



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

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

Date: April 25, 2022 (FY22 Third Quarter Report (includes January, February and March 2022))

BCC: Commission on Aging (CoA)

BCC Representative: Barbara Selter, Chair

Montgomery County's Commission on Aging (CoA) continues to serve as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's older residents by identifying significant issues where its voice on the needs of older adults can make a difference.

Age-Friendly Montgomery County

The CoA continues active participation in the Age-Friendly Montgomery County Initiative. A Commission alumnus is the Senior Fellow that staffs the Initiative, and individual CoA members participate on the various Committees. One of the co-chairs of the CoA Communications Committee, Jean Dinwiddie, also chairs the Age Friendly Communications Work Group. All have the ultimate goal of continuing to make the County a community for a lifetime.

Direct Care Workforce Round Tables

The CoA Chair, Barbara Selter, worked with the Age Friendly Home and Community Services Work Group on a series of Round Tables to address concerns associated with ensuring a sufficient supply of direct care workers to support Home and Community Based Services for Montgomery County citizens. A key recommendation from the Round Tables was to establish a county-wide Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Taskforce to provide a forum that includes multiple stakeholders to:

- Examine the County's current state of HCBS to identify gaps in HCBS services and the workforce necessary to deliver these services
- Identify economic and public health challenges associated with the delivery of in-home care
- Develop an action plan to address identified gaps and formulate *actionable* strategies to benefit recipients of care, caregivers, care providers, agencies, the County government, and the region
- Identify County entities charged with the implementation of the action plan

HCBS Workforce Task Force

In response to this recommendation, the County Executive established the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Workforce Taskforce under the auspices of the Area Agency on Aging. Co-Chairs for the new Task Force include Cynthia Grissom from WorkSource Montgomery and Dr. Monique Davis from Montgomery College. The first meeting of the Task Force was held on March 31, 2022, and was attended by Barbara Selter, CoA Chair and Eddie Rivas, CoA Co-Chair. Ongoing meetings will take place monthly. The HCBS Workforce Task Force is focusing on four areas: (1) Career Path- Including training, recruitment, mentorship, and internship; (2) Communication; (3) Wages & Benefits; and (4) Partnerships & Working Conditions – to include technology and translation.

Covid-19

The Commission continued to monitor the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on older adults. The CoA worked to ensure that seniors had access to transportation to Senior Centers from their home centers that were temporarily closed to serve as vaccination sites for the County. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the CoA continues to meet virtually.

CoA Advocacy

The CoA plays an active role in monitoring and advocating for policy that affects older adults in Montgomery County. Such advocacy activities include preparing and advocating for budget priorities, monitoring potential legislation, and writing letters to support legislation and policy positions affecting older adults.

Montgomery County Budget

The CoA advocates for budget priorities set during its July Budget Priority meeting. During this quarter, the CoA actively advocated for these budget priorities in the following ways:

- The CoA provided written and oral testimony on its budget priorities to the County Council.
- Under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), MC will receive about \$3.5 million for the Area Agency on Aging. The County assembled teams to develop spending proposals for focus areas including social isolation and meal expansion. The CoA strongly urged that ACCESS Hears be funded under ARPA as hearing impediments are a major cause of social isolation.

Thrive 2050 Recommendations

To further strengthen the *Thrive 2050 Plan*, the President of the County Council, Gabe Albornoz, requested input from the CoA on the potential impact of *Thrive 2050* recommendations on older adults. The CoA formed a work group to review *Thrive 2050* and

provide its input on four key sections in the Plan: Housing; Complete Communities; Design, Arts, and Culture; and Transportation and Communications Networks.

Letters

The CoA Public Policy Committee monitors the General Assembly, reviews state legislative proposals, and promotes proposed legislation that would be especially helpful to older adults. Letters were written in support of the following proposed legislation:

- SB 28-Home and Community Based Waiver
- SB 0006-Tenant Protection Bill
- HB 247 – Insurance Medicare Supplement Policy Plans-Open Enrollment Period Following Birthday
- HB 006 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Coverage for Adults
- HB 80 -Home and Community Based Services Waiver - Participation and Applications
- HB 456 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- SB 720 - State Board of Examiners of Nursing Home Administrators- Renaming and Licensure of Assisted Living Mangers
- HB 0008 – The Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program (Time to Care Act of 2022)
- HB 981 – The Maryland Medical Program – Personal Care Aides – Reimbursement and Required Wage
- SB 863- The Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Personal Care Aides – Reimbursement and Required Wage

In addition to letters to support state legislative proposals, the Commission wrote the following additional letters to advocate for issues of importance to older adults:

- **Transportation Services Improvement Fund:** The Commission wrote a follow up letter to the Director of the Department of Transportation related to its submitted recommendations on the future use of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund
- **Affordable Senior Housing/Design for Life:** Letter congratulating the County Council and County Executive on the Sandy Spring Village and importance of incorporating Design for Life concepts into housing for older adults

Nursing Home Surveys

Montgomery County is in a very difficult position regarding nursing facility surveys since the State cancelled a ten-year old Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that allowed for County staff to conduct nursing facility surveys. Without the MoU, nursing facility surveys are the responsibility of the state Office of Health Care Quality. The County prepared a new MoU in which the County covers the entire cost of the surveys, but the State has not agreed to the new arrangement. The Commission is actively and strongly advocating for a resolution to this dire

situation and supported the bill introduced by Del. Kirill Reznick, which he later withdrew because of federal (CMS) rules.

CoA Education

It is important that Commissioners are up-to-date and knowledgeable about key issues, programs, and services regarding the older population. Thus, the Commission invites representatives of different programs to give presentations at its regularly scheduled meetings. This quarter, the CoA had presentations followed by lively question and answer sessions as follows:

- January: Presentation by Lylie Fisher on Recommendations of the Age Friendly HCBS Work Group Round Tables on the HCBS Workforce
- February: Presentation from Montgomery County Police Department on Reimaging Policing – Assistant Chief Francke and Assistant Chief Facciolo, Montgomery County Police Department
- March: Presentation on Hospice/Palliative Care – Ben Marcantonio, Chief Operating Officer, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

Education works both ways and it is important that the CoA help to educate the public on issues, activities and programs involving our elders. During this first quarter, educational activities included:

- Continuing work on the Commission’s Public Forum that will be held on May 5 at the Gaithersburg Art Center and will be cohosted by the Gaithersburg Senior Advisory Committee. The Public Forum, entitled *In-Home Care: We Can Do Better*, will offer presentations from experts on HCBS-related issues
- Reviewing all County websites related to older adults to make sure that they are all up-to-date and accurate.
- Developing and recording television programs for *50+ in Montgomery County*, which included the following programs:
 - January: Featured James Haworth, Executive Director for PAL (People, Animals, Love) and Maria Anselmo, Community Relations Manager for the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center. This month’s show looks at pets and the role they play in enriching our lives and well-being. They take care of us, and we take care them.
 - February: Celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Village Movement and Black History Month. Featured Pazit Aviv, the Village Coordinator from Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services. Cameron Walpole and Mark Thorne talked about the rich African American experience and heritage in Montgomery County.
 - March: More focus on Villages: This episode went in-depth to discuss how local, volunteer-led, grassroots organizations aim to support

community members who choose to age-in-place. Guests included: Doug Gaddis, Executive Director of Silver Spring Village; Sylvia Saunders, Founder and President of East County Village Seniors; and Dana Robinson and Pat Matthews of the Village of Takoma Park.

Committee Activities

The CoA has four working committees that perform the activities of the Commission. These Committees have performed the following in the first quarter:

- **Aging in the Community:** In January, Pazit Aviv provided a presentation on “Older Adults in Montgomery County: A Data Snapshot” offering significant amounts of data that characterized the older adult population in Montgomery County. This Committee also established a Thrive 2050 work group to respond to Gabe Albornoz’s request for CoA reaction to the Thrive 2050 document. “Food Insecurity in Montgomery County” was the topic in February. Joyce Dubow and Karon Phillips started the session and introduced the three featured presenters, all of whom are engaged in this issue in the county: Annmarie Hart-Bookbinder, MOCO Food Council; Allisson Schnitzer, MOCO Food Council; and JD Robinson, MD Hunger Solutions. In March, the meeting was on Design for Life, facilitated by Mona Geiser and Betsy Carrier and included three featured presenters: Gail Lucas, MC Dept of Permitting Services; Sarah Reddinger, Habitat for Humanity; and Joan Kahn, UMD.
- **Health and Wellness:** The January meeting was devoted to a discussion of Home and Community-based services, as well as a discussion of other topics going forward, as the HCBS topic was to be covered by the Public Forum for this year. In February, different committee members presented their topics for ongoing committee work and in March the committee voted on advancing the topic of Health and Finances to work on for the rest of the year.
- **Communications:** The January meeting of this committee focused on Montgomery County Public Libraries, with the Library Director, Anita Vassallo, discussing services that the County’s public libraries offer to older adults. The Committee members and Director Vassallo agreed to work on a joint proposal to distribute CoA materials to the different libraries. Jean Dinwiddie gave an update on 50+ in Montgomery County. In February, the focus of the meeting was on villages, presented by Pazit Aviv, who discussed ways in which the Villages could get information out to diverse communities. She talked about actions she has taken toward this effort and shared a map of where the Villages are located in Montgomery County. The Committee agreed to begin work on a joint effort with Age Friendly Montgomery to create a resources Fact Sheet to be distributed at the Public Forum. In March, the focus was on a 50+ in Montgomery update, as well as updates on the Fact Sheet and the web site review. There was also a brainstorming session on the CoA Ambassador/Speaker’s Bureau idea.

- **Public Policy:** This quarter is a particularly busy time for the Public Policy Committee as this is when the Maryland legislature is in session. This committee focused on legislation that was pending that affected older adults and decided for which bills to advocate. The Committee reviewed and approved letters in support of various bills, talked about County budget and key dates, and planned for upcoming visits with County Council members. Members of this committee developed the “Talking Points” for the one-on-one Council Member visits.

● **Support for Award Programs**

The CoA worked in the first quarter with other partner organizations to recognize outstanding service to older adults in Montgomery County. These activities include:

- **Community for a Lifetime Award:** The CoA developed an exciting new program entitled Community for a Lifetime Awards in which individuals may nominate a person or agency who has worked diligently to further the quality of life of our elders. During this quarter, a CoA work group assembled a panel that included representation by the County government, academia, alumni of the CoA, and current CoA commissioners. This committee solicited nominations, reviewed the nomination forms submitted, and awarded the first series of Community for a Lifetime Awards to Marcia Pruzan, Senior Fellow for Age Friendly Montgomery, and Carol Craig, for the Senior Nutrition Program.
- **Neal Potter Path of Achievement Award:** Presented in partnership with the Commission on Aging and The Beacon newspaper, the Neal Potter Path of Achievement award each year honors two residents aged 60 and older whose lifetime of volunteer service and commitment to Montgomery County make them outstanding role models for young and old alike. The CoA award committee, staffed by Betsy Carrier, Nikki Ezeani, and Hillery Tsumba, reviewed all nominations and selected the two awardees for this year.
- **Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame:** The CoA created two nomination packages – one for Miriam Kelty and one for Odessa Shannon - for the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame. Odessa Shannon was inducted into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame as a result of the CoA nomination.

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 activities at CoA’s monthly meetings.

The CoA has appointed formal liaisons to the following Boards, Commissions, and Committees:

- Parks and Recreation – Kendell Matthews
- People with Disabilities – Hillery Tsumba
- Health – Betsy Carrier
- Human Rights – Laurie Pross

- Mental Health – Laurie Pross
- Coalition on End of Life - Laurie Pross
- Transportation – Wayne Berman