

**Commission on Aging  
Meeting Minutes  
December 17, 2020**

**Location:** Zoom Call  
**Time:** 10:00a – 12:30p

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>
Jean Dinwiddie, Chair	Wayne Berman
Amoke Alakoye, Vice-Chair	Ruby Moone
Beverly Rollins, Secretary	Maritza Rivera
Ryan Wilson, Budget Officer	Tho Tran
Neal Brown	
Joyce Dubow	<b>Alumni Members</b>
Stephanie Edelstein	Austin Heyman
Mort Faller	Chuck Kaufman
Arunima Ghosh	Revathi Vikram
Richard Jourdenais	
Miriam Kelty	<b>Liaisons</b>
Morris Klein	David Engle, GROWS
Karen Maricheau	Debbie Hedges, JSSA
Nanine Meiklejohn	Kendell Matthews, Greater Stonegate Village
Karon Phillips	Aseem Nigam, Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Edgar Rivas	Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montgomery
Barbara Selter	Jim Resnick, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue
Ann M. Serafenas	Liz Rhee, Asian American Health Initiative
Monica Schaeffer	Beth Shuman, County Council Legislative Aide
Katie Smith	Sara Swarr, Department of Recreation
Mary Sweeney	Arlee Wallace, African American Health Program
Hillery Tumba	
Marsha Weber	<b>Staff</b>
Arthur Williams	Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services
Janice Zalen	Patrice McGhee, Director Area Agency on Aging
	Shawn Brennan, Department of Health and Human Services
	Tremayne Jones, Department of Health and Human Services

## **Welcome–Jean Dinwiddie, Chair**

Chair Jean Dinwiddie welcomed everyone and took roll of all attendees. She recognized those Commissioners whose terms are expiring and thanked them for their service to the CoA and to the County. The members are:

- Amoke Alakoye
- Stephanie Edelstein
- Mort Faller
- Karen Maricheau

## **Updates from the Area Agency on Aging**

Chief Odile Brunetto provided the following:

- She thanked the CoA for its successful Legislative Breakfast. It was well attended and provided a good discussion.
- During its last meeting, the Maryland Association of Area Agencies on Aging (M4A) decided to write a 1-page impact statement on how COVID has affected AAA work. The statement will be shared with legislators in January.
- CoA officers are currently working on the CoA’s annual report.
- Chief Brunetto congratulated the newly elected 2021 CoA officers.
- Montgomery County libraries now lend out mobile hot spots for County residents through the “Internet to Go” program. There is a collection of 250 Verizon MiFi Mobile hotspots. They are available at County library locations.
- The County’s Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has started holding weekly Wednesday night Zoom meetings, 6:30p-8p. Mental health services are discussed. The meetings began December 16.
- On January 7, 2021, the County Council will hold a town hall meeting regarding the problems non-profit agencies are facing during the pandemic.
- Regarding the FY22 Community Grant process: The decision was made that no new grantees will be selected. The non-profit organizations that received a grant in FY21 will not need to reapply for a grant in FY22, but the funding may not be the same. County staff will review the existing grants and attempt to maintain the same level of funding that was provided in FY21.
- Several HHS staff have retired or will be retiring. A number of individuals in the community who work with HHS staff are also retiring, including David Gamse, Chief Executive Officer for the Jewish Council for the Aging, and Reverend Kasey Kaseman of the Faith Community Advisory Council. Chief Brunetto stated that she will provide the CoA with information regarding their retirement parties.
- County Council Vice President Gabe Albornoz has committed to holding a town hall meeting this winter regarding COVID-19 issues and the vaccination process.
- In closing, Chief Brunetto said goodbye to the retiring CoA members and thanked them for their service. She also reminded them that they can reapply after waiting a year.

## **Guest Speaker Council Member Will Jawando**

Chair Dinwiddie introduced Council Member Jawando and thanked him for meeting with the CoA. He spent a few minutes discussing the work of the CoA's Task Force on Dementia, Policing, and Racial Equity, saying that there is a need to constantly look at data and re-evaluate what actions are being taken with regard to policing and racial equity. Mr. Jawando stated that it may be better if Silver Alerts and other types of issues be handled by individuals and organizations other than the police. The police should handle more violent crimes. Mr. Jawando has introduced bills to define appropriate use of force by the police, and County officials are looking at different crisis intervention models such as the CAHOOTS model. CAHOOTS, or "Crisis Assistance Helping Out On the Streets," mobilizes two-person teams consisting of a medic (a nurse, paramedic, or emergency medical technician) and a crisis worker who has substantial training and experience in the mental health field.

Council Member Jawando also discussed these topics that he is currently focusing on:

- Housing issues, which is a huge concern for older adults. Montgomery County not only needs more housing, it needs more affordable housing. He introduced a proposal last week that would allow for different types of housing options.
- A renter protection bill, legislation that would not allow rents to be raised over a certain amount especially in "rising rent areas;" e.g., neighborhoods with close access to transportation. In addition, in light of the number of individuals who have lost their jobs during the pandemic, Mr. Jawando is trying to stop late fees from being charged.
- Issues of interest to the CoA, including how to keep a new budget, that has been greatly impacted by the pandemic, from impinging on the needs of older adults. Statistics are showing the racial inequality that the pandemic has uncovered; only 30 percent of the African-Americans who lost their jobs at the beginning of the pandemic have gone back to work, while 80 percent of white people have returned. Our society needs to protect those individuals who are most vulnerable during this time.

Council Member Jawando stated that it is necessary to look for efficiencies to deal with budget issues. Montgomery County is one of the wealthiest Counties in the country. In light of that he introduced a bill to have a progressive income tax because he believes that wealthier individuals should carry more of the tax load. Increasing the income tax by 3.5% on millionaires will bring in an additional \$100 million per year.

Council Member Jawando then opened the session up to questions and comments from the CoA members.

- To inform Mr. Jawando of the CoA's FY22 top budget priorities, a comment was made that the CoA would like to see the County hire additional social workers for Adult Protective Services and the Guardianship program, and to help provide legal assistance for individuals facing eviction.
- A member asked about Mr. Jawando's long-term view for implementation of the County's general plan. He responded that the County Council will hold hearings on it and will need to ensure that the plan concentrates on getting the type of housing and architecture that will be most effective. Several issues need to be addressed, including the environment and affordable housing. There are a lot of proposals on the table.

- A question was asked about how the CoA can support Mr. Jawando’s efforts with regard to racial equity. The Council Member urged interested CoA members to send him an email. A hearing will be held the evening of February 9 regarding the availability of more affordable housing. In addition, with regard to the policing issue, a police advisory committee has been appointed. Mr. Jawando noted that he has also proposed that police be removed from schools. There will be a public hearing on the policing issue on January 12.

## **Commission on Aging Business**

### ***Approval of November CoA minutes***

A correction was requested be made to the November minutes. Other than that small revision, the members moved to approve the minutes.

### ***Budget Report***

Budget Office, Ryan Wilson, reported that \$4,945.11 is in the CoA’s treasury.

### ***Reapplication Process***

If a CoA member’s term is expiring (and he or she has not reached the established term limit) then all that needs to be done is for a letter to be sent to the County Executive explaining why the Commissioner requests to continue to serve. Those Commissioners do not have to go through the interview process again and can apply online.

### ***Letters of Congratulations***

Congratulatory letters were sent to Council Members, Tom Hucker and Gabe Albornoz, who were recently elected President and Vice President of the Montgomery County Council.

### ***COVID-19 Testing***

A subgroup of the Health and Wellness Committee recently released a letter to several organizations across the County making them aware that COVID testing is available for home care providers. Letters were sent to such organizations as the Villages, GROWS, the Asian American Health Initiative, the Latino Health Initiative, and the African American Health Initiative.

### ***New Commissioner Interview Panel***

Commissioners Marsha Weber, Joyce Dubow, Miriam Kelty, and Karon Phillips volunteered to serve on the panel to interview prospective new CoA members. Of those who volunteered, three interviewers will be selected to perform the job. As a reminder, any Commissioner whose term is expiring cannot serve on the panel.

### ***Seniors Today***

Several CoA and alumni members are interested in hosting the *Seniors Today* program. Auditions will be held soon.

### ***Task Force on Dementia, Policing, and Racial Equity***

The Executive Committee decided that the current draft of the Task Force report, as written, appears not to address Montgomery County specific information and needs supporting information. The Task Force now needs to determine its next steps and keep its focus on the mission of the task force.

Commissioner Arthur Williams objected to the fact that the Executive Committee rejected the report and requested that it be given to the entire CoA to review as it is currently written. Chair Dinwiddie stated that the CoA's bylaws stipulate that the Executive Committee must approve a document before it is sent to the entire CoA membership.

### ***Social Isolation Task Force***

The Task Force will meet again on December 21 at 1P.M. Currently, speakers are being recruited and the group plans to look at fixing broken connections.

### **Committee Reports**

#### ***Aging in Community***

At its December 8, 2020 meeting Committee members discussed the County's home-sharing pilot program. Mary Hunter and Michelle Higgs of the Housing Initiative Partnership (HIP) gave a presentation. The HIP's official launch date is January 5, 2021 and will extend to June 30, 2021. After that, the program will be evaluated to determine its success and efficacy.

During the next few months, Committee members will be discussing affordable rental housing, food security, and the Villages. They will report to the full CoA in May on the progress of their work.

Commissioner Wayne Berman will now be stepping in to co-chair the Committee and will be replacing Commissioner Meiklejohn.

#### ***Health and Wellness***

Currently, Committee members are concentrating on home care. At their December 1, 2020 meeting members met with two speakers: Commissioner Morris Klein discussed options and challenges for paying for long-term care outside of nursing homes, and Raphael Espinoza of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) program talked about the Medicare program and how to qualify for the different parts of it. Next month the Committee will focus on what members learned from Mr. Klein and Ms. Espinoza and no speaker will be featured. Committee members will look at what the CoA can do for home-based care. They will look at issues such as whether family members can be compensated for caregiving and whether the CoA can help bring awareness to SHIP program.

## ***Public Policy***

Members of the Committee were thanked and congratulated for the well-attended Legislative Breakfast. In addition, retiring Commissioner, Stephanie Edelstein, was thanked for her service as co-chair of the Committee.

## **Invited Speakers for Upcoming Meetings**

- January 28, 2021: Barry Hudson, Director Public Information Office
- February 25, 2021: Robert Jenkins, Greenhouse Nursing Homes
- March 26, 2021: TBD, Perhaps Representative of Home Sharing Project
- March, Date TBD: Public Forum

## **Other**

- Julie Parker, who formerly worked for Channel 7 news, is interested in researching how non-governmental organizations have reached out to the public regarding their services during the pandemic. Commissioners were urged to contact Ms. Parker if they have any information about services that are being provided.
- Commission members engaged in a discussion regarding the CoA's role in providing information regarding older adult programs that Montgomery County offers. Questions that were raised included:
  - Is the CoA's function of providing public information a cross-cutting issue and should it be addressed by all CoA's Committees?
  - Is the Communications Task Force still in operation?
  - Do the CoA bylaws allow a specific person to be in charge of the CoA's communication strategy?
  - What kind of public education should the CoA do?
  - Should the CoA promote public programs when there are budget issues?
  - What venues and outreach efforts can be used to communicate information about older adult programs in addition to *Seniors Today* and the *Beacon*?

It was decided to address these questions with Barry Hudson, Director of Montgomery County's Public Information Office, who will be the featured speaker at the CoA's January meeting. Alumni member Austin Heyman volunteered to help in developing the CoA's communication strategy.

## **Adjourn**