

**APPROVED JANUARY 26, 2021**

**Montgomery County Community Action Board Meeting**

November 24, 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

**MINUTES**

**CAB Members Participating Online or Via Telephone:** Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Candace Groudine, Lisette Engel, Ron Jennings, Jeffery Johnson, Tiffany Jones, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Agnes Leshner, Pamela Luckett, Samuel Sharper, Jr., Mike Subin, Erika Conner,

**CAB Members Absent:** Laura E. Irwin, Meredith Bowers, Myriam Paul and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

**CAA Staff:** Sharon Strauss, Charlene Muhammad, and Aizat Oladapo

**Guest:** Tebine Otubu

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

**Consent Agenda**

Lisette moved to approve the consent agenda. Ron seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included: the minutes from the October 27 2020 CAB meeting, the meeting evaluations summary from the meeting, Executive Director's report, Head Start report, Contracts report/Food Council report, Staff Liaison's report, CAB testimony for Joint Delegation hearing, CAB testimony for HHS committee Work-session for BCCs, and the CAI workshop evaluation summary.

**CAB Updates**

Tiffany gave updates on her testimony on the CAB priorities Joint Delegation and the HHS committee hearings. The Council members were receptive especially on the issue of Universal WIFI. Council Member Gabe Alborno ask if CAB will be receptive in supporting 5G; it was explained the interest was in equal opportunity for all -universal access and he will be interested in a follow-up discussion. Board members discussed CAB Membership. Agnes has applied for an addition year and Sam will be moving out of the area but will continue representing Alpha Alpha and work with the Board until his replacements comes on board. It was suggested he continue to contribute to the CAI. He will be recognized at the volunteer awards in May 2021 and will be connected to the Community Action in Virginia where he is moving to. He was thanked by members for his contributions.

**Executive Director's Updates**

Sharon provided an update on the search for an alternative TESS site – General Services viewed 4 facilities in Long Branch and Takoma Park; 3 are being considered for ADA updates. The County's General Services must work with realtor owners the need to build in the cost to meet the needs of the department. Sharon noted that she worked with Leah to provide a "Playbook" to assure continuity of her responsibilities during parental leave. Duties are shared among Sharon, staff, Board and the CAI consultant and committee.

The CSBG formula has been reviewed supporting an allocation that holds to be more equitable over time to cover poverty as it grows over time. There will be a Public Hearing, CAA may get an increase, which is expected to be in effect in Federal FY 22 (October 1, 2021). The agency is waiting on the 2-Gen Funding from the State. Jeannie Chaffin continues working as a consultant for CAA on the whole family approach and is also being funded through DHHS and its Kresge Foundation grant to support the ecosystem and service integration work with DHHS and its partners.

Ron, Sharon and United Way met with Council Member Will Jawando on Café's Role in leading the Financial services in the City Mall in Silver Spring. Ron shared of the benefits of a site in Silver Spring and what a great opportunity it will be to the County residents. In addition to VITA/EITC outreach, Financial education, coaching and the asset building (Bank On) that CAFÉ has previously provided, the model can incorporate credit building, employment supports and housing, etc... based on resources and partnership. Ron clarified that although the funder has designated Silver Spring as the preferred site, services will be accessible to all. A site visit to the site will be organized to visit the site. United Way seeks a startup by January and has expressed interest in engaging with the TESS 2G/Whole family and Kresge projects, as well existing CAFÉ partnerships (City of Gaithersburg, Rockville, etc.) There was a discussion that the FEC can connect with the service hubs. Agnes will link Ron with the new Interfaith Works CEO-Courtney Hall to discuss priorities, as the agency will be a HUB in the Rockville area.

Sharon reported that the two VITA fellows have started and noted that recruitment of new volunteers for VITA has begun, with equipment prepared for virtual VITA. TESS has been working with the Latino Health Initiative and its partners to assist with the County's Covid response that is CARES Act funded. There may be additional relief funding to address county residents needs through Congressional action, including possibly for CSBG.

### **Head Start**

Charlene and Lisa shared enrollment - Head Start down 75 to 573, PreK 365. The Pandemic has made it challenging for some parents. Some have disengaged, due to varying issues, some want to work with their child independently, without the technology. Members had a discussion on how to assist these parents. Policy Council members have been looking at ways to support parents as well as effective ways to teach a 4-year-old virtually. Leah Bradley's intergenerational organization Empowering the Ages has been contracted to provide volunteers to reach out to those Head Start families that are not engaging. The CAB Executive Committee and MCPS has approved the reallocation of \$100k CARES funding to start BASICS Pilot program- a family engagement around child development, which will be beneficial to the parents. A portion of the Head Start CARES funding that was not used for the summer program will be used to fund this program.

Policy Council - More community building activities at the last meeting – Parents provided feedback on what is going on with them during the pandemic. They had a guest speaker (Leah Bradley of Empowering the Ages), viewed video from the MMF ECE symposium that features Zelda Wafer-Alonge and Tiffany Jones, and shared information on the BASICS Pilot with parents.

Coat Drive – Lisa shared that Head Start/Pre-K families have been referred to the County's Holiday Giving Program. Transfiguration donated gift Basket. Coats are being donated and many donors are ordering coats for the drive online. Lisa stressed how poverty affects different parts of the lives of the Head Start families: for example, having to share space; multi use of computer; custody issues; moving

from house to house; and sick family members. Everyone is doing the best they can. Fewer parents are asking for Holiday Help than from last year. The Digital divide and the lack of interpersonal connection may be causing the decline in requests. Mental health is also an aspect that affects residents from coming forward for assistance.

HOC residents are saying they don't need food, however funding for rent, insurance, car notes, utilities etc. are what is being requested. Not all residents in need are coming forward for rent assistance, and some are not eligible for the CARES funding. Barriers affecting residents from coming forward include the documentation requirements, lack of outreach and language. It was suggested that the CAB share some of these stories to assist the County legislators understanding of where the needs are. Board agreed that – this will be addressed at the next executive-committee meeting and ideas will be discussed with the full Board at the January 2021 meeting.

Sharon, Pam and Tiffany, met with the Delta Sigma Theta to investigate collaboration efforts. The Deltas described their Five-point program- Economic development, Education development., International Awareness, physical & mental health and political awareness & involvement and the strategic plan is to continue to address those in the County and have data behind it. Pam shared information about the service hubs, Sharon forwarded Covid and poverty data to help them understand impacts, and Tiffany shared information about the BASIC pilot. They were also interested in the digital divide issue. They will review this with their committee and get back to CAB.

### **Contracts Update**

Aizat thanked Board members that attended the Contract partners meeting, over 50 plus participants attended. Sharon provided CAA updates on the CARES Act, 2- gen, Navigators. We broke out into groups to find out how partners were coping during the pandemic. Some partners spoke about technology issues, residents trust issues, some resulted to the Whatsup app for virtual outreach. SNAP application backlog because of the increased numbers of applications due to the pandemic, having to be processed by Maryland Hunger Solution. Self-care session – Partners talked about compassion fatigue, zoom fatigue, Burnout etc. there were resources provided for looking after oneself.

Aizat shared that the Women Who Care Ministries and Manna Food Center have received their outstanding PO's to carry out the services funded by the CARES Act that is required to be spent by Dec 31, 2020. She is working with Procurement and CMT for KIND's Summer funding. Aizat reported that during the Food Council biweekly Covid update, there was a gratitude get together where services providers acknowledged each other for the services they provide. The Volunteer Center gave feedback of the services they offer and the resources they can help service providers with. The deputy chief of HHS' Services to End & Prevent Homelessness gave an overview of the Covid-19 Rent relief programs. The Food Council in collaboration with Maryland Hunger Solution are providing virtual trainings on SNAP outreach in English and Spanish. *MoCo Made* registration is now open virtually promoting Farms, food and beverage businesses in Montgomery County. It is also used as a fundraiser.

Mike brought up the need for mental health services and suicide prevention awareness. He referenced the county resources for vets. There is a list of resources in the current CAA E-Newsletter. The community is aware of the need, MCPS had a virtual mental health awareness week (Oct 26-31) and the Food Council had Every-Mind Inc. at one of their biweekly covid update sessions to talk to service providers.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.