

**MINUTES FROM
AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE COMMISSION ON AGING**

Date: February 13, 2024
9:30 am to 11:30 am

COMMISSIONERS

Wayne Berman
Betsy Carrier
Laurie Pross
Mary Sweeney
Joyce Dubow
Marsha Weber
Linda Bergofsky
Kendell Matthews
Kate Stein
Mona Grieser
Barbara Selter
David Engel
Sibo Nicube

Connie Row (speaker)
Doug Gaddis (Silver Spring Village)
Eric Kouwang
Amanda Schuster (aid to Sarah Wolek)
Anne Herbster (RAVE)
Claudia Fess (Chief of Staff to Sarah Wolek)
Eddie Rivas, (Potomac Village)
Elizabeth Haile (Bethesda Metro Village)
Katie Ostrowski (Rockville Commissioner)
Kristi Hullings (SBP Village Team Member)
Lynette Ciervo (Potomac Community Village)
Patricia Dubroof (Assisting Hands)
Paul Moss (Research and Practice in Aging Service)
Sandra Egan (Village of Takoma Park)
Trish Evans (RAVE)
Sarah Fought (JCA)
Vicky Vergara (Wyngate Maplewood Village)

STAFF

Pazit Aviv
Diana Ruiz
Dr. Patrice McGhee
Shawn Brennan

GUESTS

Emily van Loon, Village of Takoma Park)
Diane Smith
Doran Flowers (speaker)

Meeting was called to order at 9:30 by Wayne Berman

Minutes from the January 9 meeting were approved

Meeting Overview –There are more than 30 active villages in Montgomery County and five in development. Many of these villages have been in existence for around 10 years so they have developed a keen understanding of some of problems and solutions for maintaining organizational vigor and helping older individuals age in place. There was a panel that described organizational challenges including administrative challenges, problems in spreading villages to more diverse communities, meeting the needs of the most senior village members, and the role villages can play in addressing health equity.

Speakers were as follows:

- **Organizational Vigor:** Some existing MoCo villages and some MoCo villages in development are challenged by the problem of having to organize a suite of administrative services. The hub and spoke model is one solution. This presentation described the model and challenges of launching and funding. Connie Row, Board President, FHNHN & President of the Consortium.
- **Spreading Villages Throughout the County:** One third of the MoCo villages are down county in District 1 Diana Ruiz and Pazit Aviv, Montgomery County Village Coordinator described the outreach to spread villages up County and to the eastern part of the County-
- **Partnerships To Reduce Health Care Disparities:** Doran Flowers, Executive Director, Little Falls Village. described the Little Falls Vaccination clinic and the effectiveness of partnerships among villages to reduce health care disparities.
- **Meeting the Needs of The Oldest Village Members:** Discussed whether Montgomery County villages have the capacity to help members who are the most elderly (85+) age in place as these individuals can have very complex medical and social issues.
- Discussion followed re the benefits of villages, but they are not the sole panacea to the many complex problems related to aging.

At the meeting Claudia Fess, Rep. Wolek's Chief of Staff, summarized HB 1103 The Miriam Kely Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program that has recently been introduced. The Bill will create a grant to support the Montgomery County Village Consortium in the amount of \$80K a year for three years. This pilot will centralize administrative tasks (currently undertaken by individual villages) so that member villages can both maintain and grow services and events as well as share their expertise with other communities across the State with villages under development.

The pilot program will be housed in the Maryland Department of Aging, which will disburse the monies to the Consortium. The bill tasks the Consortium to provide a report to the Department of Aging at the end of the three years with best practices for setting up and operating a Hub and Spoke model. The Montgomery County Consortium The Montgomery County Consortium is the result of collaboration between Montgomery County Villages and the Montgomery County Office of Aging and Disability Services who met to find pathways to support the sustainability of existing villages and development of new villages.

Subsequent to this committee meeting the CoA prepared favorable comments in support of the House Bill 1103 and Senate Bill 875. Betsy Carrier will testify on February 22 and February 29 on behalf of the CoA in support of the House and Senate Bills.

Highlights from the presentations included: :

Connie Row provided a status report on the Village Consortium.

The Consortium is an administrative services nonprofit serving Montgomery County Villages modeled on “Hub and Spoke” model that is operating in other parts of the Country. The aim is to help Villages that lack sustainability and to help develop new Villages in underserved areas of county.

The Members of the Consortium include villages in development, groups who want to develop a Village but need help, especially in low-income and rural areas, Villages lacking sustainability either because their original volunteers have retired and they do not have funds for staff or for other reasons; and established Villages willing to share expertise with others and wanting additional shared services. In addition the Consortium could fund-raise to provide (e.g. shared social worker)

The services that will be provided include:

- Communications—monthly Newsletter, eBlasts, etc.
- Programs—at least one health-related and one cultural per month;
- Operations—matching driver-volunteers with members desiring rides, maintaining member and volunteer data-bases, etc.
- Other shared services—volunteer training, financial management contractors, etc.
- TA to Villages in development as funding permits.

The challenges include:

- Sustainable Funding: will need to rely on grant funding written, currently caught in State and MoCo bureaucracy so no cash actually available. Gov. Moore has other priorities.
- Some Villages unwilling to consider joining until they see the organization up and running.
- Recruiting for staff: hard to compete in competitive DC market with contract salaries and restrictions .

Commission can help by:

- Support the funding applications to State and MoCo and local foundations;
- Support Del. Wolek’s Bill introduced in the Legislature;
- Support long-term funding for the Consortium and its projects at State and County level—a funding stream that does not now exist.
- Support necessity of Villages and their future development.

Pazit Aviv and Diana Ruiz presented information about Montgomery County Villages Growth Opportunities:

They described that there are currently 30 active villages and 6 developing. Most of the Villages are down County

They addressed the question why there aren't any more villages.

Big picture:

- Strong counterculture idea
- Lack of existing social and physical infrastructure
- Structured inequities

Logistics:

- Heavy reliance on local initiative
- Insufficient knowledge and understanding
- Insufficient resources/investment

They described what can be done to increase the number of villages in East County and in the Hispanic Community

Current Work in East County

- Investment in relationship building
- East County Health and Wellness Workgroup
- Partner with the Senior Nutrition Program, Rec Center
- Bring in content to lunch program
- Identify leadership and support it

Outreach to the Hispanic Community: In the past connected with local seniors to be part of the Village. This was done by seeking Spanish volunteers. Events at Long Branch for the holidays and introduction about the villages. They are trying to reach out to local leaders and connect with local resources, information table at libraries and rec centers.

Doran Flowers shared a case study of the Little Falls Village Vaccination Clinic and how it was an example of how villages can be nimble and improve community health.

Little Falls Village was able to stand up vaccine clinics because they had:

- Flexibility – the ‘pandemic pivot’; an entire organization refocusing with incredible speed
- Leverage – activating and directing an enormous amount of human energy
- Whole-Person Relationships – listening, understanding, and adapting a response to individual needs
- Public/Private Partnerships – straddling the public and private world

Connie Row presented additional data about the Friendship Heights Neighbors Network and how the demographics of their membership presents some difficult challenges:

- Higher proportion of population is over 65 & 75 than other areas of county.
- After 8 years of operation, most new member applicants are “Full Service” with an average age of 89. They also have members in their 90’s and 100+. Majority aging solo.
- Their problems include mental and physical health: loneliness (many effectively homebound); disability (sight, hearing, mobility); cognitive impairment.
- They need trained home visitors, nurse or social work geriatric care managers for assessment and ongoing management, home health aides to help with ADL and IADLs, doctors/np’s who make house calls and provide in-home medical care.

What Can Villages Provide To Individuals With These Complex Problems?

- Very little as Villages are not healthcare providers. They do not employ, nor are they insured to provide these services, except for training for nonmedical “friendly visitors” but there are no training programs for example for visitors to dementia patients and their caregivers.
- They can twist arms and follow up on past relationships to obtain discounted geriatric care management, short-hours, less expensive home health aides, and continued plea to the one in-home medical care practice serving their area to continue to include our zip code.

The real need is for licensed, insured health and social service support residents can afford, and not just for Medicaid but also for the middle class.

CoA can help by exploring some of the following:

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- Capital Hill Village has a separate grant to support a Care Coordination nonprofit. Could a separate one be created in MoCo?
- Could the Consortium be funded to meet this need for Villages?
- Could the County be funded to do this through Aging and Disability Services?
- Actions to address the home health aid shortage and work-arounds such as a direct service employment agency that pays wages high enough to attract talent by paying providers, not corporate profit.
- Can house call providers be subsidized to provide services in at least the most aged sections of the county?

At the conclusion of the presentations several commissioners raised the concerns that villages only may be band aids to a much larger problem of adults aging in place. Commissioners remarked that all the individuals who are village members likely have Medicare coverage, so the needs reflect holes in the delivery system.

In addition remarks were made that some of the needs described should be filled by state and local government sponsored programs. However, there was concurrence that villages can provide “social glue” and a sense of community to help address some of these problems.

To help spread villages comments were also made that Villages have to be able articulate their value. It is also important that villages reach out to renters as members not just home owner.

There was concern expressed regarding the data presented by Friendship Heights and the complexity of the needs of many of the village members.

Other business: Ruth Kircher has been hired by the County as the Caregiver Coordinator.

The next meeting: March 12, 2024 the topic will be: "Transportation for Older Adults in MoCo". Meeting was adjourned at 11:19.