

**Communications Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
August 16, 2021**

**Attendees**

**CoA Members**

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-chair  
Beverly Rollins, Co-chair  
David Engle  
Arunima Ghosh  
Eddie Rivas  
Katie Smith  
Marsha Weber

**CoA Alumni**

Austin Heyman  
Marcia Pruzan  
Isabelle Schoenfeld

**Staff**

Jennifer Long, Department of Health and Human Services  
Joelle Modderman, Public Information Office  
Tracy O'Connor, Public Information Office  
Betty Ring, Montgomery County Councilmember Sydney Katz' Office

**Roll Call**

Jean Dinwiddie opened the meeting by taking roll. She welcomed David Engle as a new member of the CoA.

The July meeting minutes were approved as written.

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

Jean stated that the August show has been taped and the topic was Age-Friendly's "Safety" domain. The show featured Marcia Pruzan, Senior Fellow for Age-Friendly Montgomery; Tracy Rezvani, Administrator of Montgomery County's Office of Consumer Protection; and Jim Reznick, Program Manager for Senior Outreach & Education, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. For the September show the topic will be employment for older adults. Debby Missal, a Senior Fellow with the 50+ Volunteer Network will be featured along with someone from the Jewish Council for the Aging, and a former Gaithersburg city council member

who is a working older adult. Marcia Pruzan stressed that volunteerism and employment are completely two different things. She said that it would be nice if someone from Workforce Montgomery could also be included in that show. Jean stated that the difference between volunteerism and employment will be discussed on the show.

Jean noted that the October show will feature faith leaders from the County's diverse communities.

Jean asked Joelle Modderman when is a reasonable expectation for launching the show's new name. Joelle responded that the October show will have the new look. Jean reminded everyone that we want to have a promotion regarding the new name, including a County press release and something on Radio America.

### **Status of Committee Projects**

**CoA Member Handbook.** Beverly Rollins reported that she is incorporating the comments she received on the draft and that she is still aiming for the final version to be completed by August 31.

**Press Release for Hearing Factsheet.** Committee members agreed that it looked good.

**Ideas for CoA Weekly Newsletter.** Jean stated that HHS staff person, Shawn Brennan, requested that the Committee review the current newsletter and make recommendations on how it can be improved. HHS staffer, Tremayne Jones, puts it together and sends it to the entire group CoA every week. Katie Smith commented that it needs to be better organized and better formatted – possibly feature flash points on what the CoA is doing.

Marcia Pruzan, who assembles the newsletter for Age-Friendly Montgomery, stated that she offers mostly links to different stories, and organizes it by topics and events. She said that the CoA could use that newsletter, adding anything it feels relevant to its concerns.

Austin Heyman commented that the problem of getting information to the public regarding older adult programs is not the newsletter; the challenge is how we reach individuals who do not have Internet. We need to look at what kind of printed materials are being distributed. He noted that \$28,000 is in the Public Information Office's budget for older adult information; \$18,000 is for 12 issues of the *Beacon* and \$10,000 is for printed materials.

Isabelle Schoenfeld asked about who makes the decisions regarding what goes into the newsletter. What criteria is being used to determine what goes in? She stated that there needs to be a decision-making process to make it more relevant to the CoA. Eddie Rivas asked whether the newsletter for CoA member information. What is its purpose? Do we need it? David Engle stated that it would be helpful for new commissioners to have a structured calendar every month that features upcoming events and links to important information. Keep the structure the same for every month, and a maximum of 2 pages.

Eddie suggested that the CoA's website could be used for members to post information. However, the County will have to let the Committee know whether members can post information to the site. Katie asked whether we could work with David's idea while we are waiting for the County to respond to Eddie's website suggestion? Marsha Weber suggested that we could develop a template that just needs to be updated every week.

Jennifer Long stated that Commissioners could be asked to subscribe to other County newsletters to get information. Links can be found in places such as the *Beacon's* "Senior Resource Guide," on the Montgomery County "Senior Site" website, and at the County's HHS site. Katie added that CoA members should also know where to sign up for the Villages newsletter and newsletters from Age-Friendly Montgomery.

Eddie commented that the name of the "Senior Site" needs to be changed, not using the word "Senior." Jennifer stated that the "Senior Site" website is under the purview of the PIO.

Jean commented that this is an issue that we may want to discuss with the CoA's Executive Committee. Isabelle stated that arriving at a decision is going to be a step-by-step process; first, we have to decide on the newsletters' purpose, and then determine the criteria of what is to be included.

**Press names Excel spreadsheet.** Jean stated that we received a list of names and addresses from Mary Anderson of press organizations who receive releases regarding activities related to older adult activities. We asked Shawn Brennan to have the summer students who were working in her department to organize and enter it into an Excel spreadsheet. Shawn sent us the finished product. Jean suggested that Chuck Kaufman look at it and enter any more names and organizations that he thinks should be included. Beverly asked whether any other Committee member would like to see it. Eddie stated that he would look at it to determine whether diverse communities are included.

**Other.** Katie suggested that there be a segment be featured on *50+ in Montgomery County* to discuss the change in the show's name. Jean asked whether it could be done during Katie's introduction of the show, or possibly during the closing of the September show. Eddie suggested that it could be mentioned at end of September show and then allow 5 minutes during the opening of the October show detailing why the name was changed.

David reminded the Committee members that any weblinks to the show that indicate its old name – *Seniors Today* – will need to be changed to the new name. Tracy stated that the CoA should provide the Public Information Office the exact date of when the name change occurs and it can change the weblink names across the board. The CoA should send an email to the PIO asking that this be done.

Jean closed the meeting by saying that in September the Committee will dive deeper into Austin's concerns about getting information out to public.