth Boyd, Ora Johnson

COA Alum: Marcia Pruzan,

County Staff: Peter Illig, Jennifer Long

Guest: Alyse Weinstein-Cooper, Yulia Gufranova

**Approval of June Minutes**

June 2025 minutes were approved by the Committee.

**Ambassador Program**

1. Damascus Senior Center presentation. About 50 older adults participated in the Center's nutrition program, and many remained for the presentation (around 40).
2. David explained to the new members that the Ambassador program is in its second year, during which we visit various parts of Montgomery County to discuss the services offered by the County. Vernell prepared a draft toolkit to help others with making presentations. The draft will be sent to the committee for review ahead of our next meeting. After approval by the CC, the document will be forwarded to the CoA's Executive Committee for final approval.
3. David mentioned that it's a good idea for the primary presenter to check in with the ADRU staff about materials to distribute. ADRU provides staff to assist the presenter, bring handouts, and answer questions before and

after the session. Linda asked Jennifer to confirm that ADRU will have staff attend all presentations because it's helpful to have experts present the services offered. We act as facilitators, but ADRU staff are the key to connecting people to services, they're specialists. Jennifer appreciated the benefits of staff attendance but noted that it can sometimes be challenging to have staff at every session. She said they will do their best to ensure ADRU is present. David mentioned that the intake form should be sent to Peter and Jennifer so they're aware of upcoming presentations.

4. A question was asked whether the 'Life Transition as We Age' folder is part of the presentation. David stated that the inventory of this document is decreasing; therefore, he has a one-page handout with a QR code that he brings to the presentation along with a copy of the actual document to show attendees. This document is always the highlight of the presentation. He suggested that each presenter bring at least one or two copies to show attendees.
5. A question was asked if the toolkit would elaborate on the hand-out materials, and the answer was yes.
6. Virginia Cain volunteered to work with David on the Rockville Chamber presentation. David will send Virginia follow-up details about this.
7. Ora Johnson explained that she is facing resistance from the resident counselor in her building. David asked for her name and suggested that the resistance might lessen if it came from us.

### **Introduction**

To save time, David conducted a round robin to introduce members and guests.

### **FY 26 Priorities**

1. Linda began the discussion by explaining that the Commission's mission is to advise the County on issues important to older residents by advocating at the local, county, and state levels. There are many issues that may not involve a budget that the CoA can address. However, the CC can pursue these issues not as immediate priorities, but as committee projects that could later become priorities or policy initiatives. This year, due to budget challenges at the state and federal levels, this is even more essential.
2. David mentioned that last year the CoA had 17 priorities. Linda prepared a form called '**Proposal for New Priority**' that can be used to submit information about proposed priorities. Everyone should share their thoughts and ideas as a committee; these will be discussed and developed for presentation to the CoA if approved by CC members, with a focus on how we can improve the lives of older adults. The CoA will use rank

voting. Remember, there are eleven council members with constituents, so when communicating with them, we should focus on their constituents. At the end of November or early December, Public Policy members—20 members of the House of Delegates and Senators—will be presented with the CoA's priorities and share their own priorities so we can support them.

3. David explained that the CoA has had the same priorities over the past six years, and sometimes it takes a long time to succeed. He advised members that not winning doesn't mean we shouldn't keep advocating for priority, such as nursing home oversight, which took four years through three different CoA chairs; this year, the bill passed. Betsy Carrier worked diligently on a proposal to secure \$240,000 to develop villages, which took a year.
4. David reviewed the previous priorities. He looked at the priority (Marketing and Outreach position), which has not yet been funded. However, in discussions with Council Members, we were told this was a great idea. Therefore, the question is whether we should continue to pursue this priority or if now is the time to re-evaluate it in a different way.
5. The Aging and Disability Office staff travel throughout the county to provide information on programs and services funded by the American Rescue Plan. Last year, Health and Human Services developed a more formal marketing program by creating a strategic plan. This is why we should reconsider this priority. A closer review of what the county is doing to improve communication is needed. Examining what the county is doing with the CoA's support may help in securing funding.
6. A brief discussion was held about introducing the concept of an internship program and whether to pursue it. The Senior Fellows Program, which Marcia Pruzan helped develop and was a member of, was mentioned. The county lacked staffing resources for various projects, and utilizing older adults with specific expertise proved to be beneficial and successful. It was stated that several commissioners are talking with the county about re-establishing this program.
7. Vernell asked when priorities intersect can both entities, through a narrative, show the relationship of both. David's response was that we should better leverage our presentations to the council.
8. Virginia mentioned that while talking with one of the new commissioners, they were surprised by how little is known about the services available to older adults. Virginia suggested that we could research the possibility of an internship with one of the colleges. David agreed that this is a good idea but noted it would require supervision at the county level. He recommended forming a group to explore this option.

This would be an excellent application of the new priority form proposal. It was suggested that a group meet to complete the form and send it to Laurie, David, Kathleen, and Marie, noting that this is a project involving multiple committees.

9. Laurie asked if members could receive an email with Dr. Bridges' strategic plan laid out and whether these would be aligned with what we are to present. David informed the members that we only had notes from the CoA meeting with an outline of the plan. Dr. Johnson and Dr. McGhee were to provide the complete plan; however, it is not ready for distribution.
10. Linda wanted to make sure everyone, especially the new commissioners, understood that the priorities are not listed in order but are instead organized by the committee. Also, consider that when requesting staff, an FTE will need to allocate part of their time to supervise this new position. She suggested that we might want to partner with other commissions, such as the Commission on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Commission on People with Disabilities, and the Commission for Women. Collaborating with other commissions could give us a larger platform to speak from to the county.
11. Marie asked whether the senior fellow's program will remain part of the 26 priorities under Public Policy. If not, should we add it as a priority for Communication Committee? David asked Marie to request that Kate and Morris determine where it stands on their list of priorities. We might also consider inviting former commissioners to attend a Communication Committee meeting and discuss the program with Communication Committee.
12. Lisa Sun attended a meeting with Virginia and a small group at Montgomery College to create an internship program. Her suggestion was for the Communication Committee to collaborate with organizations such as AARP to create organizational unit to provide expertise and manpower to the Communication Committee. Such organizations' social community work would be a cross fertilization of the Communication Committee. David felt this is a great use of proposed priority form and suggested inviting individuals from these groups to discuss. This should first be put on the proposed priorities form for discussion with the Communication Committee.
13. Kamillah suggested collaboration with hospitals, etc. regarding discharge resources. David thought this was a great idea to bring hospitals in to discuss discharge planning because there is a need and this is closely related to caregiving. We should know how many are going back to hospitals and the reasons for their return. Use the form for this suggestion. If it is not a priority for this year, it can be a committee project and formulated as a priority or policy for next year. David asked

- Kamillah and Kathleen to meet, review the issue, possibly conduct research to formulate a priority.
14. It was suggested that the website should be added as a priority, it has a lot of tools and information.
  15. Linda advised members that as they prepare their ideas, they do as much research as possible with a lot of meat. Don't worry about which committee proposed the priority, it doesn't mean they own it. Also, when we say **we** clarify if this is the commission, ensure you have people on the commission behind you that are prepared to work on this, or do you mean county, parks and recreation, state, etc. Remember, we have no legal authority to apply for a grant, so we must be very clear as to who is going to do what and the commission's role.
  16. Albert, hospital readmissions and Medicare have accountable care organizations charged with keeping re-admissions down.
  17. David reminded everyone that priorities from last year can be removed, they don't have to stand. He also suggested that if there was no problem, we would like to meet in August to finalize priorities.
  18. He then reviewed briefly the existing priorities. **Number 2** a draft toolkit has been developed, and with Marie and Kathleen's assistance a system to sustain the Ambassador Program has been developed. The library program has been partially delayed, and we are sending materials out in bulk to a library liaison who distributes these to the various libraries.
  19. **Number 3** takes a lot to put on and the funding comes from another line item. David would like dedicated funds for the forum to ensure there are sufficient funds annually.
  20. **Number 4** provides funding for printing of materials, especially for older adults. The Beacon, monthly, dedicates an age friendly page to older adults. We'd like this to continue, however, other older adult flyers need translating into other languages, e.g. The Life Transition as We Age is only in English, and we have depleted almost all the printed copies. There are no funds to print this and other flyers in different languages.
  21. Lisa asked if the priority list could be formulated into a more visual project, including timeline, potential work opportunities, etc in order to tap into other organizations. Any entity who she works with can fund some of these projects. David asked if Lisa could provide this on the blank form for discussion at the next meeting because this is something possibly for a working group.
  22. Renee would like to propose a conference call to talk about organizations we could collaborate with to formulate as a priority and bring back to the group. David stated it is not necessarily a priority but a direction for the committee to go into and develop into priority. David reminded members that we don't stop advocating just because it's not a priority.

23. It was moved and seconded to have a meeting in August. The meeting will be on August 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.
24. Linda reminded everyone that now we don't know enough about the organizations we want to connect with. We need to have a more wholesome discussion on collaboration. As an example, we don't have anything to talk about to AARP to find, who are we talking about helping, the commission or county to do something? If you have an idea and think the whole commission should be working on it, do some research and fill out the form so we can discuss it.
25. Robert Cosby asked if the committee looked at issues regarding people with disabilities, and chronic conditions. In up County, it is difficult to find potential services. David's response was no, however, one of the Ambassador program's objectives is to reach out to all areas of the county. David proposed chronic conditions as a public forum topic. Within the Health and Wellness committee they might have speakers on this topic within county, and this could form an idea for a public forum. Linda stated that both commissions will be at the meeting on Thursday, and it might be a good question to ask at that time. She also recommended that he attend the H&W committee meeting.
26. David advised everyone that in-between meetings are encouraged because things don't just happen at monthly meetings.

### ACTION ITEMS

1. Send draft toolkit for discussion at August meeting.
2. Ora Johnson to send David the name of her resident counselor for a presentation invite to be sent to her.
3. Virginia to compile a group to research the possibility of an internship with one of the colleges. David suggested it should be placed on the proposal for new priority form and forwarded to Laurie, David, Kathleen, and Marie as a cross-committee project.
4. Marie check with Kate and Morris regarding the senior fellow's program, will it continue to be a priority for the Public Policy Committee.
5. Lisa is to prepare a priority form on the Communication Committee collaboration with organizations such as AARP for the purpose of cross-fertilization of the two entities' expertise and manpower.
6. Kamillah and Kathleen to meet, review the issue of discharge planning to formulate a priority.
7. Lisa to provide a priority form providing a visual needs assessment for the Communication Committee which outlines timelines, potential work opportunities needed by the Communication Committee and that can be tapped into other organizations.

8. Renee will prepare a priority form proposing a conference call to discuss the formulation of a collaborating group with other organizations.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 18<sup>th</sup>.