

APPROVED OCTOBER 27, 2020

Montgomery County Community Action Board Meeting

September 22, 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

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

CAB Members Absent: Laura E. Irwin

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

Guest: Mark Hodge, DHHS

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 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 June 23, 2020 CAB meeting, the meeting evaluations summary from the June meeting, Executive Director's report, Head Start report, Contracts report/Food Council report, Staff Liaison's report, CAB year at-a-glance, tentative CAB training schedule, CAB testimony regarding Council Bill 35-20 – Fair Criminal Records Screening, CAB letter re: Special Appropriation for Housing Assistance, CAB testimony re: Bill 27 – 20 – Police Use of Force, CAB report for quarterly meeting with Dr. Raymond Crowel for DHHS BCCs, P Card Statements, and Office of Consumer Protection updates for July 2020.

Presentation: COVID-19 Response in Montgomery County

Mark Hodge shared a presentation about the County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A few key highlights from the presentation:

- Seven consolidation hubs had been created. Each hub serves residents in one location with food and other necessities. Hubs are located in areas that have been the most impacted by COVID-19.
- The Department is providing emergency housing assistance through the COVID-19 Rent Relief Program. The program received 1,077 applications in the first week, 16% of which were submitted by people on informal leases.
- The Emergency Assistance Relief Payment program is sending checks to households who do not qualify for Economic Impact Payments (stimulus check) through the IRS. The program was in its third phase of distributions. It was noted that TESS was responsible for a third of the DHHS enrollments in the EARP.

- 346 residents had been referred through DHHS for COVID testing at one of the County's testing sites. Many of these residents had additional needs, including housing and food, and were referred for other services.

Both the African American Health Program and the Latino Health Initiative have received funds for targeted outreach and testing. These communities have been the hardest hit by the pandemic.

The board members asked about any updates on a vaccine. A plan is being developed for when an effective vaccine is available that would prioritize the highest risk groups. While people cannot be forced to get the vaccine, it was noted that MCPS has a very high vaccination rate (95-98%), so this is promising with regard to how many people in the County would be willing to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

CAB Updates

Board members discussed the meeting start time. It was decided that while the board is meeting virtually, the start time for full CAB meetings should be changed to 6 pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

CSBG Organizational Standards require that Community Action Boards review agency mission statement at least once every five years. Earlier in the month, the Executive Committee reviewed the agency's mission statement and proposed some changes. The updated mission statement was then shared with CAA staff who provided their feedback and recommendations. The full Board reviewed several proposed new mission statements. Together, the group came up with a new mission statement that incorporated the work of the agency and board and included equity principles. Jeffery moved to approve the new mission statement and Zelda seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The new CAA mission statement is:

The mission of the Montgomery County Community Action Agency is to advance social and economic mobility among communities and neighbors through services, partnerships, and advocacy using an equity lens.

Board members received an update on the CAI and those who participated in the interview panels were thanked for their time. A meeting would be held the following day to select the participants for this year's cohort.

Executive Director's Updates

Sharon provided an update on the agency's CSBG funding through the CARES Act. The funding will support:

- Five navigators who will work with community members to connect them with services. Navigators will be linked with the County's hubs.
- The COVID-19 Rent Relief program. Funds will be moved to DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness, which is overseeing the program.
- A part-time project coordinator.
- Contractors at TESS.

Sharon reported that in her work with the County's Service Access and Equity Workgroup, the Board's Community Needs Assessment was used to highlight critical needs in the County.

Sharon noted that she had the opportunity to work with partners at the Kresge Foundation to provide information about whole family approaches and the County's work in East County, Germantown, and Long Branch.

Contracts Update

Aizat reported that additional funding was allocated for the Farm to Food program at Manna Food Center. The program will help farmers grow more produce and provide capacity building. Women Who Care Ministries received additional funding, along with Manna, to provide weekend food bags. Kids In Need Distributors (KIND) was still waiting on its additional funding for weekend food bags. Aizat reported that MCPS was offering weekend meals where households can pick up additional food at distribution sites on Fridays.

Head Start

Lisa reported that the virtual Head Start/PreK school year was going well so far. She noted that as of the previous week, there were 700 vacancies in PreK and 100 in Head Start. There have been many challenges with online registration. To help address these challenges, in-person document drop-off opportunities were scheduled so that parents could drop off materials at Rocking Horse Road Center in a socially distanced manner.

Family Service Workers were participating in eight weeks of training for the new school year. Lisa noted that Head Start hired a new parent engagement specialist, Jose Flores, who has been an excellent addition to the team.

An Early Head Start grant application was submitted. If received, the grant would expand the program and provide technical assistance. Earlier in the month, the EC voted to support the grant application and submit a letter of support on behalf of the CAB. The Head Start Parent Policy Council also submitted a letter of support.

Zelda reported that the Policy Council held its retreat. They are trying to increase parent engagement this year with a special focus on fathers. Policy Council members will participate in orientation sessions Head Start/PreK schools to talk about the role of the PC and encourage participation by parents.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.