

**Communications Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
March 20, 2023**

**Attendees**

**CoA**

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-Chair  
Beverly Rollins, Co-Chair  
Virginia Cain  
David Engel  
Arunima Ghosh  
Kendell Matthews  
Yvette Monroe  
Katie Smith  
Marsha Weber

**Alumni**

Austin Heyman  
Revatha Vikram

**Staff**

Pazit Aviv, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services  
Ayanna Hawkins, Montgomery County Connector  
Jennifer Long, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services  
Carol Smith, Montgomery County Connector

**Roll Call**

Committee members approved the February 2023 minutes.

Pazit Aviv informed the group that County Executive, Marc Elrich, will be meeting with the full CoA at its meeting on Thursday, March 23.

**Meeting with Connectors**

Jean introduced the two newly-hired Aging and Disability Services' staff members known as Connectors – Ayanna Hawkins and Carol Smith. When asked what the role is for the Connectors, Carol explained that they are visiting different County communities and listening to older adults. Ayanna stated that they are doing outreach to different County locations such as senior centers. They reach out to several of the places by email and are also asked to participate in special events at the different places. Carol said that they reach out to various places, almost

like cold-calling. They generally do not do presentations; they generally offer information about County resources at an event table. Jennifer Long commented that the Connectors were not hired to do presentations, their job is to visit places where older adults gather. She said that as the Connectors do their cold calls, hopefully it will have a domino effect as individuals start learning about them.

Marsha Weber asked what the response has been from the crowd when the Connectors make presentations versus when they simply sit at the resource tables. Carol responded that when they make presentations they receive lots of questions; when they sit at resource tables individuals come to the table and have conversations with them.

Virginia asked about the nature of their work; what type of information are they providing? How do they find out what information to give? Ayanna responded that they provide general resource information and do not answer specific, personal questions. Carol noted that she does provide specific information about various Montgomery County programs when she has a chance, such as providing individuals with information regarding how to apply for the programs. Virginia asked whether there is a way for the Connectors to report to the County on information that is requested that the Connectors cannot answer. Carol responded that she gets a lot of questions regarding vision and dental assistance. She also gets a lot of questions regarding the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary program.

Marsha asked whether the Connectors have enough places to visit; she knows that any organization that has an activities coordinator is looking for someone to give a presentation. Carol said that they have been to many retirement communities already but there are many more places to visit. Marsha suggested they contact Stephanie Moore, Resident Services Supervisor at the Housing Opportunities Commission, to get a list of places the Connectors could contact.

Rev Vikram commented that individuals at the senior center she frequents are asking for older adult information. The information the Connectors provide is very valuable. Carol noted that she plans to return to Rev's center in June.

Austin Heyman stated that he is curious about the presentations; they sound like they are more for simply providing information. He asked, "Do the Connectors also offer listening sessions? Focus groups? These types of sessions would be valuable, especially for planning the upcoming senior summit." Jennifer responded that the Connectors were not hired to conduct listening sessions; they were hired to get the word out about services in Montgomery County. They do, however, bring feedback from the different communities when they visit them. Carol agreed that they do bring information back to their supervisors within Aging and Disability Services after a visit.

Beverly Rollins asked about the individuals who do not visit senior centers or do not live in a retirement community. "How do you reach them?" Carol responded that she visits libraries to provide information. Ayanna responded that she goes to events such as bingo nights and to places such as churches and dialysis centers.

Jean asked how many resource tables the Connectors provide and how many presentations. Ayanna said that she does not usually do a large presentation. Jean then asked how the CoA could best work with the Connectors. Carol and Ayanna responded that they would like to think about that.

Marsha asked whether they have contacted the places that provide meals and are they working with them. Carol responded that they are doing some of that now. She said that she has had a lot of success at the recreation centers and libraries where they often set her up near the front door. Marsha asked who they contact at the libraries to set up their tables. Carol responded that she usually reaches out directly to the individual library.

Jean stated that she would like to try to work together with the Connectors to reach out to the different places. Carol responded that if one of them is available they could try to tag team. Jean commented that the CoA would like to have a partnership with the Connectors.

Carol noted the Connectors are getting a lot of activity in the east County and would like to get more involved there. Pazit commented that she plans to send information about the Connectors to the County's Villages, but the Villages do not usually have a central place where individuals congregate. Marsha said that King Farm has a central place, as do some of the Villages located in Bethesda. Kendell Matthews said that she has a contact at East County Village. She suggested that the Connectors may also want to contact Mid-County Villages.

David Engel asked Jennifer whether the Connectors would want to continue after their funding runs out. Jennifer responded that she does not know how these particular Connectors would feel about it and whether it could be done, but it would be great if it did. She would like to see the program continued but it needs to be better defined and better managed.

### **Draft Ambassador Operation Plan**

Jean opened a discussion of the Ambassador Program's draft operation plan. Jean pointed out that the draft plan stipulates that it begin as a pilot program. She then discussed the draft bullet by bullet.

- Marsha asked how many individuals will be involved as Ambassadors. Jean responded that it will depend on the vetting process.
- Virginia asked what is the estimated start date for the Program. The Committee decided to start September 1.
- With regard to the Task Force that the plan envisions: it will not necessarily consist solely of Ambassadors. A request will be made to all CoA members to contact the Communications Committee if they are interested in participating on it.
- Jean noted that a presentation for the Ambassadors to use has been developed but it will be revised as needed.
- Marsha suggested that the Ambassador vetting committee and process needs to be better defined. Virginia commented that it may be tricky to decide what criteria to use to vet individuals to be Ambassadors; it will have to be done in such a way so as not to offend anyone. Jean asked whether everyone agrees that we need a vetting procedure? Rev

responded that it probably is necessary because not everyone is able to make presentations. It was noted that the Ambassadors will be CoA current and alumni members.

- As for preparing a report after an Ambassador does a presentation, Jean stated that the reports would be uniform and easy to complete.

After reviewing the draft plan, Jean asked whether any more changes should be made. Rev offered that the individuals signing up to be Ambassadors should commit to the full 6-month pilot. Marsha agreed, saying that should be made very clear. Virginia suggested that the commitment should be part of the Task Force's evaluating criteria when vetting individuals. She said that we need to flesh out what is expected of the Ambassadors and also come up with criteria on who can be an Ambassador. Rev suggested we should look for Ambassadors who speak more than one language.

Virginia asked whether it is envisioned that two individuals will make the presentations. Jean responded yes. Rev added that note-taking is also important, and one individual could make the presentation while the other takes notes.

It was stated that there will be responsibilities for the Task Force, responsibilities for the vetting panel, and responsibilities for the Ambassadors. Kendell suggested that we recruit CoA members initially and then ask alumni members after that.

For the Committee's next meeting, Beverly and Jean will prepare Task Force responsibilities and also vetting criteria. It should be as standardized as possible. Jean stated that we will look at the methods used to find a host for 50+ in *Montgomery County*. Marsha commented that it should not be too onerous. Rev said that when we go recruiting for the Task Force and vetting panel all of the criteria should be fleshed out.

Kendell asked whether we have a target audience. Beverly responded that is why meeting with the different minority groups was included in the Operation Plan to find out where the Ambassadors need to go.

Beverly noted that she requested that the Ambassador Program be included in the CoA's budget proposal that will be sent to the County Executive and the County Council. David said that it will be reflected in his talking points as fairly as possible.

### **Draft Library Liaison Job Description**

Jean led a discussion of the rough draft that she and Beverly developed of the job description for the CoA library liaison.

- Marsha noted that the Ambassador Program and the Library Liaison position would be good to discuss with new CoA members. She added that there should be exit interviews when CoA members leave. It would be good to find out how to keep the alumni CoA members involved.
- Marsha asked whether anyone has talked to Anita Vassallo, head of Montgomery County's public libraries, to ensure that the older adult sections have definitely been established in all

of the libraries. Jean noted that she will contact Anita and ask her. She suggested that the Liaison job description be shared with Anita.

- Committee members voted to approve the job description as written and share it with the CoA's Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee approves it, it may be possible that it will be shared with the full CoA at its April meeting.

### **CoA Website Update**

David explained that he, Jean, Beverly, and Arunima held a Zoom call to discuss how the website will be updated. He asked Pazit: How do we make changes? Who is maintaining the website? How do we request changes be done?

Pazit responded that website format is done by a contractor, so the CoA is limited on doing any formatting. David noted that the CoA is very interested in ensuring that weblinks lead to updated, correct websites. David also asked whether the CoA can request some formatting changes? Pazit responded that we should go through Tremayne and if she cannot do it then she will forward it to, hopefully, someone who can.

David asked whether minutes, agendas, and things like that should go to Tremayne. Pazit responded yes. She said that it is the responsibility of Committee chairs to send minutes and agendas to Tremayne. She noted that the County Council is going to tighten requirements for accountability, including having Boards and Commissions to submit draft minutes. This all came out of an audit the Council did of the County Commissions and found there were some questions.

Jean asked Committee members to discuss who we want the audience of the website to be. Currently, it's more directed to CoA members and not the public. She asked, "What is the target audience?" Arunima responded that when individuals Google "senior services in Montgomery County" the CoA's website does not come up. In light of that, the CoA's website should be about the CoA, not about services.

David stated that the CoA should take care of its own business on its own website. CoA members can refer to the website when they meet with individuals. Age-Friendly can show the services that the County provides on its website. The CoA's website should only deal with CoA information.

### ***50+ in Montgomery County Update***

Jean provided the following information about 50+:

- March program—Intergenerational Programs
- April program—Technology/Public Forum
- May program—MoCo Centenarians/No-Mow May
- PSAs—Katie was meeting with Robert Williams on 3/20/23 @ 4p
- Planning Committee meets 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of each month

### **Adjourn**