

**APPROVED NOVEMBER 24, 2021**

**Montgomery County Community Action Board Meeting**

October 27, 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

**MINUTES**

**CAB Members Participating Online or Via Telephone:** Meredith Bowers, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Candace Groudine, Lisette Engel, Ron Jennings, Jeffery Johnson, Tiffany Jones, Will Kenlaw, Danette Lawrence, Agnes Leshner, Pamela Lockett, Myriam Paul, Samuel Sharper, Jr., and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

**CAB Members Absent:** Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Laura E. Irwin, and Mike Subin

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

**Guests:** Betty Lam, DHHS and Tebine Otubu, Head Start Social Work Intern

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm.

**Consent Agenda**

Lisette moved to approve the consent agenda. Sam seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes from the September 22, 2020 CAB meeting, the September meeting evaluations summary, Executive Director's report, Head Start report, Contracts report/Food Council report, Staff Liaison's report, CAI participant pre-program survey results, and P card statements.

**Training: Equity Initiative**

Betty Lam, Chief of the DHHS Office of Community Affairs, led a presentation about the County's equity initiative. She explained that the County wanted to look at disparities in our community and look "upstream" to address these issues. The belief was that local government had the power to address inequities. Since the initiative started, efforts have included staff engagement, creating a shared vision and common language, embedding equity concepts into systems, developing tools and highlighting examples of inequities. The underlying equity principles include dignity, elimination of disparities, access, distribution of resources, and community engagement and participation. The initiative looks at the decision-making process and the impact.

Betty reviewed the equity tool that has been created for government programs to utilize. The tool lists questions that programs can use during the decision-making process to help ensure equitable policies are developed and put in place. The tool also includes equity standards that are intended to operationalize the equity value and principle.

It was noted by the CAB that this tool is being utilized in the board's work, including its recent discussions regarding the Community Action Agency mission statement. A question was asked

about implicit bias training. The County does offer training on this topic, along with other equity topics. Training is incorporated into new employee orientation and is offered as stand-alone training sessions that many County employees have already taken in the last few years.

### **CAB Updates**

The Board members reviewed the proposed list of priorities for FY21. The list was developed at the annual retreat in August and then fine-tuned by the EC. Board members discussed how the digital divide and racial equity impact all other priorities highlighted in the list. It was recommended that a new underlying issues section be included at the beginning of the list noting these two important issues. Erika moved to incorporate the two new underlying issues and approve the proposed FY21 priorities for the CAB. Ron seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The board's key priorities for the year include housing and utility expenses; early childhood education; economy, employment, and workforce training; and accessibility and responsiveness of human service ecosystem.

### **Executive Director's Updates**

Sharon shared a new organizational chart that reflects the CARES Act funding recently received by the agency. This funding will allow for five new positions. The chart also included the agency's AmeriCorps Member and contractors. Members asked for a list of agency employees by position to accompany the revised organizational chart.

Sharon reported that the state's CSBG funding formula was recently changed to reflect current demographics in Maryland. Sharon is participating in the formula workgroup as Chair of the MCAP board.

Sharon reported that MCAP leadership recently met with landlord associations to discuss concerns about evictions during COVID-19. Ilana Branda from the County's DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness also participated. The discussion focused on concerns surrounding what will happen to renters when the evictions moratorium ends. It was recommended that case managers need to be engaged with landlords.

MCAP recently met with staff from the governor's office as well to discuss housing concerns. As MCAP board Chair, Sharon provided an overview of MCAP and shared concerns from Maryland CAAs. Primary concerns during the pandemic have focused on housing and protecting people's credit.

### **Head Start Updates**

Lisa reported that the Head Start/PreK programs are still under enrolled at 72% for the year. For Head Start, 560 of the 648 spots have been filled. New Hampshire Estates Elementary School and Kemp Mill Elementary School programs need the most students. To address challenges with the online registration system, MCPS staff hosted outdoor, socially distanced document drop-off days at Rocking Horse Road Center to help parents apply.

All instruction and home visits are now virtual. Virtual learning has been difficult and some parents are not able to supervise their children during instruction. This has led to families dropping out of the program.

Lisa reported that the annual Community Providers' Forum was held virtually the day before. The meeting included 22 partners that offer services to Head Start families, including healthcare providers, Early Head Start, and County and nonprofit partners. The group looked at service delivery during COVID-19. Many service providers reported that their numbers have gone down. The meeting was recorded and Lisa said she may be able to share the recording.

Charlene reported that we will be going through the Head Start monitoring process this year. The agency will be given 45 days' notice and will then be interviewed virtually.

An overview was provided about how the program is facilitating virtual classes to such young children. Sessions are recorded and breaks are included throughout the day. There are also more hands-on activities. Activities are broken up and children still get their "specials" instruction.

### **Contracts**

Aizat reported that she and Melissa are busy processing invoices. Invoices and other communications are sometimes delayed due to the large volume of emails coming into staff. Aizat reported that the annual CAA contract partners meeting will take place on Zoom on November 16 from 10 – 11:30 am and all board members are invited to participate.

Aizat reported that two of the food providers with contracts overseen by the agency received additional funding. Staff are working on getting the contracts realized. The contracts are still with Procurement and should be released within the next week.

The Food Council is working on finalizing its racial equity plan.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 pm.