

**AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMISSION ON AGING**

Date: April 13, 2021

9:30am-11:30 am

Meeting Topic “Accessible and Affordable Housing for Older Adults”

In Attendance: Monica Schaeffer (co-chair, AIC), Wayne Berman (co-chair, AIC), Barbara Selter, Nanine Meiklejohn, Marsha Weber, Richard Jourdenais, Miriam Kelty, Eddie Rivas, Joyce Dubow, Karon Phillips,

Staff: Pazit Aviv, Marcia Pruzan,

Guests: Sara Fought (JCA), Barbara Brubeck (Friends House Retirement Community, Inc), Leslie Marks (DHCA)

Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs: Monica and Wayne welcomed everyone and Wayne reviewed the agenda and focus for the meeting. The focus of the meeting was on “Accessible and Affordable Housing for Older Adults – Understanding the Challenges and Defining Actions”. This was a follow-up discussion to our January meeting on Accessible and Affordable Housing.

Approval of the Minutes: The minutes of the March 9th meeting were approved and seconded.

DISCUSSION: Accessible and Affordable Housing for Older Adults

The meeting discussion was divided into two parts: Accessibility and Affordability.

ACCESSIBILITY: Nanine Meiklejohn along with Mary Sweeny led the discussion on accessibility. Mary related her investigation of the “311” and “240-777-3000” County call center helpline. When she called both numbers to ask about affordable housing in the County, she was told that “There is no affordable housing in the County.” This anecdote led into a robust discussion of ways to that the CoA can recommend to improve that accessibility of information on affordable housing. The following suggestions were offered regarding the issue of accessing information on affordable housing:

- Research information on the Portland, OR navigator app. To be led by Barbara Brubeck.
- Investigate the feasibility of a universal app that lists all availabilities, with support from Commission for Human Rights.
- Gain info on DHCA’s Market Place, by speaking with Lorraine Driscoll, led by Marsha Weber
- Recommend improvements to the training of 311 and 7-3000 staff. These recommendations will be brought to the CoA to share with the Communication Committee and Seniors Today.
- Update Affordable Independent Senior Housing Packet, to be led by Mary Sweeney.
- Coordinate with JCA Senior Help Line to disseminate information regarding affordable housing.
- Coordinate with all appropriate County and nonprofit entities to assure aggregation and dissemination of housing information.
- The CoA should consider sending a letter to the PHED Committee and County Council specifically supporting County Executive’s FY22 budget request for the HIF.

AFFORDABILITY

Nanine led the second part of the meeting discussion on housing affordability. She presented a number of ideas for the Committee to consider, that led to another robust discussion. One of the main ideas was whether the

Committee should learn more about available assistance for cost burdened renters and consider ways to respond to their needs. A number of thoughts were then presented in response, such as:

- Reinforce County Exec's requests to enhance funding for the Housing Initiative Fund which will create three more senior buildings and to fund the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund to support preservation of existing stock.
- Request from the county information on rent burden in the County (age, race, ethnicity, location)
- Find out whether the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) needs more money and whether RAP meets the needs
- Research whether there should be a different program to meet rental assistance needs

Two other ideas also were discussed.

- Advocate for safety in bathroom designs in new construction (70% showers and 20% grab bars) early in design phase. Same for renovations of older properties.
- Encourage disseminating Design for Life as a county resource (coordinate with the disabilities community)

Nanine also suggested that the Committee monitor several proposals of Councilmember Will Jawando to expand missing middle housing and to limit rent increases. There are a number of ways to do this that included:

- Identifying existing references to affordable housing in the County THRIVE 2030 Plan and relaying to the Council members.
- Follow the progress of the Councilmember's bills introduced to address missing middle housing and rent limits on properties within a mile from transit stations
- Monitor the PHED meetings on these bills if a hearing is held.
- Ask for information on rent increases in the County
- Track Thrive 2050 and Parks and Planning study on housing preservation (issued Nov 2020)

To wrap up the entire discussion, Nanine suggested that the COA send a letter to the PHED Committee and County Council specifically supporting County Executive's FY22 budget request for the HIF.

Following the discussion on Accessible and Affordable Housing, Wayne Berman led a short discussion to review the action items that came out of the March AIC meeting on Transportation and identify people who might want to lead these items. The following action items were each briefly discussed:

- Getting engaged in developing and reviewing the "Age Readiness Plan" that will be part of the THRIVE 2050 planning process. Wayne offered to lead this item.
- Sit in on Public Hearings for the THRIVE 2050 Plan. Wayne offered to follow up on this item.
- Engage the JCA and the MC DOT to help develop, review, and promote the new Transportation Training Video. Sara Fought offered to keep the AIC and CoA engaged as this video develops.
- Ideas on how to include transportation into the CoA's annual budget request. The Committee felt that this item was better left to discussion that will be taking place this summer on the CoA Budget Priorities.
- How can the CoA be more of an advocate for innovative transportation services for older adults, such as Flex and FLASH? Dick offered to continue his monitoring of these initiatives and report back to the Committee and changes evolve.
- What can the CoA do to address the need for more transportation to County Rec Centers?

- How can the CoA help to loosen the income requirements for the County's Call-N-Ride Program? No action was taken on this item at this time and will await further discussion at a later time.

UPCOMING MEETING: The next AIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 11th at 9:30 am. The main meeting topic will be Food Insecurity and be facilitated by Joyce Dubow. We will be hosting two speakers:

1. Angela Whitmal, Sr. Director of Participant Support, Manna Food Center and
2. Carol Craig, Senior Nutrition Program Manager, Area Agency on Aging

MEETING ADJOURNED: 11:40 am