

APPROVED FEBRUARY 22, 2022

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Virtual Meeting
January 25, 2022

MINUTES

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

CAB Members Absent: Lisette Orellana Engel

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

Guests: Agnes Leshner, former CAB member and Luciana Smith, Aetna

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

CAB welcomed four new board members who are all serving in the private sector of the board:

- Elaine Carballo – nominated by EveryMind
- Denise Fredericks – nominated by Mercy Health Clinic
- Eneshal Miller – nominated by Everyday Canvassing
- Claudia Simmons – nominated by Hughes United Methodist Church

All CAB members introduced themselves.

Consent Agenda

Will moved to approve the consent agenda. Jeffery seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included minutes from the November 30, 2021 CAB Meeting; meeting evaluations summary from the November 30, 2021 CAB meeting; Executive Director’s Report; Head Start Report; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison’s Report; CAI workshop evaluation results summary; Ethics statement for Boards, Committees, and Commissions; County personnel regulations – Ethics; CAB Bylaws; BCCs and political activities; Political activities “Dos and Don’ts” for County employees; CSBG FY21 Organizational Standards Report and Technical Assistance Plan; Office of Consumer Protection reports; BCC state legislative process presentation; Crime and Poverty study; and the TESS December thumbnail sketch.

CAB Updates

Board members received the bylaws for their review prior to the meeting. Staff provided a brief overview of the bylaws and explained that according to the CSBG Organizational Standards, the bylaws must be shared with board members at least once every two years. Staff recommended a small edit to the bylaws that would delete a section which states that board members serving in the low-income sector of the board do not need to be low-income themselves but as long as they can represent that community. This is inconsistent with the board's practice, which requires all members of the low-income sector to be low-income themselves. Jeffery noted that there may be other aspects of the bylaws that should be changed in light of the COVID pandemic and other special circumstances. The board decided to form a committee that would review the bylaws carefully and determine if other changes should be recommended. Pam, Jeffery, Denise, and Tiffany volunteered to serve on the committee. Tim recommended tabling the bylaws discussion until after the committee has had a chance to meet.

The board discussed advocating for better reimbursement for members of Boards, Committees, and Commissions. The current reimbursement rate is set by the County Executive's Office and may need to be increased to help more members of the community participate in BCCs, especially low-income community members. Eneshal noted that in addition to transportation and dependent care reimbursement, another important cost to consider is the high cost of internet access since many meetings are held online now.

Board members received the County ethics statement for members of BCCs, the personnel regulation regarding ethics, and two presentations about BCC members and their participation in political activities. Staff provided a brief training on these topics. It was noted that there used to be a training about ethics hosted by the County that was required for all members of BCCs. This training has not been offered in several years though.

Staff reminded board members about the weather cancellation policy for BCCs. BCCs follow Montgomery County Public Schools. For in-person meetings, when MCPS is closed then BCC meetings are cancelled. For virtual meetings though, this rule does not apply and BCCs can still choose to meet. Board members will be notified ASAP if a meeting needs to be cancelled for any reason.

Executive Director's Report

Board members received a written Executive Director's report. Sharon reported that the agency has returned to a more virtual model due the increase in COVID cases. TESS is primarily working remotely with limited in-person hours on Wednesdays. TESS staff have supported victims of the recent Flower Branch apartments fire. The move to the new TESS facility may take place in March.

VITA will offer virtual appointments at the beginning of the tax season. A drop-off option will soon be available as well. Staff are working with the County Executive's office to explore opportunities to increase EITC/WFIS outreach since this year presents a special opportunity. ITIN filers are now eligible for the MD EITC and County WFIS. Additionally, the EITC and Child Tax Credit have been expanded and can provide added support to households. This year's outreach campaign has a new slogan – Get All Your Tax Credits. This will help draw attention to the increased tax credits available to County households. Staff are exploring outreach opportunities for EITC Awareness Day on January 28.

Sharon reported that there are four Navigators working with the CAA team and a fifth still needs to be hired. TESS contactor, Monica Rivera-Goldberg is now the Navigation Project Coordinator. She is developing training for the team focused on all service areas within DHHS.

Sharon is working with Pam and staff from the Collaboration Council to help develop the new Guaranteed Basic Income pilot program.

Head Start

Charlene provided a review of the 2021 Head Start Annual Report. The report provides an overview of how the program is doing with regard to various measures, including school readiness, family engagement, enrollment, and health. The report also provides an overview of the Head Start budget. Several questions were asked regarding children receiving medical services, parent involvement, and other specifics of the program that were highlighted in the report. Charlene recommended providing a breakdown of the Head Start budget and its projects at the next CAB meeting. It was also noted that the Head Start Budget Committee, which includes several CAB members, has been meeting regularly for the last several months to figure out how to increase the number children who can be served by Head Start.

Lisa spoke about the impact of the recent COVID surge on Head Start/PreK classes. She explained that there are essentially four options. If a child is quarantined, a virtual classroom is set up. If an entire school has to go virtual due to large numbers of COVID cases, then everyone learns virtually for two weeks at a time. There are also schools where most students are fine but one specific class needs to go virtual. Lastly, there are situations where parents are concerned about sending a child to school due to their family's specific health situation. These children receive a packet and other materials. Lisa noted that not every student has a Chromebook. **Note: Charlene followed up on this issue with Head Start staff. CAB members were notified the following day that all Head Start and PreK students do have access to Chromebooks, especially children who need to attend virtual learning due to COVID.*

Board members asked about the lower levels of parent engagement reflected in the report. This is partly due to all parent meetings and parent classes being held virtually. ESL classes were cancelled this year but Active Parenting classes continued and went well. It was noted that there were sometimes conflicts between a child's schedule and a parent meeting. If only one device was available in the household, this could result in the parents not being able to participate in their scheduled meeting.

Mike moved to approve the 2021 Head Start report. Jeffery seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Contracts

Board members received a written report with highlights on the agency's contracts. Aizat noted that monitoring visits are being scheduled and are taking place. Organizations are reporting the challenges they faced due to the pandemic and how they have addressed them. These include staffing and volunteer shortages as well as the cost of postage. Monitoring staff reviewed and updated the FY23

Community Grants recommendations and FY23 DHHS Non-Competitive Awards. Aizat noted that she is working on the additional funds of \$95,000 granted to Manna Food Center's Farm to Food Bank Contract.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.