

APPROVED APRIL 27, 2021

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Virtual Meeting
March 23, 2021, 6 pm

MINUTES

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

CAB Members Absent: Ron Jennings, Jeffery Johnson, and Danette Lawrence

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

Guest: Doug Weisburger, Department of Environmental Protection

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

Consent Agenda

Agnes moved to approve the consent agenda. Zelda seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included: the minutes from the February 23, 2021 CAB Meeting; Executive Director's Report; Head Start Report; Contracts Report; TESS Reports and Draft Facility Plan; Financial Reports, including credit card report for Head Start; MCCA Organization Standards, Head Start FY22 Budget at a Glance; CAI Status Report; Navigator Outreach Practice; Working Families Income Supplement factsheet; MCAP Advocacy Update; and CAB DRAFT Budget Priorities.

CAB Updates

MMF would like to continue the Basics program and expand to other zip codes. There is a community-wide initiative to educate residents about the Basics curriculum. MMF is looking for a "permanent home" for the program now. Charlene noted that there will be carryover funding for Head Start this year and she has notified the Head Start Office.

The second testimony practice session for the CAI program was held on March 20 with about 20 participants (including staff and CAB members). The graduation ceremony will be held on May 25 on Zoom.

Sharon reported that the MCAP Legislative Day went well and included participation by staff members, CAB members, and three legislators. Sharon also provided an update on state legislation being tracked by MCAP.

The Executive Committee and staff worked with VITA partners to create an EITC/Working Families Income Supplement factsheet. The state EITC was increased to a larger amount this year – 45% match of the federal EITC. The state EITC was also expanded to tax filers without dependents and to ITIN filers. The County Executive’s budget increased the amount allocated for the WFIS and he has stated that it will continue to be a 100% match of the state EITC. The CAB continues to work with Councilmembers and partners to ensure that enough money is included in the budget for a full match.

Candace shared information about the Commission of Human Rights Fair Housing Summit, which will include four panel discussions throughout the course of the full-day virtual event.

Board members reviewed and discussed the draft budget priorities for FY22. Most of the priorities expand upon the priorities highlighted in the CAB’s testimony from the County Council HHS Committee hearing in November. The budget testimony will also include a big emphasis on the WFIS and ensuring full funding. Meredith recommended that each priority included in the testimony address the digital divide and racial equity. Once the draft testimony was finalized, staff would share the full document on Google drive so that all board members could review and submit feedback.

Head Start

Charlene introduced the Head Start Grant Application for year 2 of the five-year grant cycle. The grant application includes information about how the program has achieved previous goals and plans for this upcoming year. The discussion was tabled so that board members would have a chance to review the entire grant application, in addition to the budget. A discussion was scheduled for April 13 at 5:30 pm prior to the EC meeting. CAB members were invited to attend to ask questions about the grant application and provide feedback. Following that discussion, the EC would vote on behalf of the full board to approve the grant application at their meeting that night.

Executive Director’s Report

Sharon reported that DHCD advised that the agency has received a reduction in its CSBG budget in the amount of \$1,649 for FY21, based on federal allocation changes to Maryland. She proposed reducing funding for supplies and miscellaneous expenses, noting that expenditures for food and materials has been reduced due to the pandemic. Lisette moved to approve the budget reduction as proposed and Mike seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Sharon noted that the tax filing deadline was extended. Because of this, VITA is considering adjusting its appointments schedule. The program may be able to add 40 additional appointments per week. These appointments may target families in crisis who are referred to VITA by other DHHS programs.

Sharon reported on the agency’s CARES Act funding, part of which is being used to hire navigators. Additionally, she is hopeful that the county’s general funds will provide new permanent positions to complement the work, with positions remaining beyond the CARES cycle, and the increasing needs related to the pandemic.

Climate Stories Project

Doug Weisburger from the Department of Environmental Protection shared a presentation about a new initiative that is part of the County's Climate Action Plan. The Plan includes an equity component that focuses on the disproportionate impact of climate change on lower-income minority communities. The DEP wants to elevate the concerns of lower income people by focusing on personal stories. One idea is to establish a Climate Justice Academy where residents would learn more about these issues, receive advocacy training, and become "climate ambassadors" who engage their neighbors in developing solutions to climate change. Participants would share their personal stories about how climate change impacts their daily lives.

Following the presentation, board members shared their feedback on these ideas and how lower income residents can become more engaged. Board members were invited to participate in a virtual training session for the Climate Stories Ambassadors Program, which would be held later in the week.

Contracts

Board members received a written report with updates on all of the CAA's contract partners. Aizat reported that all partners received funding in the proposed FY22 budget.

CAB Updates Continued

The Board formed a Nominating Committee to develop the EC slate for FY22. Mike, Lisette, Myriam, Erika, and Tiffany volunteered to join the Committee.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.