

APPROVED JUNE 23, 2020

Montgomery County Community Action Board Meeting

April 28, 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

CAB Members Participating Online or Via Telephone: Meredith Bowers, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Candace Groudine, Laura E. Irwin, Lisette Engel, Ron Jennings, Jeffery Johnson, Tiffany Jones, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Agnes Leshner, Pamela Lockett, Myriam Paul, Mike Subin, Samuel Sharper, Jr., and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

CAB Member Absent: Isaac Osei Asare

Staff: Sharon Strauss, Charlene Muhammad, and Leah Goldfine

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm.

Consent Agenda

Lisette moved to approve the consent agenda. Agnes seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included: minutes from the March 24, 2020 CAB Meeting, meeting evaluations summary from the March 24, 2020 CAB meeting, Executive Director's report, Head Start report, Contracts report, Food Council report, Food Council meeting highlights, Staff Liaison's report, CAB and HSPPC testimony re: the FY21 Operating Budget, NCAP sign-on letter opposing proposed third poverty measure, CAB testimony in support of County Council Bill 18 – 20, P Card statements, CSBG fiscal update, Head Start fiscal update, and the CAI Program Evaluation Summary Report.

Training

Leah provided a brief training on best practices for boards when meeting virtually. The training included information about ensuring all board members have a chance to participate and how to improve discussions when using virtual platforms.

Nominating Committee

Lisette presented the EC ballot for FY21 on behalf of the Nominating Committee. Board members were asked to submit their ballots electronically using a Survey Monkey ballot that would be shared following the meeting. The proposed ballot included:

Chair: Tiffany Jones

Vice Chair: Lisette Engel

Secretary: Myriam Paul

At-large CAB members: Meredith Bowers, Jeffery Johnson, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

Nonprofit Montgomery Update

Meredith shared some updates from the nonprofit community. Nonprofit Montgomery has been hosting weekly webinars during the COVID-19 emergency focused on issues of importance for nonprofits during the pandemic. A recent survey of Nonprofit Montgomery's members indicated that by the beginning of April, respondents were reporting losses – between \$4,000 and \$1 million in losses in just the time since the emergency started. There were concerns about what nonprofit budgets would look like the following year, especially if there are cuts to County contracts.

A question was raised about CARES Act funding and whether or not nonprofits were applying. Meredith reported that nonprofits were applying but the application process for the Paycheck Protection Program has been difficult for some organizations. Another question was raised about how many nonprofits rely on state and federal funds. While 400 County nonprofits receive County funds, it was unknown exactly how many receive federal and state funding. Another question concerned how nonprofits are reporting losses since March may be a poor indicator. It was unknown what timeframe the County would use to review nonprofit losses.

Community Action Month Thank You Message

Since the in-person Community Action Month Awards and Celebration scheduled for May 19 was cancelled, the agency and Board are celebrating VITA and TESS volunteers virtually. CAB members recorded a thank you message for the volunteers, expressing the Board's gratitude for all that the VITA and TESS volunteers do. This message, along with messages from VITA and TESS staff, will be posted on the agency's website and included in a special Community Action Month e-newsletter.

Head Start Update

Charlene presented the Head Start Quality Improvement and COLA grant application. Board members received a detailed narrative explaining how the QI funds will be used for trauma-informed care, including a Positive Behavior Implementation Program. Agnes moved to support the grant application and Tiffany seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The County will apply for funding available for HS in the CARES Act by the May 14 deadline. Funding will be used to support an additional 140 children in the summer program.

A question was raised about the funds that Head Start will not be able to use this year due to the closure of MCPS. Charlene explained that staff are still paid the same during the emergency but there may be unused funds for supplies and activities. Head Start is anticipating a no-cost extension.

Lisa shared an update on Head Start/PreK registration for the 2020-2021 school year. The process is now virtual, allowing parents to complete a questionnaire online. Required documents may be submitted online to a secure dropbox. Staff members followed up with those who had scheduled appointments in March and April to inform them of the online process and to provide assistance. Since the schools closed, 498 parents had contacted the HS office. Lisa noted that there is a new MCPS helpline (240-740-5999) for parents who lack internet access or are experiencing technical challenges. Parents can also call the HS/PreK office directly to receive additional assistance over the phone.

Lisa reported that families have received Chromebooks and educational packets in the mail. Most families are continuing services and working with FSWs. A question was raised about families who are not participating in the remote learning. FSWs and teachers are calling these families and also calling their emergency contacts if the families cannot be reached. Lisa reported that the contingency plan for the HS summer program is to continue with distance learning.

Executive Director's Updates

Sharon presented a grant application for funding to support the VITA program. The \$19,000 in funding would support contractors to staff Germantown and East County VITA sites during the tax season. Zelda moved to approve the grant application. Danette seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Sharon provided an update on the COVID-19 emergency. At the time, there were 4,000 cases in the County and 201 people had died. Three County zip codes were the most impacted. These are disproportionately communities of color and lower income.

The CARES Act includes additional funding for CSBG. The agency will submit an application for this funding, including a Limited Community Needs Assessment highlighting the increased needs in the County since the emergency started. A grant proposal will be presented to the EC for approval since the application is due before the full CAB meets again. The proposal will likely include funding for additional staff at TESS to help address ongoing community needs. The CARES Act funding may be used to serve people up to 200% of the FPL.

Sharon shared some additional updates from the agency. She has been in touch with United Way to discuss its plans to initiate a financial empowerment center in Montgomery County, working with a designated nonprofit and in partnership with other groups, including CAA's VITA. Regarding VITA, the program was running at capacity before appointments had to be cancelled when our office closed. Staff followed up with customers who had been seen to make sure they could claim their refunds, and assisted clients to understand the CARES Act Stimulus (Economic Impact Payment). The program has been approved to serve as a "virtual VITA" site, which will allow for contactless appointments. There are numerous additional resources included on the CASHBACK website now for those who are struggling financially during the COVID-19 emergency.

The TESS Community Action Center continues to serve community members remotely. They are providing assistance with SNAP applications, food pantry referrals, Unemployment Insurance applications, healthcare needs, energy assistance, and other supports.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.