

**Meeting of the  
Montgomery County  
Commission on Aging  
April 25, 2019  
Minutes**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Alumni Members</b>
Jean Dinwiddie, Chair	Pat Lesnick
Stephanie Edelstein, Vice Chair	Isabelle Schoenfeld
Beverly Rollins, Secretary	
Revathi Vikram, Treasurer	<b>Guests</b>
Amoke Alakoye	Susan Donovan, Nexus Montgomery
Neal Brown	Sara Hufstrader, Project Coordinator, JSSA
Mort Faller	John J. Kenney, Chief Operation Officer, JSSA
Amy Harbison	Edgar Rivas
Richard Jourdenais	Hileia Seeger, Director of Senior Services, JSSA
Miriam Kelty	
Karen Maricheau	
Nanine Meiklejohn	<b>Liaisons</b>
Monica Schaeffer	James Campbell, Commission on Veterans Affairs
Tho Tran	Denise Isreal, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Hillery Tumba	Marcia Pruzan, Senior Fellow Age-Friendly Montgomery
Marsha Weber	Phil Smakula, Montgomery County Department of Recreation
Ryan Wilson	
<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Barbara Brubeck	Odile Brunetto, Acting Chief, Aging and Disability Services and Director, Area Agency on Aging
Deborah Royster	Tremayne Jones, Department of Health and Human Services
Syed Yusuf	

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Jean Dinwiddie welcomed everyone and led introductions of all attendees. She reported that Commissioners Alan Kaplan and Phyllis Rand have resigned from the CoA, and thanked them for their valuable contributions. Commissioner Marsha Weber will now co-chair the Health and Wellness Committee.

## **Advance Care Planning Presentation**

John J. Kenney, Sara Hufstrader, and Susan Donovan led a discussion on advance care planning. Dr. Kenney recently retired from Montgomery County government with nearly 30 years of service with Health and Human Services. He is now the Jewish Social Services Agency's (JSSA) Chief Operating Officer. Sara Hufstrader is a Project Coordinator with JSSA and Susan Donovan is the Director of Population Health with Nexus Montgomery.

Ms. Hufstrader conducted a slide presentation entitled "Promoting Advance Care Planning in the Community." The slides described advance care planning: what it is, why it is critical for an individual to have an advance care plan (ACP), and the reality that only a small percentage of American adults have one. She explained that an ACP provides individuals the opportunity to understand health care treatment options, communicate their values and preferences, and ensure that their wishes are recorded while they are well enough to make choices. Ms. Hufstrader stressed that promoting advance care planning in the community now is especially vital because of the growth in the number of individuals over the age of 65. Currently, only 30-35 percent of American adults report having an ACP.

She stated that JSSA has agreed to partner in a Nexus Montgomery project to promote advance care planning. The project will be led by a 12-member steering committee and will provide training, education, and public awareness of the need for an ACP. The steering committee will include representatives from the Nexus Montgomery staff, Montgomery County hospitals, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Prince George's County Department of Health and Human Services, faith groups, and the Montgomery County Palliative Care and End-of-Life Coalition. It will also include a consumer representative. The goal is to have the first phase of the initiative up and running sometime this Fall.

### ***Discussion***

An active discussion followed the presentation with the CoA members posing a number of questions and comments. A Commissioner suggested that a representative from one of Montgomery County's Villages participate on the steering committee. It was also recommended that a representative from each Village be trained on ACP. The steering committee should also stress that individuals need to complete a MOLST (Medical Order for Life Sustaining Treatment) form.

A comment was made that at least one of the representatives on the steering committee will need to understand diversity and cultural issues. The forms need to be published in different languages; patients often do not understand the forms if they are not in their language. Also, sometimes when they are completed in the patient's language, the forms do not get translated for the doctor or for the hospital. Ms. Donovan responded that the committee members and community partners will be trained on diversity issues. They will start with a broad community approach and then focus on training the physicians.

A Commissioner urged the committee to work closely with the Maryland State Bar Association Estate Planning Section, and also with the Office of the Attorney General. The different forms can be confusing. Hospitals often do not know what form to recognize. Also, statutory forms must be used to make them operative. If the forms are not filled out properly then they are considered invalid. In addition, if an individual has a court-appointed guardian, he or she would likely not be considered to

have the legal capacity to sign a power of attorney or other advance directive. All of these things need to be considered; confusion is a big program in the advance planning.

The question was asked about where older residents who do not live in a Village can find information about advance planning. Ms. Donovan responded that a website is being developed to help individuals with the process, and training sessions are also being planned. These initiatives will attempt to simplify the process as much as possible. Concern was raised about the use of a website because many older adults do not use computers. Ms. Hufstrader stated that there will be a lot of community programs and training available.

A question was asked about why only a low number of individuals engage in advance care planning. Ms. Hufstrader responded that a survey will soon be conducted to ask individuals that question. The steering committee will be looking at those reasons and addressing them. Many individuals do not like to consider end-of-life issues and they associate advance care planning with death. The initiative will push the idea that individuals need to plan for a crisis. Its mantra will be “Any age, any stage.”

The comment was made that hospitals and physicians need to be included in the ACP initiative from the beginning; they need to know that a patient’s plan exists. Ms. Hufstrader responded that the partnership is currently only in the planning stage and it will be getting feedback on how best to roll out the program. Nexus Montgomery will be getting physician and hospital perspectives on the initiative. It will also be working with the Maryland Health Exchange. The steering committee will be looking at all of the different pieces and how they fit together.

The question was asked whether the steering committee will be getting feedback from organizations such as caregiving groups and others involved in patient care. Another question was asked about how the initiative will be rolled out; i.e., will there be a focus on certain areas of Montgomery County? Will the committee work with HHS? Dr. Kenney responded that HHS will be a part of the rollout, probably with the help of the Health Officer. The committee will try to tap into and partner with as many groups as possible. A long list of partners has already been identified. The rollout will be community wide and health providers will be included.

Ms. Hufstrader stated that CoA members should send her suggestions on which individuals and organizations should be included in the initiative. Everything is still in the planning stage and it is still being discussed where the program will be rolled out. This will be determined in years 2 and 3 of the initiative. The group will be testing the messaging of the need for an ACP during the first year.

A question was raised about how the project will define older adults; i.e., will they include all individuals over the age of 55? Ms. Hufstrader again reiterated that the group is still in the planning stages but urged the Commissioners to send her their questions.

Ms. Donovan stated that the initial focus will be on older adults, but the partners wants to get everyone engaged in the process. They are now trying to figure out where and when to do ACP training. It was suggested that social workers would be a good group to include in the early training. Also, organizations such as Compassion and Choices and Death Cafe should be informed of the initiative, as well as the military population and senior centers. Although the military encourages individuals on active duty to complete a directive, after active duty many people allow the directives to become out-of-date. It was suggested that the committee meet with representatives of the Veterans’ Administration and social military organizations.

A Commission member suggested that the group invite the Director of the American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging, Charlie Sabatino, to work on the steering committee. Commissioner Amy Harbison stated the CoA's cable television program, *Seniors Today*, will feature a program on ACP on its next show. She invited Dr. Kenney, Ms. Hufstrader, and Ms. Donovan to join her.

The comment was made that older adults are often not the ones who do not want to do an advance directive; rather, it is often their families who are hesitant. It was suggested that the group also work with family members. In addition, it was suggested that representatives from continuing care retirement communities be included in the group's efforts to gather information. Also, patient portals are another group of systems that need to be coordinated.

The question was asked whether an ACP initiative has been set up in any other State. Ms. Hufstrader responded that organizations in other States have done it. Wisconsin has implemented a very successful model, but it has not been able to be duplicated anywhere else.

### **AAA Director Updates**

Odile Brunetto thanked the CoA Commissioners for meeting with members of the County Council to advocate for older adult initiatives. She then provided the following updates:

- The State recently released its draft of "A Better Maryland" plan. Public comments will be accepted through May 15. Dr. Brunetto suggested that the CoA may want to provide written comments, including a suggestion that Maryland should work to be designated as Age Friendly by AARP. The final "A Better Maryland" plan is due to Governor Hogan on June 30, 2019.
- The State is studying the wait list of the Medicaid waiver program. Currently about 20,000 individuals are on it. It is planned that a new way of selecting individuals for the program based on need will be implemented this Summer. One factor that may be considered is whether the individual is high risk.
- The Maryland Department of Aging has been funded \$1.4 million in its FY20 budget for a "loan closet" to lend durable medical equipment to individuals of all ages. Individuals can visit a central warehouse to obtain the equipment or use a satellite site. Equipment will be sterilized and repaired between loans. A computer database will indicate what is being offered and trucks will be available for needed delivery. The State is underwriting the program.
- Seven new CoA Commissioners will be appointed by the County Executive on April 30 and their orientation will take place on May 15. Two additional members will need to be appointed to replace the two Commissioners who recently resigned.
- Speakers planned for upcoming CoA meetings include:
  - May—Marsha Pruzan will discuss the State of Maryland's and Montgomery County's Age Friendly status.
  - June—Howard Haft, M.D. will discuss Maryland's Primary Care Program. NOTE: June meeting will be on June 13, at the Rockville Library.
  - September—A representative of the County's Board of Elections will discuss polling place accessibility.
  - October—CoA priorities will be discussed.
  - November—County Executive Marc Elrich will be invited to discuss his agenda.

## **Commission Business**

**Approval of March CoA Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the March CoA meeting were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer’s Report** – Commissioner Revathi Vikram reported that the CoA’s account has a balance of \$5,109.

**Annual Report** – The report is complete and will be posted on the CoA’s website soon.

**April 8 County Council Testimony** – Chair Jean Dinwiddie testified before the Council HHS Committee on the CoA’s budget priorities and it went well. More comprehensive written testimony was also submitted.

**Meetings with Councilmembers to Highlight CoA Briefing Book and FY20 Budget Priorities** – The CoA discussed this at length. Highlights of the discussion include:

- Commissioner Miriam Kelty, who is also a member of the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board, noted that the APGRB appreciates the CoA's support for additional staffing in the APS/Public Guardianship program.
- It was suggested that in the Fall the CoA should start considering issues of older adults as a group on a macro level; look at the bigger picture and work with the County Executive and other organizations to achieve results. In addition, the CoA should discuss this macro picture with the Council members. Focus on problems like social isolation and what that means to medical costs; try to show what impacts Montgomery County seniors.
- The CoA may want to invite one of the County Executive’s budget staff to attend its October meeting to discuss what the FY21 budget will look like.
- Commissioners Stephanie Edelstein and Alan Kaplan met with Council member Gabe Albornoz about the County budget. He is hoping that the Council will start using an “Aging Lens” when considering the budget. He would also like to return to a grouping of the senior budget items for easy reference.
- The CoA should discuss its budget priorities and interests with the County Executive when he attends the November CoA meeting. The CoA should develop its budget priorities during the Summer and not wait until Fall.
- The CoA needs to compare what Montgomery County spends on its senior budget with what neighboring Counties spend. Budget cuts over a period of years have a cumulative effect.
- The CoA members could meet regularly with the same Council member and staff that they met with during the budget cycle to push CoA priorities. They can inform the Council members on what they can do specifically with regard to older adult initiatives and funding.
- For the programs that receive budget cuts, determine who has been affected by the cuts and include representatives of that population in CoA conversations. Possibly include them in upcoming CoA forums.

## **Stakeholders/Liaison Updates**

**Veterans’ Affairs** – Jim Campbell reported that the Veterans’ Administration is looking to build a second Veterans’ home in Maryland. It will have 150 beds. Twenty-five developed acres that have water, electricity, and sewage capacity need to be donated for the home to be built. Only 15,000 of Montgomery County’s 25,000 veterans know of the services that are available to them. Services will

atrophy if they are not used. Representatives from the community centers need to communicate to the public what is available to the veterans.

**Department of Recreation** – Phil Smakula thanked the CoA for its support of the FY20 budget. The Department is looking at a \$178,000 budget cut next year in senior programs. The bottom line number shows a 14 percent (\$60,000) cut in part-time seasonal staff, the \$78,000 cut of a full-time position (recreation coordinator for health and wellness programs and the Maryland Senior Olympics), and a 31 percent cut for recreation transportation. Among other things, these cuts mean a reduction in the number of mini-trips and a reduction in the number of hours the senior centers will be open. The centers will be closed on Saturdays and will close at 1:00p on Fridays. The cuts will have a huge impact on the community and will affect programs at senior centers and senior programs at other recreation centers. He noted that recreation centers have a separate budget from the senior centers.

Council members Navarro and Rice are very interested in these cuts and want to do something about them. A question was asked about how the Friday bus service to the senior centers could be restored. Mr. Smakula responded that it would cost about \$120,000 to do this. His department is considering other options and working with experts to see what can be done.

**Department of Transportation** – Denise Isreal reported that the Department will host an open house on April 25 to introduce Ride on Flex. The initiative has a \$380,000 budget and will feature small buses.

**TSIF** - Commission member Mort Faller voiced his concern that the CoA was not informed of the release of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) regulations for comment earlier in the Spring. The CoA has a strong interest in them and is very frustrated that it was not notified.

**Age Friendly Montgomery** – Marcia Pruzan reported that she is working with a group to apply for Montgomery County to be recertified as Age Friendly. The recertification will happen in October 2020.

## **Committee Reports**

**Aging in Community** – Commissioner Monica Schaeffer reported that at the Committee's April 9 meeting the members discussed affordable housing for intergenerational living. At that meeting, Mary Sweeney from GROWS gave a presentation on co-living and co-housing. Lisa Govoni of the Montgomery County Planning Department also attended and noted that the County Council is increasingly interested in diverse and intergenerational housing. She stated that two studies on the preservation of affordable housing in the County will take place in the Fall and she will keep the Committee members up-to-date on them.

At the Committee's May meeting, Commissioner Nanine Meiklejohn will lead a discussion on rent stabilization. All CoA members are invited to attend. The meeting is scheduled for May 14.

**Communications and Community Outreach** – Commissioner Hillery Tumba reported that the Committee is now trying to determine its focus, as it is still in its revival stage. Because of logistical problems the members will conduct their meetings by conference calls for the time being. The Committee does not want to take on the role of producing everything the CoA disseminates; rather it wants to be in a position to provide guidance for the Commissioners regarding CoA communications.

The Committee's primary focus will be to ensure that the CoA has consistent key messaging points. Committee members are also trying to understand what the CoA's outreach should be, how effective senior communications are, and how those communications can be improved. They are also getting educated on what's going on in the community and will be inviting speakers to participate. They are hoping that some of the new Commissioners will join the Committee.

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Commissioner Amy Harbison reported on recent activities on the CoA's cable TV program, *Seniors Today*. She is still acting as interim host while alumni Commissioner Austin Heyman is recuperating. The next taping will be on May 15 and will feature County Executive Marc Elrich.

Commissioner Harbison invited the CoA members to send questions for that interview. A suggestion was made that she ask Mr. Elrich what his plans are to meet the growing needs of older adults in Montgomery County, especially in light of the increasing percentage of them in the County.

Commissioner Harbison noted that future episodes of *Seniors Today* will include discussions with consultant Jane Markley regarding advance directives and dietician Melody Polk on nutrition. She is also inviting representatives from the County's diverse communities to talk about their issues and concerns. She asked the CoA members to send her topics that they would like to see discussed on the program. A suggestion was made that Commissioner Harbison feature a different community representative every month.

**Health and Wellness** – Commissioner Marsha Weber reported that the Committee is wrapping up its paper on the "Senior Gap" issue and hopes to issue it soon. Members are now looking for outlets for how it can be communicated. The Committee's next focus may be on the effects of social isolation for people with hearing loss.

**Public Policy** – Commissioner Ryan Wilson reported that at the Committee's last meeting members discussed the wrap up of the Maryland General Assembly and the outcomes of legislation relevant to Montgomery County's older adults. Members also discussed the County Executive's budget, CoA's meetings with the County Council, and efforts to get the State of Maryland designated as Age Friendly.

Commission member Mort Faller reported on the TSIF regulations and reiterated that he is frustrated that the CoA was not notified when the draft regulations were issued for comment. A suggestion was made that the CoA send a letter to Council member Tom Hucker, who chairs the Council Transportation Committee, voicing its frustration. Another suggestion was made that the CoA should say something to the County Executive when it meets with him next Fall.

Commissioner Faller also briefly discussed his efforts to establish an Association of Maryland Commissions on Aging (AMCoA). He recently mailed a second letter to the CoAs of the Counties that had not responded to his first letter. He received a few more responses and, based on what he has received, it appears that there will be no Statewide association. He suggested that the CoA keep a roster of the contacts at these agencies to informally pass along information in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.