

APPROVED MARCH 22, 2022

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Virtual Meeting
February 22, 2022

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Elaine Carballo, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Lisette Orellana Engel, Denise Fredericks, Candace Groudine, Jeffery Johnson, Tiffany Jones, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Pamela Lockett, Eneshal Miller, Myriam Paul, Timothy Robinson, Claudia Simmons, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Jones

CAA Staff: Sharon Strauss, Aizat Oladapo, and Leah Goldfine

Guests: Francisca Moraga Lopez and Laura Newman

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm.

Consent Agenda

Staff added the following to the agenda: an update from the Bylaws Committee, which would be shared during the CAB updates section. Claudia moved to approve the consent agenda. Myriam seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included minutes from the January 25, 2022 CAB Meeting; meeting evaluations summary from the January 25, 2022 CAB meeting; Executive Director's Report; Head Start Report; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison's Report; CAI workshop evaluation results summary; Consumer Protection reports; Presentations: CSBG Updates, WIOA, Homeowner Assistance Fund, Digital Equity and Inclusion Programs; and CAB Testimony: HB282/SB316 - Sales and Use Tax - Diapers – Exemption, HB8/SB275 - Time to Care Act of 2022, HB252/SB369 - Income Tax - Return Preparation Assistance Program for Low-Income Families, HB571/SB279 - Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund, HB456 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement, HB422/SB404 - Working Marylanders Tax Relief, HB588 - Local Health Departments and Community Action Agencies - Feminine Hygiene Products, HB919 - Income Tax – Child Tax Credit – Alterations and Sunset Extension.

CAB Updates

Aizat shared a presentation about the CSBG Annual Report, including the Theory of Change, data analysis, ROMA Next Gen, and our Community Action Plan. Aizat described the four modules that are part of the Annual Report: State Administration; CSBG Eligible Entity Expenditures, Capacity, and Resources; Community Level; and Individual and Family Level. Our agency primarily focuses on Modules 3 and 4, with some focus on Module 2 regarding expenditures. The agency submits its report to the state Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the state submits the report to the national office.

Staff shared an update on County Council Bill 42 – 21, which will establish an independent entity to oversee the County’s early care and education system. The bill recently passed and included an amendment recommended by the CAB that would require the entity’s board to include low-income residents.

Jeffery shared an update from the Bylaws Committee, which met prior to the full CAB meeting. The Committee discussed updating the CAB bylaws to include language about virtual meetings, the County’s conflict of interest policy, and about the CAB’s practice for allowing some flexibility for those who exceed the number of allowable absences. As well, the Committee recommended deleting the section about petitions for membership and the section stating that low-income representatives do not need to be low-income themselves. The timeline for the Nominations Committee and election of new EC members would also be updated. The board discussed the section about its attendance policy and voiced support for allowing for flexibility when there are extenuating circumstances such as illness or maternity leave. The Bylaws Committee will meet again in March to review the proposed edits and will share the updated draft bylaws with the EC for their review.

Executive Director’s Report

Board members received a detailed written report with updates about the agency and its services. Sharon noted that the agency is adding four County-funded positions. These positions include a Program Manager to oversee the navigation program and three Community Services Aides to support the navigation program. Sharon reported that the agency has more funds than expected for its navigation efforts due to underspending this fiscal year. The agency will request a carryover to spend these funds after the deadline. Sharon met with Ilana Branda at DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness to discuss options for the funds allocated for rent relief. One option is to use the funds for a program that assists people who experienced homelessness but do not need case management. Sharon also noted that we are expecting an increase in our CSBG for the next grant year.

Sharon reported that the agency is preparing for a gradual return to an in-person and hybrid model. VITA will offer both in-person and virtual tax appointments. The agency has been engaged in EITC/CTC outreach. The outreach message was changed to “Get All Your Tax Credits” this year to focus more attention on the expanded federal, state, and local credits. Staff are planning to work with a communications firm called the Hatcher Group to increase EITC outreach this year.

Two CAI graduates were featured in a Child Tax Credit outreach video created by the National Community Action Partnership. The video was shared during the meeting.

Head Start

CAB members received a detailed written report with updates on the Head Start program. Lisa shared that registration for the current school year is still underway and Head Start/Pre-K registration for school year 2022 – 2023 will begin on March 1. This will include registration at multiple sites and Saturday dates as well. There is a new online parent portal that parents are encouraged to use. For those who do not have access to a computer or do not feel comfortable registering online, they can go to one of the in-person sites. A question was asked about whether or not the application could be completed on the phone or tablet, which it can.

A question was asked about obtaining the number of children who are eligible for Head Start but not served by the program (the “overflow” number). Lisa explained it is difficult to know the exact number of children who need Head Start/Pre-K service each year. At the same time, she explained that any child who is eligible for Head Start will receive a spot. The spot may be in a Pre-K class though. In other words, there is no limit on the number of children the program could serve because any child who is income eligible will have a spot found for them.

The board members discussed outreach efforts since not all eligible families know about Head Start/Pre-K. It was noted that child care providers have an important role to play here. It was also noted that the fact that some Pre-K classes are still part-day is a barrier for families. It is not worthwhile for them to enroll their child in a program that is only a few hours long. The more full-day classes we have, the fewer the vacancies we will have. As well, numbers for this year are lower than usual due to the ongoing concerns about COVID.

Contracts

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency’s contract partners. Aizat reported that she and Melissa were continuing to complete their monitoring visits. The meeting with Manna Food Center revealed that their numbers have gone down this year due, which is likely due to the increased availability of other food resources. Aizat reported that the agency has been asked to monitor three new contracts that would support new hubs hosted by CHEER, IMPACT Silver Spring, and Catholic Charities.

Women Who Cares Ministries is still waiting on a response regarding their request for additional funding. Aizat and Melissa continue to work on inflationary adjustments for the contracts. Aizat noted that the MCAP Human Services Conference is May 11 – 13 in Ocean City. She is again serving on the planning committee this year.

The board discussed how the increased cost of food may be impacting the partners, along with other increased prices due to inflation.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 pm.