

**Commission on Aging
Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2020**

Location: North Potomac Recreation Center, 13850 Travilah Road, Rockville, MD

Time: 9:00a – 12:15p

Members Present	Alumni Members
Jean Dinwiddie, Chair	Charles Kauffman
Beverly Rollins, Secretary	Isabelle Schoenfeld
Ryan Wilson, Budget Officer	
Neal Brown	Guests
Stephanie Edelstein	David Engel
Arunima Ghosh	Beth Shuman
Richard Jourdenais	
Miriam Kelty	Liaisons
Morris Klein	Elise Barnes, African American Health Program
Karen Maricheau	Denise Israel, Department of Transportation
Ruby Moone	Phil Smakula, Department of Recreation
Karon Phillips	
Edgar Rivas	
Barbara Selter	Staff
Odessa Shannon	Odile Brunetto, Department of Health & Human Services
Mary Sweeney	Shawn Brennan, Department of Health & Human Services
Tho Tran	Tremayne Jones, Department of Health & Human Services
Hillery Tumba	
Marsha Weber	
Arthur Williams	
Janice Zalen	
Members Absent	
Amoke Alakoye, Vice-Chair	
Barbara Brubeck	
Mort Faller	
Amy Harbison	
Nanine Meiklejohn	
Deborah Royster	
Monica Schaeffer	

Welcome

Chair Jean Dinwiddie welcomed all attendees.

Council Member, Gabe Albornoz’, and Special Assistant to the County Executive, Chuck Short

Mr. Albornoz discussed the following:

The Montgomery County – Property Tax – Credit for Senior Citizen Volunteers Bill (MC 23-20). Mr. Albornoz opened his discussion by talking about MC 23-20. He noted that individuals often volunteer in retirement and he would like to encourage more of them to do so; he wants to harness that energy and acknowledge volunteerism financially. Jurisdictions where similar legislation has been enacted have seen a significant rise in the number of individual volunteer hours. Mr. Albornoz worked with State Senator Ben Kramer to introduce a similar bill Statewide.

Mr. Albornoz stated that MC 23-20 and the State bill generated several questions, however, such as who would be eligible for the tax credit. Therefore, State legislators do not feel comfortable proposing the legislation at this point. Over the next nine months the proposal will be studied. If it is enacted it would require a partnership between the Office of Volunteerism and the Office of Finance.

Update on County Issues, Especially Pedestrian Safety. Immigrants and older adults are the populations most impacted by pedestrian safety issues. Any number of factors contribute to the increase in incidents, but the number 1 reason is distracted driving; e.g., texting and using GPS and apps like Waze. Because of GPS and Waze, drivers are traveling roads that were not designed for travel flow increasing damage to roads. It was also noted that speed limits and stop signs are not always appropriate and some are not placed properly.

Mr. Albornoz stated that the County Council is tackling the problem in several ways. One thing it is mandating is the narrowing of lanes and the addition of speed cameras. Another is to create more of a buffer between the sidewalk and traffic lanes. Technology also provides an opportunity; for instance, traffic lights could be of higher technology and could be programmed to acknowledge traffic changes.

Mr. Albornoz stated that he will try to meet with the CoA during the summer to provide updates on MC 23-20 and pedestrian safety.

Thrive 2050 – General Plan Update Khalid Afzal, Special Projects Manager

Mr. Afzal distributed the “Thrive Montgomery 2050: Issues Report” and tailored his presentation around that report. He also distributed the “Thrive Montgomery 2050: Issues Explainer,” a companion to the “Issues Report.”

The County has changed a lot since it first issued the General Master Plan in 1964. The General Plan is the overall operating system for the County and over the years the operating plan needs to be overhauled. It is the big picture and provides the overall guidance. Today there is different technology available and different demographics than when the Plan was developed. The County needs to step back and look at how things look now and how things have changed. It needs to look at new ways to do things, such as how to handle traffic. The General Plan interacts with the Thrive report. The County started working on Thrive activities about a year ago. The Issues Report is a product of that effort and includes issues that should be addressed in the General Plan.

Mr. Afzal described the major issues the County faces. Those issues include complete communities, connectedness, diverse economies, safe and efficient travel, affordability, healthy and sustainable environment, diverse and adaptable growth, and culture and design. He noted that Montgomery County is very diverse, and it needs to keep this framework in mind to deal with the diverse communities.

The pace of change in the County is happening very fast and the County needs to learn to adapt. It needs to consider water and sewage capacity, resident culture, and manage growth. As it designs communities it will have to be cognizant of the vast diversity and also design transportation to be the most effective.

Mr. Afzal stated that in April, May, and June his staff will be taking comments on the draft plans. By March 2021 they will submit a product to the County Council.

Census 2020

Daniel Jones, Partnership Specialist, Bureau of Census

Mr. Jones provided a brief overview of the work of the Census Bureau. It is very important to participate in the Census. The Census 2020 forms will be sent to all households beginning in March. Residents will be able to complete the information by phone, on paper, or online. On March 12, Census Day, the first invitations will be sent out. The forms are provided in 13 different languages and 13 different phone numbers for the different languages. Individuals do not have to complete the information all online if it is too difficult; they can call and report it. Or they can do it on paper and mail it.

Mr. Jones ended his presentation by reminding the meeting attendees that it is very important to participate in the Census.

Chair Dinwiddie added that the 2010 census had an 80 percent participation rate. The 20 percent of the population that did not respond cost the County \$365 million per year in Federal funding.

AAA Director Updates

Director Odile Brunetto provided the following updates:

- On March 11 the County Council will host a Senior Town Hall meeting at Leisure World. It will be held at 8:30a in Clubhouse 2.
- On March 21 the County will hold an Intergenerational Forum organized with local several Catholic Churches. It will be held in the County Executive Building from 8:15a-12p. The purpose is to get faith leaders involved in connecting generations.
- The State legislature has held one hearing regarding the State's Department of Aging's budget. Another hearing is scheduled for February 28. The Governor is proposing a \$2 million increase in the budget and the money will be used for multiple programs.
- Staff of Vision Zero, the County's initiative to reduce the number of severe and fatal collisions, met with the Chair and members of the Commission on People with Disabilities. The Commission is very interested in that plan.
- The medical adult daycare program offered by the Jewish Social Service Agency is being terminated effective March 15. It has been operating at a deficit for many years. Twenty-five persons/families will be affected. Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services is working with these families to place them in other programs.
- Thirty-six applications were received to fill the five vacancies on the CoA. The interviews are taking place now.

Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) Update

Walton Harris, Policy Analyst, Taxicab Regulation and Special Transit Services

Mr. Harris provided a brief background of the TSIF noting that it has been in existence since 2015. Montgomery County receives money from a surcharge that is placed on every Uber and Lyft ride that originates in the County. This money is supposed to go to the taxi industry to make taxicabs handicapped accessible and to provide a subsidy to those taxis to keep them in repair.

Since 2015, the County has received about \$7.5 million from the surcharge. However, in 2018, money was transferred from the TSIF to the mass transit fund where it was used for other purposes. The County received much criticism for this action, including from the CoA and the Commission on People with Disabilities. The TSIF is now again accumulating money from the surcharge. Mr. Harris commented that his department is going to come up with aggressive ideas for using the TSIF.

Commission on Aging Business

AAHP Liaison: Elisse Barnes, J.D., Ph.D.

Chair Dinwiddie introduced Dr. Barnes. She is the CoA's liaison for the African American Health Program.

Attendance Policy

Chair Dinwiddie reminded the CoA members that they are allowed three absences during a rolling year. Staff will ensure that a copy of the policy will be included in the new member orientation book.

Report on February 5 Meeting with Sidney Katz

Chair Dinwiddie and Vice Chair Amoke Alakoya met with the County Council Chair's Chief Legislative Analyst, Mary Geis, and briefed her on the CoA's budget priorities. They also plan to meet with County Executive Marc Elrich to reiterate the CoA priorities decided on in July 2019.

Report on February 19 Meeting with Public Information Officer

Chair Dinwiddie and Commissioners Amy Harbison, Hillery Tsumba, Marsha Weber, and HHS staff person Shawn Brennan met with PIO Barry Hudson to discuss ways to raise awareness of Montgomery County's Age-Friendly initiative and also the CoA's March 18 public forum.

Approval of December CoA Minutes

The CoA voted to approve the minutes of its December meeting.

Approval of January CoA Minutes

The CoA voted to approve the minutes of its January meeting.

Budget Report

CoA Budget and Finance Advisor, Commissioner Ryan Wilson, reported that the CoA currently has \$4,945.11 in its treasury. Chair Dinwiddie added that the Executive Committee voted to make a \$50 contribution to the American Cancer Society in memory of past-Commissioner Jon Honig and a \$50 contribution to the ALS Foundation in honor of Dr. Jay Kenney. There were no objections.

Vote on Meeting at Wheaton Recreation Center

The CoA members had a lengthy discussion on whether to continue holding most of the monthly meetings at the North Potomac Community Center, move it to the new Wheaton Center, or to alternate sites at different senior centers around the County. A vote was taken and the results were 13 in favor and 8 against moving the meetings to alternating sites. Another vote was taken to determine how many consecutive meetings will be held at each site. The vote was 17 in favor of alternating on a quarterly basis, and 3 in favor of alternating on a monthly basis.

Chair Dinwiddie will work with staffer Tremayne Jones to determine the availability of a senior center for the CoA's September, October, and November meetings.

CoA Member Meetings with Council Members: first two weeks in April

Chair Dinwiddie asked CoA members to keep the first two weeks in April available to meet with County Council members to discuss CoA budget priorities.

March 18 Public Forum

The theme of this year's public forum is "What Can Racial Equity Look Like in an Age-Friendly Community?" All CoA members are expected to attend. Chair Dinwiddie advised that some of the CoA's budget will be used to finance the Forum. The biggest expense will be the provision for lunch. Chair Dinwiddie asked if there were any objections, and none were voiced.

Committee Reports

Aging in Community

Commissioner Dick Jourdenais reported that the Committee currently has two focus areas, affordable housing and senior employment. The February 14 meeting was focused on learning about employment opportunities that are available for older adults in Montgomery County. Committee members specifically looked at the Senior Fellows program. They heard from Special Assistant to the County Executive, Chuck Short, on how the Senior Fellows program originated and also heard from a number of Senior Fellow employees regarding their work. At its March meeting the Committee is inviting Montgomery County administrators to discuss how they could use Senior Fellows.

Health and Wellness

Commission member Marsha Weber reported that the Committee is now researching hearing loss and its implications on health, dementia, and social isolation. At their February 7 meeting Committee members met with Carrie Nieman, MD, MPH, and her colleague, Khoi Lee, of Johns Hopkins University who are involved in the Aging and Cognitive Health Evaluation in Elders (ACHIEVE) study. Members also heard about Access HEARS which is a pioneer social enterprise working to disrupt the current hearing care industry by providing affordable, accessible hearing care through a sustainable, community-delivered model. Commission member Weber noted that the Committee is exploring providing a 1-page fact sheet on hearing loss and other things to the CoA as a project proposal. She stated that at its March meeting the Committee will visit Potomac Audiology and meet with Dr. Gail Lynne.

Public Policy

Commissioner Stephanie Edelstein reported that Committee members are looking at bills filed this year both in the County and in the Maryland General Assembly. Committee members prepared letters in support of seven bills pending in the State General Assembly regarding elder abuse, affordable housing, and sales tax exemption on hearing devices. The Executive Committee approved the letters at its February meeting.

Group Photo of CoA and Adjourn
