

**APPROVED NOVEMBER 30, 2021**

Montgomery County Community Action Board  
Virtual Meeting  
October 26, 2021, 6 pm

**MINUTES**

**CAB Members in Attendance:** Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Lisette Engel, Will Kenlaw, Candace Groudine, Danette Lawrence, Pamela Luckett, Myriam Paul, Timothy Robinson, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

**CAB Members Absent:** Ron Jennings, Jeffery Johnson, and Agnes Leshner

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

**Guests:** Tiffany Jones and Darryl White

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

**Consent Agenda**

Mike moved to approve the consent agenda. Zelda seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes from the September 2021 CAB meeting; September 2021 meeting evaluations summary; Executive Director's Report; Head Start report; Contracts report; Staff Liaison's report; CAI Pre-Program Survey results; September fiscal budget update, P Card statements, Food Council Advisory Board recruitment flyer, and the Capital Area Food Bank's Utilization efforts report and presentation.

**CAB Updates**

Prior to the meeting, Board members received the draft CAB priorities statement, to be submitted to County Council for the annual HHS Committee Worksession with Boards, Committees, and Commissions. Mike moved to approve the priorities statement and Myriam seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The board's priorities for FY23 include funding for VITA, access to services and navigation, early childhood education, and housing and utility expenses. Lisette would testify for the CAB at the worksession on November 17.

Board members discussed County Council Bill 38-21, which would establish a grant program for employers who offer child care Flexible Spending Accounts for employees. Board members noted that this is not a direct subsidy for families, but it can still be helpful for community members and may encourage employers to establish FSA programs. Tim moved to support the bill and Will seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mike volunteered to testify for the CAB at the November 9 hearing.

Candace shared some updates from the most recent Human Rights Commission meeting. The Commissioners heard from Amanda Harris, Chief of DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness;

Frank Demarais, Deputy Director of Affordable Housing at DHCA; Captain Robin Lewis; and Matt Losak, Executive Director of the Renters Alliance. The focus of the discussion was on affordable housing and evictions prevention. The speakers discussed the various protections in place for renters, rental assistance available, the process of eviction, and the need for more outreach to those who may not be aware of supports available to them.

The Board members discussed a recent briefing about lending practices in the County that both Sharon and Candace received. The presentation focused on disparities in homeownership, discriminatory practices, and the current state of banking and lending in the County. Board members were very interested in learning more about this important topic and determining if additional research should be conducted. Staff will reach out to HRC staff to coordinate a briefing.

Board members discussed the Capital Area Food Bank's Utilization Efforts Study. CAFB staff briefed the Executive Committee about the study and the full CAB received documents explaining the study and the policy recommendations. The CAFB policy recommendations include:

- Enhancing the service consolidation Hub model and community-based organizations by investing in utilization efforts
- Administering campaign to assuage immigrant community fear of social safety net eligibility
- Create workload or full-time position designated to inter-programmatic utilization efforts

Erika moved to support the CAFB's recommendations and Tim seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Sharon reported that the agency received an increase to its CSBG budget for FY21, which we can be spent down later. The proposed TESS facility changes were approved and will be made to the new location. This adds to the budget and will delay the move by a few months. The changes were necessary for staff and program needs.

Sharon noted that three Navigators, funded through the CARES Act, started that week and a fourth Navigator would start the following week. Sharon was in discussions with Diana Tato-Niktash about the needs of the County's Hubs.

### **Contracts**

Aizat reported that she and Melissa received most of the renewals that were due. This meant that contractors could begin their work.

Aizat shared a presentation about the FY21 Partners' Outcomes. Each partner organization reports their annual outcomes in terms of the number of people served, classes offered, calls received, food distributed, etc. Aizat noted that one continuing challenge is duplication of numbers since it is difficult to know how many community members received services from multiple organizations.

Aizat reported that the Food Council's bi-weekly calls continue, with each call including guest speakers and important topics for food providers. The most recent call featured a speaker from the Department of Transportation. Even though RideOn buses remain free, it is still difficult for people to physically carry their food on public transportation. The call also included a discussion about the needs of new arrivals. The first session of *Transforming Food Systems through Advocacy: Community Leadership in Policy Change* webinar had presentations by elected officials about best practices for advocacy.

**CAB Updates Continued:**

Pam reported that Councilmember Jawando and Council Vice President Albornoz introduced a special appropriation for a basic income pilot program in the County. If approved, participants in the program would receive a monthly amount of money with no strings attached. Other jurisdictions that have piloted similar programs have had a lot of success. People reported that their lives were improved, and they were able to spend the money on necessities. The Montgomery County pilot program would target 300 households, with one-third of these households being people exiting the homeless system. Pam noted that this would be a public-private partnership, with partners including DHHS, the Meyer Foundation, Collaboration Council, and the University of Maryland School of Social Work. The project is still being developed and a workgroup is being formed. Pam would like Community Action to be involved in the planning of the program, which would start in March 2022.

Sharon reported that a meeting would be held that week to discuss updating the Maryland Self-Sufficiency Standard. The hope is that the other Community Action Agencies in the state will provide financial support for the update in 2022.

**Head Start**

Board members received a written Head Start report from Charlene. Lisa reported that the Head Start Partners' meeting was held the previous week. The meeting included many public and private partners that support Head Start families. Lisa noted that it was interesting to hear that some organizations are seeing a drop in their numbers now.

Head Start is 82% enrolled. They are still recruiting and enrolling for the current school year.

*\*As of November 23, 2021, Head Start is 97% enrolled.*

Sharon shared a few highlights from the written Head Start report. She noted that the agency is still waiting to receive the Purchase Order back from Procurement for the Empowering the Ages agreement. The organization cannot begin services until an agreement is in place.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm.