

APPROVED October 26, 2021

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Virtual Meeting
September 28, 2021, 6 pm

MINUTES

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

CAB Members Absent: Ron Jennings, and Jeffery Johnson

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

Guests: Verna Washington, Supervisor with MCPS Head Start/PreK, and Roberto Flores, Family Engagement Specialist with MCPS Head Start/PreK

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:01 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 June 2021 CAB meeting; June 2021 meeting evaluations summary; Executive Director's Report; Head Start report; Contracts report; comparison charts for FY 13 – FY22 contracts; Staff Liaison's report; CAB Activities in FY21; CAB Year-At-A-Glance Calendar for FY22; CAB Testimony for Council Bill 30-21; P-Card Statements FY22 CSBG Budget; and August 2021 fiscal budget report.

Presentation: FY2021 Head Start Program Self-Assessment

Charlene provided an overview of the Self-Assessment, which is an annual requirement for all Head Start programs and must be submitted to the Office of Head Start. The Self-Assessment looks at the five-year program goals and how the program is progressing towards achieving those goals. This year's assessment took a close look at how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the program and the students' academic progress.

The Head Start five-year program goals are:

1. Montgomery County Head Start families are safe, healthy, have opportunities for educational advancement and economic mobility, and have access to physical and mental health services, housing and food assistance, and other family support services.

2. Montgomery County Head Start parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's health, development, and learning.
3. Montgomery County Head Start supports families with income eligible three-year-olds transitioning from Early Head Start to assure children remain ready to learn

Charlene reported that the program achieved numerous accomplishments this past year, including the WIDA Early Years program for English language learners (a membership program for higher education faculty and instructors preparing preservice teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms), mental health and parenting support, the HS Parents Policy Council senior leadership mentoring new members, providing PPE to families, virtual dental screenings, and increased parent engagement. With regard to academics, there was also no loss in learning for math and early literacy during virtual learning. Additionally, Family Service Workers increased their professional development, individualized family engagement was provided through a new partnership with Empowering the Ages, and the BASICS curriculum was rolled out to the community.

Charlene also shared some challenges, including technological difficulties with virtual learning, enrollment, and attendance. Staff morale also went down during the pandemic. There was an increase in managerial and administrative work for staff as well. It was noted that medical and dental services had to be adjusted to comply with health safety protocols.

Verna reviewed the Child Outcome Data, which was reduced to four categories this year due to the limitations of assessment during virtual learning. Verna reported that there were no significant changes in comparing outcomes of 2018 and 2021 for four-year-olds. For three-year-olds, the outcomes were actually higher in 2021. The outcomes were about the same for African American male four-year-olds and slightly lower for African American male three-year-olds. When comparing the in-person and virtual students who participated in the hybrid model, proficiency was significantly higher for in-person students.

Roberto shared an overview of the parent surveys. The survey responses reflected a significant increase in participation by parents in Policy Council meetings. Parents indicated that they would like to learn more about advocacy, family well-being, and positive parent-child relationships. Roberto also noted that the English classes for parents were very successful this year.

Charlene reviewed the CAB survey that was conducted as part of the Self-Assessment process. The survey, which included open-ended questions, revealed certain areas for future training for the board.

A question was asked about continuing some of the new virtual aspects of the program that were introduced during the pandemic. Staff indicated that they are looking into continuing certain virtual options, especially with regard to parent engagement (i.e. virtual meetings).

The board members and staff also discussed why there is no virtual option for Head Start this year. It was explained that this was a system-wide decision to return all students to in-person learning. The program was also following guidance from the Maryland State Department of Education.

Charlene shared the recommendations that are included in the Self-Assessment:

- Continue improvements to Montgomery County Public Schools Synergy Management Information System (used to enroll students and store electronic records) to include Family Engagement Data.
- Establish additional three-year old Head Start classrooms for children aging out of the county's Early Head programs.
- Review budget to assess potential changes in spending that may support hiring additional staff.
- Develop partnerships with early childhood education providers outside of the public schools to lessen class sizes in support of social distancing.

Timothy moved to accept the Head Start Self-Assessment report and Agnes seconded the motion. Mike opposed the motion and all other board members in attendance voted in favor.

Executive Director's Report

Sharon shared the latest architectural model of the new TESS office. The new office will have no lower level but a similar amount of office space on the main level. Staff are making adjustments based on program needs. The layout of the office will be similar to the first level of the current office. A question was asked about providing enough space for social distancing. Sharon indicated that this is taken into consideration and TESS already has protective barriers and other equipment available.

Sharon noted that she participated in a meeting with several County leaders about a recent study of banking in the County. There were significant disparities in terms of who the banks served.

A meeting was scheduled with Lisa Manzer at the University of Washington to discuss updating the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS). The hope is that Maryland Community Action Partnership partners will be willing to invest in a new SSS and help cover the full cost.

Sharon reported that the agency would be conducting interviews for the five navigator positions that are being supported through CARES Act funds. Latino Health Initiative and African American Health Program colleagues have offered to serve on the interview panel. Staff are also looking at tools navigators will need for their work. Additionally, DHHS is looking at training that will be helpful for a new team housed in 311 that will provide navigation services.

Sharon reported that she received a draft report from the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB) on their Utilization Study. Sharon recommended having the CAFB staff provide an overview for the EC as well.

Sharon reported that VITA would continue to use a hybrid model during the tax season. The agency is still waiting to receive American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that were designated for additional VITA

staff. Mike moved to have the CAB ask the County Council about the ARPA funds and Zelda seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Head Start

Charlene noted that there are extra funds in the Head Start budget that have not been used this year. It was recommended that a meeting be scheduled with the board members to discuss these funds and how to utilize them.

Contracts

Aizat reported that July and August invoices and reports were being reviewed as they were received. Procurement has issued outstanding FY22 Purchase Orders for four CAA contracts. One of these contracts for Women Who Care Ministries has received its funding granted for the summer services and the inflationary adjustment associated with that contract. They have requested additional funds to provide nutritional services to 4,000 students for the rest of the FY22 school year and this is being processed. WWCM is still waiting on its Inflationary adjustment funds for contract # 1103726.

Jayne Park, Executive Director of Impact Silver Spring will be stepping down from her role at the end of the year. The agency is moving to a non-hierarchical democratic organization.

The FY21 Outcome/Outputs was shared with the committee highlighting a reduced number of clients served, especially by the smaller agencies who relied on volunteers and had to shift to appointment scheduling due to the pandemic. On the other hand, some agencies offered workshops virtually and were able to accommodate more participants than when they operated in-person. Most agencies have adopted both virtual and in person modes of service provision.

The Food Security Community Advisory Board (FSCAB) met with County Planning Department to discuss the 2023 Fairland & Briggs Chaney Master Plan. They discussed the increase in food prices and high fees/tips associated with buying groceries online. FSCB started recruiting new members on Oct 1.

The Contract Partners Annual meeting is scheduled for November 15 from 10:00 - 11:30 am.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.