

APPROVED JUNE 22, 2021

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Virtual Meeting
April 27, 2021, 6 pm

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Meredith Bowers, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Lisette Engel, Tiffany Jones, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Agnes Leshner, Pamela Lockett, Myriam Paul, Timothy Robinson, Michael Subin, and Zeldia Wafer-Alonge

CAB Members Absent: Candace Groudine, Ron Jennings, and Jeffery Johnson

CAA Staff: Sharon Strauss and Leah Goldfine

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Consent Agenda

Mike moved to approve the consent agenda. Agnes seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included: the minutes from the March 2021 CAB meeting; March 2021 meeting evaluations summary; Executive Director's Report; CAA budget update; TESS report; VITA report; Head Start report; Contracts report; CAB testimony for the FY22 County Council Budget Hearing; Office of Consumer Protection March 2021 statistics; and Consumer Protection website analytics for March 2021.

CAB Updates

Board members received an update on recent WFIS/EITC advocacy. Board leadership joined staff and partners for meetings with Council Vice President Alborno and Councilmember Rice. The meetings focused on expanding the WFIS so that it will continue to match the state EITC, for which ITIN filers are now eligible. Staff also submitted feedback to DHHS Director Dr. Raymond Crowel regarding the proposed legislation that would increase funding for the WFIS. The information submitted strongly supported the legislation and encouraged the department to support the legislation as well. Dr. Crowel approved the feedback and submitted it to Council staff.

Board members were presented with the FY22 Executive Committee Slate. There were no nominations from the floor. Board members were asked to submit their ballots electronically through Survey Monkey and the new EC would be installed at the June CAB meeting.

Tiffany reported that Board leadership met with staff from the Capital Area Food Bank regarding their idea to establish a Utilization Commission in the County. There were questions about how this Commission would differ from other groups like the Food Council and Food Task Force. There is also a question of funding for this initiative. The CAB is not taking a position on the proposal at this time.

Board members received an update on the CAI and discussed the idea of retuning to in-person workshops next year. This will depend on where the County is in terms of COVID and what restrictions are in place. A hybrid model where some participants are virtual and others are in-person was discussed, but this will need to be explored further in terms of logistics. Pam suggested an idea to have an in-person, drive-by event for this year's CAI graduates. Mike, Tiffany, Tim, and Agnes all volunteered to help with the planning.

Executive Director's Report

Sharon reported that TESS staff worked with victims of a recent apartment fire and she shared a story of one family that was helped tremendously by TESS. Sharon reported that the new TESS location has been selected. It is across the street from their current location. The new location will not accommodate Judy Center programs but will otherwise work well for TESS. The move will not take place for several months.

Sharon discussed VITA and EITC outreach needs following recent expansions of EITC and WFIS, as well as the complexity of delivering services due to Covid-19. Board members discussed the possibility of reallocating CSBG CARES funds currently committed to SEPH for rental assistance to VITA, given that since the CSBG CARES plan was developed, SEPH has received additional County and federal funding for rental assistance. Another option might be to use the County ARPA funding for VITA. It was noted that Board recommendations regarding changes in federal funding would require approval by the County and DHCD. Tiffany recommended having a discussion at the next EC meeting regarding how the CAB can best advocate for additional funding. Meredith and Lisette volunteered to explore advocacy options for the CAB to increase VITA and EITC funds. Sharon recommended that Ron be approached due to his role with United Way.

Head Start

Lisa reported that Head Start is 93% enrolled and PreK is 81% enrolled for the next school year. There will be both in-person and virtual summer programming July 6 – August 6. There has been a lot of great outreach with Head Start partners to promote HS/PreK registration, but the staff are still exploring how MCPS can safely offer parents in-person registration.

Tiffany provided an update on the BASICS program, including the upcoming Ambassadors training, in which a few CAI participants will participate.

Lisette reported that the BASICS program is requesting additional funds from Head Start to support the pilot while the program transfers from Montgomery Moving Forward to another agency. CAB members received a proposed budget for their review. Zeldia moved to provide Head Start funds to the BASICS to support the transfer of the program to a new agency. Erika seconded the motion. Tiffany recused herself due to her employment with the BASICS. Meredith recused herself due to her previous employment with MMF and her new job at the Collaboration Council, which will likely be the new agency overseeing the BASICS. All other board members voted in favor of the motion.

Contracts/Food Council

Board members received a written report only on the CAA contracts. Leah provided an update on the Food Council on Aizat's behalf. The agency recently coordinated with the Food Council and the Department of General Services to distribute 24 pallets of hand sanitizer to County residents through the food hubs. This initiative was organized by the National Community Partnership for all Community Action Agencies with the capacity to distribute the donated hand sanitizer. The department will assist in tracking the distribution of the hand sanitizer. It was also reported that Aizat linked CAB member Candace Groudine with the Interfaith Works Hub so that members of her synagogue could support the County's food security efforts.

Thank You message for TESS and VITA volunteers

In celebration of Community Action Month and in lieu of an in-person celebration, CAB members recorded a thank you video for TESS and VITA volunteers. Each board member recorded an individual message and the full board and staff recited the Promise of Community Action at the conclusion of the video. The video would be shared with volunteers and posted on the CAA website.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm.