



**Commission on Aging
Communications Committee Meeting
Minutes
June 16, 2025**

Attendees:

Commissioners: Katie Smith, Linda Bergofsky, Marie Sloan, David Engel, Kathleen McGuiness, Virginia Cain, Yvette Monroe, Vernell De Witty

New Commissioners: Candy Schimming, Al Woodward, Lisa Sun, Kamilah Mantle, ChiQuita Battle

COA Alum: Marcia Pruzan

County Staff: Peter Illig, Jennifer Long

Guest: Yngrid Lindores (Infinite Legacy)

Introduction:

1. David introduced himself and gave a brief background on the Communication Committee (CC). The CC was formed several years ago with a few members, and about five years ago, the Ambassador Program was launched. David hopes to continue the work started by previous members.
2. Kathleen explained that she started over a year ago and, working with the previous chairs (Beverly Rollins and Jean Dinwiddie), she updated the Ambassador Program slide presentation. Through a lot of work and collaboration with other presenters, a standardized presentation has been created that lasts about 50 minutes. New members are encouraged to attend at least one presentation.
3. David asked the remaining members to introduce themselves and provide a brief background.

Meeting Summary

1. **Toolkit**—Vernell De Witty gave a brief overview of Toolkit, which is currently being developed. The CC noted that the request for presentations exceeded the number of commissioners available to deliver them. Therefore, the proposal is for a training tool to prepare interested commissioners to make presentations. The kit will include PowerPoint slides with talking points, FAQs, and other resources within the County. The document is expected to be finalized in the next 6-8 weeks. This resource will help ensure all commissioners deliver a consistent message.
2. **ADRU Appreciation**—Jennifer Long, Aging and Disability Resource Unit (ADRU) Chief, was thanked by David for providing personnel to staff tables at the presentations with various handouts.
3. **Library Liaison**—The purpose of the program is to ensure each Montgomery County library (26+) has a dedicated section for older adults with informational materials such as COA Life Transition as We Age Toolkit, Age-Friendly Resource Fact Sheet, ACCESS Hears, and more. Initially, the process involved having a commissioner serve as a liaison to one of the 26+ libraries, ensuring the library regularly stocked sufficient older adult materials and that they were displayed in a visible location.

After a year, it was determined that this process was not sustainable. The library provided a liaison (Patrick M. Fromm, Interim Assistant Director for Programming and Outreach, Montgomery County Public Libraries). We will collaborate with Jennifer and Peter to restock all the libraries quarterly instead of monthly. David requested a volunteer to work with Jennifer and Peter quarterly to coordinate and organize the documents. The documents will be mailed to the library liaison by ADRU staff.

4. **Montgomery County 50+---**Kate Smith (host and COA Commissioner) discussed the Montgomery County 50+ TV show which is produced by the Commission monthly. The purpose is another means of providing older adults in Montgomery County with information as to where County services can be found. Educational issues such as hearing loss for older adults, experts in Medicare, or lighthearted issues such as bird-watching, a fashion program on issues such as colors and styles as we age, are examples of topics covered. This month 50+ will focus on Elder Abuse Prevention and July will be an interview with Montgomery County President Kate Stewart. The Committee meets on the first Friday of every month at 1:00 p.m. Members were encouraged to attend the meetings, provide topic suggestions, etc. The show can be seen on the COA website or on the County's cable channel.
5. **Responsibility of the Aging and Disability Resource Unit (ADRU)**--David asked Jennifer Long, staff liaison to the COA, to provide the complete 240 phone number found in many flyers, etc. and explain the ADRU responsibility (240-777-3000). The ADRU provides personalized hands-on assistance, referrals to services, etc. to seniors, people with disabilities and caregivers over the phone and in person. Staff advise residents about

benefits and services, help them determine what they are eligible for and can help them apply. The email address for the Aging and Disability Service is ADS@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov. The ADRU website is on the HHS website at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs/> under **Older Adult Services**.

6. **Commission 2027 Priorities**—Linda discussed the development of the 2027 budget priorities:
 - a. There are approximately 180,000 older adults in Montgomery County age 55 and older, which is the fastest growing demographic in the county.
 - b. Montgomery County has 80+ commissions, including the Commission on Aging (COA) advocating for older adults, women, youth sports, etc. All requesting funding/support for their resource needs. All must advocate their needs before various County departments, the State Legislature and County Council. As a result, the COA must:
 - Prioritize what we are asking for, what we hope to accomplish, determine if it makes sense to continue to pursue, is this a one-year or five-year plan, etc.
 - The COA process will begin priorities development after the June meeting. Priorities for the full COA will be voted on in September.
7. New commissioners requested the website where previous priorities were located: the COA website <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/COA/COAindex.html>), second tab, “**Bylaws and Priorities**”.
8. Members were encouraged to communicate with each other between meetings. Also, new members were encouraged to go to the COA website and review the various information available.
9. **Advocacy 101**—Linda announced that at the next COA meeting, we will begin the Advocacy 101 training. During September and October, the COA will be scheduling full advocacy training for all commissioners. Linda explained that we are “deputized as advocates for older citizens.

Next Steps:

1. The July CC meeting will be devoted to establishing 2027 priorities.
2. Press releases are to be requested for the upcoming Ambassador presentations
3. Request for Library Liaison Coordinator