

**AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
COMMISSION ON AGING**

Date: November 9, 2021  
9:30am-11:30 am

“Review and Summary of Committee Work in 2021”

**In Attendance:** Wayne Berman (co-chair, AIC), Barbara Selter, Nanine Meiklejohn, Richard Jourdenais, Marsha Weber, Eddie Rivas, Mary Sweeney, Art Williams, Jean Dinwiddie, Laurie Pross, Kendell Matthews, Nkiru Ezeani, Betsy Carrier, Mona Grieser, Karon Phillips, Virginia Cain, Sibon Ncube,

**Staff:** Pazit Aviv, MoCo; Shawn Brennan, MoCo; Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montgomery;

**Guests:** Sara Fought, Jewish Council for the Aging; Barbara Brubeck, Goodwin House at Home

**Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs:** Wayne welcomed everyone, especially the newest Commissioners. Everyone had a chance to introduce themselves. Wayne reviewed the agenda and focus for the meeting “Review and Summary of Committee Work in 2021.” The focus of this meeting was to summarize the four principle topics addressed by the AIC in 2021 – Housing, Transportation, Technology, and Food Insecurity. In addition, other topics to be included in the discussion included Shared Housing, Design for Life, and Senior Fellows / Senior Employment. Following the review of topics, the committee was to develop some lessons learned from the review and to formulate some ideas that could evolve into a program agenda for the AIC committee for 2022.

**Approval of the Minutes:** The minutes of the October 12th meeting were approved and seconded.

**REVIEW AND DISCUSSIONS:** “Review and Summary of Committee Work in 2021”

Special thanks to Marcia Pruzan for taking such detailed notes of the summaries and conversation during the meeting.

Before any specific topics were summarized, there was an overall consensus that improved outreach and communication is of overriding need for all the topics being discussed at today’s meeting. The principle topics were presented and discussed in the following order: Housing, Technology, Food Insecurity, and Transportation. The topics of Shared Housing, Senior Fellows / Senior Employment, and Design for Life were addressed following the Transportation discussion.

Some key recommendations / ideas highlighted in the notes are presented in the minutes. The full set of notes from the meeting is attached as an addendum to these minutes for further review and discussion at the December meeting.

**Topic #1: Housing, Facilitated by Nanine Meiklejohn and MarySweeney**

Nanine reviewed the AIC committee’s goal of advocating for additional budget for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) in order to provide expanded availability and additional affordable rental units. There were also additional regulatory improvements that were noted including zoning changes to permit smaller units (e.g. ADU’s) to the so-called “Missing Middle Housing”), rent limitations near transit stations, County rent guidelines extending the pandemic limits, pandemic rental assistance and protection from eviction. Potential ideas discussed by the committee included advocating for safety in bathroom design, monitoring the County budget as it related to the HIF, better demographic data about

older adults who are rent burdened, monitor Council bills, and review THRIVE 2050 as it relates to older renters. Other ideas included monitoring County budgets, learn more about the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), and gather data/information about patterns of rent increases in the County.

Mary addressed the need for improved communication between the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and other entities providing services to seniors. The need for better communication led to a conversation regarding the Universal App – a comprehensive one-stop app to learn about housing opportunities developed in Oregon. Legislation for such a model app is being considered in Maryland. Better training about existing County housing opportunities is needed for staff who respond to the calls from the 240-777-3000 and 311 hotlines.

### **Topic #2: Technology, Facilitated by Wayne Berman and Barbara Selter**

Wayne spoke about efforts by Montgomery County to expand the application and use of broadband services to seniors and persons with disabilities. While the new Federal infrastructure bill will help to increase the use of broadband, very little data exists in the County on the use of the numbers of seniors and low income persons who do not have access to broadband services, cell phones, tablets, or computer devices.

Barbara spoke about the use of technology as an enabler of important home and community based services. Innovative use and applications of technology can enhance medical care and individual health monitoring in order to enable people to remain in their homes while recuperating from a hospital stay or throughout a prolonged illness. Various technologies can also help to reduce social isolation. Use of technology can be part of wrap-around services that enable older adults to live at home longer and stay out of the hospital after returning home. (i.e., reduce hospital readmissions)

A discussion ensued by the committee that was skeptical about how much technology can really do, given that access to broadband and cell services is limited among older adults. In addition, there was skepticism about how much impact the use of technology can have to mitigate the current nursing shortage.

### **Topic #3: Food Insecurity, Facilitated by Karon Phillips**

Karon summarized the work of Montgomery County's Senior Nutrition Program including budget, staffing, data, and public-private partnerships. One issue cited was the need to better identify people in the Upcounty area who may be eligible for the services offered by the senior nutrition program. Karon then summarized the work of the Manna Food Center. She highlighted their mobile kitchen and community-based programs that assist SNAP recipients. Manna faces challenges of transportation, language, specific needs of older adults, and different ethnic preferences. Recovering food before it becomes waste is another challenge.

A discussion followed about the need for food security throughout the County, even in more upscale communities of the County. It was noted that the Meals-on-Wheels programs is important and can evolve to also do well-checks on those older adults being served.

It was recommended that the Committee follow-up with the County regarding obtaining demographic data of older adults being served by the County's Senior Nutrition program.

### **Topic #4: Transportation, Facilitated by Dick Jourdenais and Wayne Berman**

Dick summarized the transportation aspects of the County's THRIVE 2050 master plan especially as it relates to the needs of older adults in areas such as safe networks for biking, walking, public transit, driving alone, and advanced communications networks.

Dick also summarized the County’s transportation services available to older adults, including Connect-a-Ride, FLASH, FLEX, transportation to recreation and senior centers, and Medicaid transportation. With County support, the Jewish Council for the Aging provides Connect-a-Rides and services like escorted transportation, village rides, and elder buses.

A discussion followed that highlighted the need for the COA to help improve communications and understanding of all of these services. In addition the COA should advise the County, at the development stage, of the proposed transportation training videos and training bus being funded by a grant from the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments.

Wayne summarized the County’s Vision Zero Plan and Pedestrian Safety Master Plan. The Vision Zero plan is intended to make sidewalks and streets safer for walkers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Older adults are vulnerable to injury and death from crashes caused by poor design. The goal is to reduce traffic deaths and crashes. The plan presents lower cost projects that can save lives. Poor lighting and hard-to-read street signs are a concern to Commissioners, especially during nighttime driving situations. The Pedestrian Safety Master Plan is intended to make walking, and “rolling” (e.g. bicycling, scooter use, etc.) safer and more accessible through better design. The Plan also has prepared a Pedestrian Safety Audit Toolkit to enable pedestrians to identify and report unsafe areas to the County. Commissioners can get involved by signing up for the “e-Newsletter at [www.Montgomeryplanning.org/walkinghere](http://www.Montgomeryplanning.org/walkinghere)

Following reviews of the four principle topics, the Committee expressed interest in three additional topics that could be included as part of the 2022 AIC Program agenda. These topics include:

- Senior Fellows / Senior Employment Programs: The Committee expressed interest in learning more about these efforts, especially the work being done by the Age-Friendly Montgomery Group;
- Design For Life Programs: The Committee expressed interest in learning more about these programs and work being done in this area to help older adults age in place longer;
- Villages: The Committee expressed interest in getting better data on Villages, such as budgetary information.

**UPCOMING MEETING:** 📍 The next AIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am. The focus of this meeting will be the “Preparation of AIC Program Listing and Work Plan for 2022.” We will be preparing a table that lays out planned monthly programs and decide who will take responsibility for making those programs happen. We will also identify specific outcomes that we want to try to accomplish in n2022

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** 11:40 am

ADDENDUM  
**RAW NOTES**

Aging In Community—Discussion/ideas for 2022

Improved outreach and communication overriding issue for all topics discussed below.

**Topic 1: Housing (Nanine)**

- Availability-advocate for additional budget
  - HIF budget (need for additional units)
- Regulatory
  - Regulatory -zoning change to permit smaller units “Missing Middle Housing”
  - Regulatory- rent limitations within transit rail stations
  - County rent guidelines-extension of pandemic limits
  - Pandemic Rental assistance program
  - Protection from eviction
- Advocate for safety in bathroom design in reconstruction of older properties
- Communications
- Potential Ideas
  - Monitor budget
  - Rental assistance-learn more about different RAP programs
  - Rent limitations – information/data about pattern of rent increases in county from County Council (rent guidelines)
  - More demographic data about older adult and other rent-burdened
  - Monitor bills, attend Council sessions
  - Review THRIVE 2050 and other reports from planning Department re older adult renters

Housing-Mary Sweeney

- Improved communication between HOC and other entities providing services to HOC seniors. (Partnerships to keep older residents in current housing?)
- Better way to communicate available housing options for older adults in County. Comprehensive one-stop (Oregon) Universal application model-Maryland?
- DHCA’s Marketplace online source—follow up on needed changes?
- Contact JCA -information on affordable housing. (Senior Help Line); challenge is availability of enough affordable housing.
- DHCA has staff devoted to eviction prevention.

Home Sharing: Challenges:

- Disconnect between what renters and landlords want.
- Communications --
- Technology
- Better training needed for 7-3000 number and the 311 number, to provide improved assistance to callers.

**RECOMMENDATION:** COA should send letter to Council supporting Increased HIF Funding

**Topic 2: Technology**

- Ultra Montgomery-Mitsi Herrera-get broadband to residents
  - Expand broadband and computer use
    - Expand Main Street program for young adults and people with disabilities
    - Senior Planet

- Data re low income, no access to broadband, no computers, etc. (new federal bill would increase use of broadband)
- Use of smartphones
- Access fees
- Privacy

Technology: Barbara

- Connected Home Living Model -use of technology as enabler to provide important services
  - Use of technology to enhance medical care and monitoring while people remain in homes with information sent back to care managers
  - Reduction of social isolation as care coordinators provide help with social determinants of health.
  - Leverage limited supply of home care coordinators, supply affordable home care with fewer hours of in-person home care.
  - Need for in-home care providers to provide shorter hours of care due to technology
  - Both quality and affordability enhance via technology in combination with needed services (results: reduced hospital stays and readmissions, reduced Medicare penalties related to readmissions, also allowed remote follow up of those discharged during covid who were reluctant to have people come into homes)

Discussion: Mona

- Skeptical of tech marketed to seniors because many don't have WIFI or access; subsidy offered too small.
- would like to see improved bathrooms for all senior housing.
- Make Montgomery County pilot test to see results of putting tech into homes.

Barbara S: important to provide wraparound service needed for use of technology provided;

Barbara B: need to anticipate nursing shortage --technology part of solution

Barbara S: need to address shortage of home care workers--tech only one tool, and older adults becoming more open to its use (COVID example of older adults engaged with tech.)

Mona: nursing shortage is in part due to how nurses are treated in hospitals. System broken.

### Topic 3: Food Insecurity - Karon

Senior Nutrition Program – Older Americans Act-

- Currently has budget to sustain through 2022, including new program manager, electronic reporting, data integrity
- Participate in Food Security Task Force, other public/private partnerships
- Issue: Need to identify people in upcounty who may be eligible and connect to senior nutrition program

Manna Food Center:

- Mobile kitchens, food pantry, community food rescue programs, assist SNAP recipients,
- Challenges: Transportation, languages, specific needs of older adults, different ethnic preferences
- Why is SNAP enrollment lower than it could be?
- COA—recover food before it becomes waste?
- Barbara:
  - Food security is a need throughout county, even in more upscale communities
  - Meals on Wheels has been doing well-checks on adults to whom they deliver meals—will report at next meeting.

### RECOMMENDATION

Follow up on data re older demographics of adults being served by programs

### Topic 4: Transportation (Dick)

**Thrive 2050: update of County master plan**—transportation areas to be addressed

AREAS: Safe network for biking walking, world class transits system, Driving alone, Advanced communication networks

**Follow up Needed:** Age-Readiness Plan?

Sam Oji, DOT overview of transportation services available (Connect-a-Ride, same day taxi access, JCA's free taxi rides for COVID testing and vax, FLEX (now have call in system), Flash system, transportation to recreation and senior centers, Medicaid transportation

Sara Fought JCA, programs: Connect a Ride, escorted transportation, village rides, elder buses

**Follow up needed:**

- Need for improved Communication for residents
- COA would like to be part of COG grant to provide travel training on retrofitted bus--on hold due to pandemic.
- DOT / DHHS /Taxicab Commission survey of residents 65+ and those with disabilities. The focus of the survey is obtaining input on taxi services from 65+ residents and those with disabilities. (Ask Shawn about how County is reaching residents?)

**VISION Zero:** Making sidewalks and streets safer for walkers—goal to reduce traffic deaths, fatal and severe crashes. Saving lives preventable and not expensive. Older adults vulnerable

**Pedestrian Safety Master Plan**, to make walking or “rolling” safer and more accessible via better design, etc. Developed pedestrian audit toolkit to let pedestrians audit their local sidewalk, give feedback to County.

**Issues:** What to do about nighttime driving?

**Other December/future agenda Items**

- Senior Fellows Program – COA doesn't do much about employment for 50+; council and executive have different programs. Council now has 7 fellows, stipend for meals and transportation. Asked for consideration to change name. Exec program now has fellows in HR, DHCA, OCP, DHHS; we've learned that sister counties have full time Age-Friendly staff.

## Discussion

- Need more information about how this program is run. Are departments willing to take on more senior fellows?
- Team up with Age-Friendly employment work group, which focuses on resources for older job seekers, educating businesses on benefits of hiring and maintaining older workers, and on ageism in the workplace.
- Senior employment in general may be future topic;
- Villages (Pazit) – villages would like some budgetary/priority requests
- Design for Life

Process for coming year:

At December meeting, planning for 2022: Develop a table, decide who will take responsibility for which topic over the year, and identify specific outcomes where known.