



**Montgomery County Commission on Aging**

**February 26, 2026, Monthly Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Location**

Zoom

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

**Attendance**

**Members Present**

Liz Barnes  
Linda Bergofsky  
Wayne Berman  
Elizabeth Boyd  
Dixie Butler  
Virginia Cain  
Betsy Carrier  
Vernell DeWitty  
David Engel  
Norman Goldstein  
Ora Johnson  
Kendell Matthews  
Kamilah Mantle  
Willie (Don) McCullough  
Yvette Monroe  
Laurie Pross  
Renee Randall  
Candy Schimming  
Marie Sloan  
Kate Stein  
Lisa Sun  
Eleanor Tanno  
Albert Woodward  
Janice Zalen

**Members Not Present**

ChiQuita Battle  
Robert Cosby  
Morris Klein  
Nicole McDonald

Sibo Ncube  
April Stubbs-Smith

### **Proof of Quorum**

Majority of members present

### **HHS Staff**

Tara Clemmons-Johnson  
Peter Illig  
Dr. Patrice McGhee  
Dr. Kimberly Johnson  
Tremayne Jones  
Shawn Brennan

### **Guests**

Kim Coleman, FHNN  
Jean Dinwiddie, COA Alumna  
Joyce Dubow, COA Alumna  
Bella Fanjou, Student  
Mansi Gosalia, Montgomery County Council  
Mamika Hada, Asian American Health Initiative  
Holly Mancuso, Councilmember Balcombe's Staff  
Joni Mason, George Mason University student  
Stacy Sigler, Montgomery County Recreation  
Marcia Pruzan, COA Alumna  
John Yepown, UMD School of Nursing student  
Marsha Weber, COA Alumna

### **Guest Speakers**

Marilyn Balcombe, Vice-President, Montgomery County Council  
Nina Russell, Urban Institute  
Linna Zhu, Urban Institute

### **Handouts**

February 26, 2026, Minutes  
March Agenda

### **Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions**

**Time:** 9:30 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.

**Approval of October Minutes:** The January 2026 Minutes were presented and approved unanimously.

**A. Discussion of County Council Vice-President’s Priorities for 2026**

**Presenter: Marilyn Balcombe, Vice-President, Montgomery County Council**

Ms. Balcombe provided her perspective of the current year budget related to “Services for Seniors”:

- (1) It’s more difficult to pinpoint a single budget line item supporting older residents because services are delivered and funded across so many different agencies, but overall, the Council allocated \$89 million in FY26. In addition, the Council recently approved a \$1 million special appropriation for FY26 to clear the waiting lists for in-home respite, home care, and the senior nutrition program. This appropriation then becomes part of the base budget going forward.
- (2) She understands that tax credits for older homeowners and transportation are evergreen issues that continue to come up year after year. She would like to investigate the possibility of a pilot program providing emergency backup transportation for seniors at recreation centers.
- (3) Ms. Balcombe acknowledged the importance of providing similar services to different geographies across the county. She mentioned the Western County Community Center planned for Poolesville to begin in FY29, which could serve as a model in other communities; she also noted the new Village under development in Boyds and the challenges closing the incinerator in Dickerson.
- (4) Her committee is also undertaking a study of data centers and the rising costs of utilities for consumers and businesses. She and the Council are looking to the Economic Development Corporation to inventory business in the county regarding their workforce needs into the future so that education, access to utilities, and office space are aligned with the needs of businesses.

**B. Discussion of Urban Institute Housing Analysis Project**

**Presenters: Linna Zhu, Nina Russell, Urban Institute**

- (1) Urban Institute (UI) was awarded an internal grant to conduct a research project that will update the 2018 Housing Needs Assessment, engage community-based stakeholders, and do a field scan of national best practices, all with the goal of developing a policy roadmap.
- (2) The past few months, UI has focused on delving into a variety of data sources. The data show that while most older people are aging in place, they are not necessarily aging well. Staying out in one’s home can reflect stability and preferences or it could reflect constraints, hence the “stuck in place narrative”.
- (3) Three key pillars have emerged in describing the challenges older people face: affordability related to the escalating housing cost burden, lack of accessibility features to accommodate the rapidly changing health status, and the lack of affordable, senior-friendly housing options for those who want to relocate or downsize.
- (4) Linna and Nina lead a discussion with Commissioners on three key questions: whether their experiences align with what we see in the data, do they encounter similar problems and challenges that showed up in the data, and have they considered relocating or downsizing. Commissioners had some differing opinions and observations, for example, the choice to downsize has a social-emotional component and can occur in stages, affordability is the biggest challenge of all because it can vary so much across the population and it’s difficult to factor in

trade-offs that people make throughout their lifespan vis-à-vis transportation, recreation, multi-generational opportunities, how universal design baked into new construction can mitigate the “stuck in place” issue, and the role of health decline in driving relocation choices. Commissioners asked UI staff to not forget about older people who rent and older people of color. (5) Linda asked that the discussion continue within the Committees.

### **Area Agency on Aging Report**

Dr. Kimberly Johnson, AAA Director

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

#### **Staffing**

- The County is finalizing hiring for one of two program manager vacancies within the long-term care ombudsman program. Once the other position is filled, they will embark on a volunteer recruitment campaign.

#### **SOAR Program (Supporting Older Adults with Resources)**

- Implementation recommendations produced under contract have been shared by MDOA with the AAA's and these will be assessed at the March AA Directors meeting.

#### **Federal Level Budget**

- Federal funding is under a continuing resolution through September 2026, which means level funding for most A&D services. That said, the Administration for Community Living, which oversees Older Americans Act services, received a \$17 million increase over FY25 funding levels.

#### **State Level Budget**

- The AAA and Department wrote testimony in support of the Governor's budget for MDOA.

#### **Nursing Home Experience-of-Care Survey**

- Data collection has been completed, with an expected sample of approximately 250 residents
- As a next step, the contractor will provide an outline of the final report, including proposed tables, charts, figures, and statistics followed by a draft, final report.

#### **Nursing Home Inspections**

- The biannual OHQC report on nursing home inspections has been received and analyzed. As of July 31, 2025, 79% of Maryland nursing homes were up to date on their annual surveys; that number increased to 88% by October 31, 2025. During that same time, the number of pending complaints had decreased by 39%.
- Although the County maintains its own data on inspections and complaints, the reports from OHQC have been helpful in validating those data.

#### **Older Americans Month**

- Planning has begun for observing Older Americans Month in May.

## **Commissioner Discussion**

Questions were raised about the County's process for recruiting and training volunteers for the Ombudsman program. Dr. Johnson noted that the training will now be available virtually, which means interested volunteers do not have to travel to Baltimore. A&D is willing to work with AARP or others to help facilitate recruitment. Another question was raised about the special appropriation that was just passed; the funds will be used to help with wait lists for the Senior Nutrition Program, in-home respite and home care.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Communications Committee**

- A small group of volunteers will be preparing talking points for one-on-one discussions with County Council members; it's important for all Commissioners to participate in these discussions as they are essential to our advocacy at the County level.
- We are very close to getting an online form where organizations can request an ambassador's presentation by clicking the button on our website. The Committee will be updating the slide show for 2026.
- We are drafting a fact sheet on the Medicare Savings Program. Thanks to AI for making that effort (and Jean who volunteered to help with the prescription drug piece).
- 50+ in Montgomery County will focus on the African American Health Initiative in March and we will welcome Dr. Brandt from the Lamy Center to discuss pharmacy issues; she wrote a chapter in the Living to 100 book.

### **Health & Wellness Committee**

- Just a reminder that the meetings have moved to a new time this year on the second Wednesday of the month at 9:00 AM.
- The Committee wants to focus on direct care providers, so we will welcome Maria Lahat in March; she is the Executive Director of Home Care Partners.

### **Aging in Community Committee**

- AIC will focus on the healthy aging ecosystem this year, specifically the pillars of age-friendly communities.
- Each month will focus on one aspect of the ecosystem; we began the year looking at transportation followed by financial security in February. In March, the focus will be on housing repairs in the county, looking at Rebuilding Together, Habitat for Humanity, and the Housing Initiative Partnership.
- Betsy, who is on her way to testify in Annapolis, is leading the planning for the Annual Forum, which will be looking at the impact of social connections and longevity. While the planning committee is well along in its deliberations, anyone is welcome to attend our meetings on Mondays at 4 p.m.

### **Public Policy Committee**

- Kate thanked everyone who has engaged in advocacy at every level this year. It really does make a difference.

- The committee meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 9:30 a.m. We also meet on Fridays at 11:30 a.m. to discuss bills at play in the General Assembly.
- Our bill, which would create a study of direct stipends to caregivers, was sponsored by Delegate Wims in the House and Senator King in the Senate. The first hearing went very well.
- Linda stressed that this bill didn't just happen on its own, but rather because we identified caregiver needs as a priority when planning last year's Forum, and again when we met with legislators over the summer to share ideas on possible legislation, when we reiterated our priorities at the legislative briefing in December and then in writing or giving testimony once the session started.
- Other Commissioners remarked on their experiences reviewing bills and deciding whether to write or give testimony as well as about the help they received from other PPC Committee members.

### **Public Comments**

- Stacy Sigler from Recreation Montgomery gave some additional background on the great showing of Poolesville Seniors in the pickleball events at the national Senior Olympics. Pickleball registration for this year opened in January and they already have 762 people registered for the 4-day tournament. The bad weather forced a lot of lost program days at Rec and Senior Centers, but they are moving ahead with spring programming, including the Cardboard Boat Regatta on March 11 at the MLK pool. Fashion boot camp starts this week, with 20 people registered and ready to go to go. Rec is also getting ready for the Senior Adventure Camp this summer. Registration for that will open in May.
- Mamiko Hada gave two updates for the Asian American Health Initiative. AAHI is currently running a micro-grant competition for community-based and faith-based organizations in the county serving the AAPI community. To be eligible, organizations must have been operating since 7/1/24 and have an annual budget less than \$1 million. Also, Asian American Pacific Islanders Heritage Month will be celebrated at Seneca Valley High School on May 3; all are welcome.
- Shawn Brennan reported that the Age-Friendly Needs Assessment is still underway with focus groups planned for Poolesville and White Oak. She also concurred with the comments on the importance of conducting advocacy continuously.

The CoA will meet next on Thursday, March 26 at 9:30 a.m. The guest will be Rich Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer for Montgomery County.

### **Adjournment**

**Time:** 11:59 a.m.

Meeting adjourned by Co-Chair Bergofsky.