

Commission on Aging

December 16, 2021

Virtual via Zoom

Members Present

Barbara Selter, Chair

Edgar Rivas, Vice Chair

Janice Zalen, Secretary

Richard Jourdenais, Budget Officer

Jean Dinwiddie, Past Chair

Wayne Berman

Neal Brown

Virginia Cain

Betsy Carrier

David Engel

Nkiru J. Ezeani

Arunima Ghosh

Mona Grieser

Morris Klein

Kendall Matthews

Nanine Meiklejohn

Sibo Neube

Karon Phillips

Laurie Pross

Beverly Rollins

Monica Schaeffer

Katie Smith

Mary Sweeny

Marsha Weber

Ryan Wilson

Members Absent

Joyce Dubow

Nkiru J. Ezeani

Ruby Moone

Hillery Tumba

Arthur Williams

Alumni Members

Austin Heyman

Rev Vikram

Liaisons

Monique Gardner, African-Amer. Health.

Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly MC

Betty Ring, Sr. Fellow for Sidney Katz

Staff

Odile Brunetto, DHHS

Patrice McGhee, DHHS

Shawn Brennan, DHHS

Tremayne Jones, DHHS

Josie Makon, DHHS

Leslie Frey, DHHS

Robin Riley, Recreation

Sara Swarr, Recreation

Adriane Cutter, Recreation

Guest

Lindsey West

Welcome – Barbara Selter, Chair

Chair Barbara Selter welcomed everyone and took roll.

AAA Director Update – Odile Brunetto, DHHS

After commenting that the State Legislative Breakfast was excellent, Odile Brunetto provided the following information:

- The AAA recently participated in the County Executive budget meeting;
- There is a dental bill in the works at the federal level that would provide dental care for over 800,00 people, which the CoA should review;
- The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) appropriates money to the Older Americans Act and other vehicles to assist older Americans. Montgomery County (MC) will receive about \$3.5 million for the AAAs. The County assembled teams and work groups to develop spending proposals that include two major focus areas—social isolation and meal expansion, among other things. Two large challenges for the county are: (1) ARPA funds are for a limited time so the County would have to hire contractors and will not be able to hire new staff; and (2) procurement backlogs.
- Additional funds will come from the Family First Corona Virus Response Act. The State will receive \$50 million and MC will receive \$120,000 to reach out to unvaccinated individuals. Since 99% of older residents in MC are already vaccinated, the County will reach out to the last 1%.

A suggestion was made to use the vaccine money to purchase COVID testing kits.

Ms. Brunetto then turned to Robin Riley and Sara Swarr, Parks and Recreation, for an additional update as follows:

Robin Riley reported that the Senior Centers are open and fully engaged in activities and services. Long Branch Center in the Piney Branch Corridor that had been converted to a homeless shelter will be closing the homeless shelter, thoroughly cleaned and re-opened as a Senior Center. In the meantime, seniors are being transported to Wheaton and Margaret Schweinhaut Centers.

Sarah Swarr reported that there were lots of holiday parties, with 120 attendees from three senior centers at the Wheaton party. The SOAR program will start up in the Spring, with exciting trips planned. Usually, there is a waiting list for the trips.

Commission on Aging Business

Approval of November Minutes

The November minutes were approved.

Budget Report

Richard Jourdenais, Budget Officer, reported that the amount in the Commission account is \$4,795.11.

Chair's Report

- Public Forum: Co-chairs of the Public Forum Planning Committee are Jean Dinwiddie and Marsha Weber. They will contact all committee members after an initial organizing meeting.
- Response to Council Member Albornoz on Thrive 2050: Wayne Berman will chair a task force. The following individuals volunteered to be on this Task Force: Mona Grieser, Nanine Meiklejohn and Barbara Selter. It was noted that the County Executive is not supporting Thrive 2050 because of its lack of middle - income affordable housing.
- ARPA funds to support older County residents: County staff will be looking at the CoA budget priorities as it determines how to allocate the funds. The CoA has urged that ACCESS Hears be funded. Ms. Selter noted that the CoA may need to respond quickly to questions from the County even though it is holiday vacation time for many.
- The Executive Committee approved a letter to the Secretary of Health urging that the MoU with the County regarding nursing facility surveyors be signed. A motion for the full Commission to approve the letter was approved.

Update on Assisted Living Regulations

Janice Zalen, reported that following the Commission meeting, she will participate in the Office of Health Care Quality meeting on proposed assisted living regulations. She will suggest the following, as approved by the Public Policy Committee:

- The Montgomery County CoA strongly recommends that all assisted living facilities with Level 2 or Level 3 residents must have awake overnight staff.
- Currently, there is no right of appeal for involuntary discharges. The Commission urges that there be opportunities for appeal and for mediation.
- Requirements regarding the MOLST form should be included in the assisted living section of the regulations

Other comments will be included, as discussed and approved in previous EC meetings.

Committee Reports

Health and Wellness Committee (HWC)

Marsha Weber reported that a speaker from Meals on Wheels of Central MD explained that the meals on wheels program is much more than just “wheels.” They provide grocery and pet shopping services and targeted case management to help keep individuals at home. Ms. Weber also mentioned that University of MD graduate students were doing important research. Neal Brown discussed Community Reach, which provides in-home care to 50 individuals.

Aging in Community (AIC)

Wayne Berman reported that the AIC devoted its last meeting to formulating its 2022 agenda and creating work groups. The first meeting of the new year will be on data in order to better understand MC’s needs.

Public Policy Committee

Ryan Wilson reported that the majority of the PPC's time was taken up with the legislative breakfast. He commended the presenters on their excellent presentations and commented positively on how many legislators participated.

Communications Committee (CC)

Jean Dinwiddie urged all commissioners to watch 50+. The December 50+ session had a deacon and a rabbi talking about holidays and it was a great session that all should see. The January session will be on pets, on adopting older pets and on an intergeneration "reading to a dog" program.

Beverly Rollins reported that the CC is working on preparing packages for older adults for libraries. Also, David Engel is spearheading an effort to get the MC website relating to older adults and older adult programs accurate and up-to-date. The CC also is working on getting more publicity for 50+. The Committee is thinking about a new CoA Ambassador Program. Monica Schaeffer offered to get information on an ambassador program from a nearby county.

New Business

There was no new business.

Thank you and Goodbyes to Retiring CoA Commissioners

Barbara Selter thanked Monica Schaeffer and Dick Jourdenais for all their work over the years and they were given a huge round of applause. She also thanked Janice Zalen for her work as Secretary (Janice remains on the Commission). Ms. Selter ended by stating that it has been a pleasure to be Chair and she sent holiday and new year wishes to all.

Meeting Adjourned

Action Items

(These action items are based on a review of the minutes)

- Public Policy Committee: Review dental bill that Odile mentioned;
- Jean Dinwiddie and Marsha Weber will send an email to the Public Forum Planning Committee members with a date for a meeting;
- Wayne Berman will contact the Thrive 2050 task force members;
- All Commissioners should watch 50+;
- Monica Schaeffer will give Beverly Rollins information on an ambassador program in a nearby county.

