



Montgomery County Commission on Aging

November 20, 2025, Monthly Meeting Minutes 9:30 am

Meeting Location

Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82378694890?pwd=YU5RaHJQTjNTSzYvZ2lObHNqY204Zz09>

Attendance

Members Present

Liz Barnes
ChiQuita Battle
Linda Bergofsky
Wayne Berman
Elizabeth Boyd
Dixie Butler
Virginia Cain
Betsy Carrier
Vernell DeWitty
Joyce Dubow
David Engel
Norman Goldstein
Ora Johnson
Morris Klein
Kendell Matthews
Nicole McDonald
Kathleen McGuinness
Yvette Monroe
Laurie Pross
RC (Renee) Randall
Candy Schimming
Marie Sloan
Kate Stein
April Stubbs-Smith
Lisa Sun
Eleanor Tanno
Janice Zalen

Members Not Present

Robert Crosby
Kamilah Mantle
Willie (Don) McCullough
Sibo Ncube
Katie Smith
Albert Woodward

Proof of Quorum

Many members are present.

Staff Present

Peter Illig
Dr. Patrice McGhee
Dr. Kimberly Johnson
Tremayne Jones

Guests

Ingrid Lizama (Latino Health Initiative)
Shane Rock- Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA)
Sara Swarr – Montgomery County Recreation
Stacy Sigler – Montgomery County Recreation
Marcia Pruzan, Alumni
Nestor H.
Pamela's iPhone

Guest Speakers

Bob Blancato – Executive Director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
Heather Bruskin – Montgomery County Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR)
Diana Tato – OFSR
Link Hoewing, Food Access Committee in Poolesville (WUMCO)

Handouts

October 23, 2025, Minutes
November Agenda

Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Time: 9:33 AM

Presenter: Linda Bergofsky, Co-Chair

Co-Chair Linda Bergofsky called the meeting to order and welcomed Commissioners, guests, partner organizations, HHS staff, and invited speakers. Introductions were made, and the meeting focus on **food insecurity among older adults** was highlighted.

Discussion of Food Insecurity Among Older Montgomery County Residents

Presenters:

- **Bob Blancato**, Executive Director, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
- **Heather Breskin**, Director, Montgomery County Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR)
- **Link Hoewing**, Executive Director, WUMCO Help / Fair Access in Western Montgomery County

A. National Landscape – Bob Blancato

Bob Blancato provided an overview of national food insecurity trends affecting older adults:

- **7.4 million older adults** nationwide are food insecure.
- Maryland's senior food insecurity rate is **11.4%**, slightly lower than the national average.
- Households where grandparents raise grandchildren experience significantly higher food insecurity.
- Maryland leads the U.S. in enrolling eligible older adults in **SNAP**.
- The recent **43-day federal shutdown** caused:
 - Delayed SNAP benefits,
 - Confusion for states,
 - A temporary declaration allowing emergency SNAP issuance.
- **SNAP work requirement expansions** for ages **55–64** could impact **~67,000 Maryland residents**.
- Older Americans Act nutrition funding is level with FY25 but delayed **6–8 weeks**.
- USDA reversed a proposed rule that would have required SNAP re-certification for all participants.

B. County Landscape & Programs – Heather Breskin

Director Breskin provided a comprehensive review of food access challenges and local support:

- Approximately **300,000 county residents** (35%) cannot meet the Self-Sufficiency Standard.
- **150,000 residents** fall into the “self-sufficiency gap.”
- Older adults comprise **~17% of food-insecure residents** in the region.
- Food costs, distribution needs, and demand have risen sharply.

County Strategies and Investments:

- OFSR funds and coordinates **50 food assistance organizations**.
- Supports:
 - Choice pantries
 - Mobile markets

- Home-delivered meals
- Culturally matched food programs
- Community-based food distribution
- Maintains countywide **food maps** and a **real-time distribution calendar**.
- Operates a culturally targeted **voucher program** with Manna and ethnic markets.
- **\$3.5M special appropriation** recently deployed for emergency food assistance post-shutdown.
- Expands **Food as Medicine** partnerships and SNAP outreach.
- Invests in **local farm-to-foodbank purchasing** and farmers market matching programs.

Emerging Themes:

- **80% of food providers** report assisting residents who are food insecure for the first time.
- Outreach to older adults requires **non-digital channels** and partnerships with faith institutions, libraries, and trusted community organizations.
- Increased demand for culturally appropriate food, better public signage, transportation access, and dignity-centered service delivery.

C. Upcounty/Western County Perspective – Link Hoewing, WUMCO Help

Link Hoewing highlighted significant disparities in Poolesville and Western Montgomery County:

- Large geographic area (94 square miles) with limited transportation and services.
- No direct **Meals on Wheels** coverage and limited Senior Nutrition Program capacity (10–15 meals).
- Hidden poverty among older adults and immigrant workers on farms.
- Distance to service sites (up to 30 miles) restricts access to meals and summer nutrition programs.
- WUMCO helps fill gaps through volunteer-run services, but stressed the need for county-level structural support.

D. Commissioner Discussion

Commissioners raised questions about:

- How residents can **donate** effectively to support food insecurity work.
- The need for **public signage** in stores and community hubs.
- Strategies to reach **non-digital older adults**.
- Expanding food recovery (recycling) from schools, markets, and corporate partners.
- Improving cross-jurisdiction coordination in Upcounty areas.

Presenters are committed to following up on information and collaboration.

Approval of October Minutes and Commission Leadership Opportunities

Linda Bergofsky, Co-Chair

- October **2025 Minutes** were presented and **approved unanimously**.
- Open leadership positions were announced:
 - **Co-Chair, Health & Wellness Committee**
 - **Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee**
 - **Secretary**
 - **Treasurer** (one expression of interest received)

Commissioners were encouraged to volunteer to ensure strong committee leadership.

Area Agency on Aging Report

Dr. Kimberly Johnson, HHS

Dr. Johnson provided updates from the Area Agency on Aging:

Staffing

- A new **Manager for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** begins on November 30.

SOAR Program (Supporting Older Adults with Resources)

- Consolidates Senior Care and Senior Assisted Living Subsidy programs.
- Aims to strengthen case management and align with **Longevity Ready Maryland**.
- State regulations forthcoming; implementation expected in **FY27**.

Post-Shutdown Monitoring

- Weekly call center tracking:
 - **23 calls** about food resources
 - **20 calls** about SNAP loss
 - **5 calls** related to shutdown hardships

Senior Nutrition Program

- Monitoring need for additional meals and home-delivered services

Branding/Outreach

- Aging & Disability branding campaign running through **Jan 6** with:
 - TV ads
 - Bus ads
 - Geofencing

Nursing Home Experience-of-Care Survey

- 17 of 34 facilities enrolled.
- Survey to begin early December; report expected April–May.

Department of Health and Human Services Strategic Plan will be posted this week.

Committee Reports

Communications Committee

- Working on messaging related to the Age-Friendly Needs Assessment Survey.
- 50+ in Montgomery this month is on Age-Friendly and in December will be a pet episode.

Aging in Community Committee

- Presentation from the Urban Institute on the Gorham Award project to update data and statistics on Senior Housing.

Health & Wellness Committee

- Committee seeking new Co-Chairs. Presentation on Bone Builders and senior fitness programs.

Public Policy Committee

- Monitoring legislative issues related to SNAP, food access, and senior housing. Family Caregiver bills are upcoming in the Legislative Session. The committee sent letters to Jamie Raskin (Rep. MD) and Angela Alsobrooks (Sen. MD). Discussed that all Commissioners should attend the December 11th at 9:30 am Zoom Legislative briefing with 15 legislators coming at this time.

Public Comments

Shane Rock from JCA commented on the need for support from the CoA on a grant program to become a Benefits Enrollment Center, assisting Medicare-eligible clients in completing applications for SNAP, MSPs, Medicaid, and Part D LIS. JCA believes additional resources are needed in this area to serve low-income Medicare-eligible people who may not know about programs, their eligibility, and the application process.

Stacy Sigler from Montgomery County Senior Recreation commented that they will distribute a flyer for the Age-Friendly needs assessment listening sessions.

Other Business

Discussion from Wayne on the Austin Heyman Community for a Lifetime Awards to be presented on December 12th, Brookside Gardens CoA Luncheon taking place at 11:30 am. RSVP invites will be emailed soon with the request to donate to the Senior Nutrition Program. The cost of the luncheon is \$20. The Executive Committee will meet prior to the luncheon.

Linda said she would share ideas with the Commissioners at the 2026 Public Forum. Linda requested that Commissioners submit their own Public Forum ideas to her as soon as possible.

Adjournment

Time: 12:00 PM

Meeting adjourned by Co-Chair Bergofsky.