



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCC)

Date: December ____ (FY19 Second Quarter Report)

BCC: Commission on Aging (COA)

BCC Representative: Isabelle Schoenfeld, Chair, COA

The Commission on Aging (COA) is pleased to acknowledge that Montgomery County continues to make progress as a Community for a Lifetime for all its residents. This is evidenced by provision of critical services and programs for both vital and vulnerable older adults in the County; by the County Executive's Senior Initiative budget; by the development and implementation of Age-Friendly Montgomery action plan activities; by programs and policies in support of COA's Senior Agenda; and by other initiatives.

FY19 First Quarter Activities Update

On September 27, 2018, the COA meeting focused on identifying our FY20 Budget Priorities based on COA decision criteria. The FY20 potential Budget Priorities include (1) budget items for which we advocated in FY19 but which were not funded; (2) budget items resulting from Summer Study recommendations that have not been implemented; and (3) budget items resulting from COA programs, Age-Friendly workgroup meetings, stakeholder and public forums, and other input.

The budget priorities are described in the Commission's October 15, 2018 letter to Councilmember George Leventhal.

FY19 Second Quarter Activities

On October 22, 2018, COA Chair, Isabelle Schoenfeld, gave testimony to the Council HHS Committee on COA's FY20 budget priorities. Mr. Leventhal, Chair of the HHS Committee commended COA and the Commission on People with Disabilities on their effective advocacy activities and suggested that other Commissions learn from them. The Commission's FY20 priorities are:

- Expand Senior Center Plus Programs for those with Early Stage Memory Loss
- Assist with increases in Respite Care rates and services
- Reinstate funding to the Recreation Dept. for Friday Transportation to Senior Centers and Mini Trips
- A new social work position in the Public Guardianship Program

- A new position, “Coordinator for Outreach and Support to Older Adults in Diverse Communities.”

The demand for Affordable Housing continues to increase, therefore, we continue to prioritize the need for more affordable housing options for seniors. Our priorities related to affordable housing include:

- Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) Increases
- Moderately-Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) Program Expansion
- An Affordable Housing User Friendly Database and Streamlined Application Process
- A Home Sharing for Older Adults Pilot Program

At the October 25, 2018, COA meeting, Pamela Zurich, Coordinator, Research & Special Projects, Montgomery County Planning Department and Lisa A. Sturtevant, President of Lisa Sturtevant & Associates, LLC, discussed the 2018 report, *Meeting the Housing Needs of Older Adults in Montgomery County*.

During last and this quarter, COA developed a “Commission on Aging Briefing Book” which was completed and printed. It contains information on the following eight key issues facing older adults in MC: Affordable Housing; Assisted Living Affordability; Caregiver Support; Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation; Health and Social Services; Quality of Long Term Care Facilities; Social Isolation; and, Transportation, Driver Safety and Pedestrian Safety. It also discusses the following three cross-cutting topics: Diversity, Communications, and, Ageism. The Briefing Book is being distributed to the County Executive and County Councilmembers, MC Department Directors, the MC delegation to the General Assembly, and other stakeholders.

In the November 29, 2018 meeting, the Commission voted in Executive Committee Officers for 2019. They are: Jean Dinwiddie, Chair; Stephanie Edelstein, Vice-Chair; Beverly Rollins, Secretary; Revathi Vikram, Budget and Finance Officer.

The Commission was honored to have the following guest speakers at the November meeting: County Executive, Isiah Leggett; County Council President, Hans Riemer; and County Council Vice-President, Nancy Navarro.

On December 19, 2018, the Commission will conduct our December Meeting and Holiday Lunch at Ingleside at King Farm.

Aging in Community Committee (AICC)

Committee 2019 Priorities: At the October 2018 meeting, the following priority issues for 2019 were identified:

- Social Isolation: Response to Crises
- Housing Code Enforcement in Affordable Housing

- Food Insecurity
- Extremely low income housing and senior homelessness
- MCPS support for seniors in community schools.

The Committee members agreed that the following overarching issues should provide a framework for 2019:

- improved communication
- addressing diversity
- elimination of ageism.

Food Insecurity Data: Dennis Linders, Manager, Planning, Accountability, and Customer Services, DHHS, presented some statistics from a recent MC Food Council report entitled “Aging and Vulnerability Outreach”. In the U.S., about 5.5 million (7.7%) seniors (>60 yrs.) are food insecure. Also in the U.S., only 42% of eligible seniors are enrolled in SNAP (USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Issues related to senior food insecurity include fixed income (causing some to choose medical expenses over quality food), isolation (lacking knowledge about/or transportation to food programs), low technology literacy (unable to connect to services online), and limited English language proficiency (LEP). Food delivery program issues identified by committee members include cultural pride and food offerings.

Food Insecurity Programs: The December 2018 AIC Committee meeting focused on food insecurity and was briefed by: Melanie Polk, MC HHS Director, Senior Nutrition Program; Diana Tato-Niktash, MC HHS Program Manager, Food Security Plan; Heather Bruskin, Executive Director, Montgomery County Food Council; and Jenna Umbriac, Director of Programs and Policy, MANNA Food Center.

Health and Wellness Committee (HWC)

Affordability and Quality of Assisted Living Care: Using data provided by Erin Smith, Area Agency on Aging/DHHS Data and Evaluation Manager, the Committee members discussed issues related to the affordability and quality of assisted living care. Committee members identified a population of seniors who fall into the “senior gap,” those whose income and resources are above the Medicaid qualifying level, but not enough to afford assisted living or home care.

MC Older Adults Data: The Committee heard from Dennis Linders, Manager, Planning, Accountability, and Customer Services, DHHS. He presented data on senior living facilities as well as charts on total personal income of County senior residents.

The Senior Gap Population Assistance: At the December meeting the Committee continued to focus on defining the senior gap population and what opportunities and programs exist to help these individuals get needed assistance. The Committee had presentations from Marsha Aron and Erin Claxton who implement the State’s Senior Care Program in Montgomery County. This program helps seniors with assisted living needs remain in the community.

Public Policy Committee (PPC)

Preparations for the 2019 General Assembly Session – The Committee discussed being proactive and looking for issues to work on for legislation. Two issues seemed to offer possibilities: dental care as part of Medicaid and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit to finance the building of additional affordable housing in the county.

The Committee learned that the state Medicaid program, beginning January 1, 2019, subject to the limitations of the State budget and as permitted by federal law, will begin a pilot program to provide comprehensive dental services for adults. The Committee will monitor the pilot program for further developments.

The committee also discussed drafting legislation requiring the state to study making better use of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit in higher cost jurisdictions such as Montgomery County. Questions that could be studied include:

- Whether higher cost jurisdictions would be able to use the credit to incentivize preservation of affordable housing
- Whether the Virginia model, which makes adjustments for higher cost jurisdictions, could offer lessons
- What effect the recent federal tax legislation will have on the credit's viability as an incentive to build low and moderate income housing.

Transportation Services Improvement Fund – On October 17, a COA representative attended a meeting convened by the Department of Transportation to discuss changing the incentives in the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) program. The Taxicab Commission and the Commission on People with Disabilities were also represented at this meeting. DOT acknowledged the challenges that it has experienced in implementing TSIF. COA ideas for program enhancements using the TSIF included:

- Providing transportation to senior centers on Fridays
- Enhancing Call-n-Ride service by adjusting income criteria for inflation.

A second meeting is slated to be called by the Department, but no date has been set as of yet.

Legislative Breakfast – This annual event was scheduled for December 13 but had to be cancelled due to legislators having conflicts with other key events that morning. The Committee will send the legislators the contents of the packets that would have been provided to them at the legislative breakfast, including:

- The Commission on Aging Briefing Book
- The Budget Priorities Statement included in the COA letter to Councilmember Leventhal
- The COA Roster.

Medicaid and Home and Community Based Services: The Committee heard from guest speaker,

local elder law attorney Morris Klein, who discussed proposed legislation in the General Assembly to reform the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Waiver program.

FY19 Third Quarter - Upcoming Activities

Commissioners will be visiting the County Executive and each of the Council Members in one-on-one meetings to discuss the COA Briefing Book issues and respond to any questions.

On March 19, 2019, COA will conduct our annual Public Forum. It will be held in the Silver Spring Civic Building. The focus of this year's public forum will be the issues/challenges facing older adults in diverse communities.

Collaboration with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees

COA collaborates with other Boards, Commissions, and Committees, as appropriate. COA also welcomes representatives of other Boards, Commissions and Committees at its Standing Committee meetings. These representatives are invited to report on their B/C/or C's activities at COA's monthly meetings.