

Commission on Aging

February 25, 2021

9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual via Zoom

Members Present

Barbara Selter, Chair
Edgar Rivas, Vice Chair
Janice Zalen, Secretary
Richard Jourdenais, Budget Officer
Jean Dinwiddie, Past Chair
Wayne Berman
Neal Brown
Joyce Dubow
Arunima Ghosh
Miriam Kelty
Morris Klein
Nanine Meiklejohn
Rev. Dr. Ruby Moone
Beverly Rollins
Monica Schaeffer
Mary Sweeney
Marsha Weber
Arthur Williams
Ryan Wilson

Members Absent

Karon Phillips

Maritza Rivera
Ann M. Serafenas
Katie Smith
Tho Tran
Hillery Tsumba

Alumni Members

Stephanie Edelstein
Austin Heyman
Chuck Kaufman

Liaisons

David Engel, GROWS
Monique Gardner, African-Amer. Health.
Lori Marks,
Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montg.

Speakers

Enrico Lachica, MC Dept of Health
Robert Jensen, Greenhouse Nursing

Staff

Eileen Bennet, Long Term Care Omb.
Patrice McGhee Director, AAA
Shawn Brennan, DHHS
Tremayne Jones, DHHS

Welcome – Barbara Selter, Chair

Chair Barbara Selter welcomed everyone and took roll of attendees. She noted that the agenda is long and discussion may have to be cut off due to time constraints. Curtailed discussions can be continued by email.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Update – Patrice McGhee

- On January 21, MD Department of Aging surveyed the AAA Title III Programs. The results appear favorable. AAA submitted additional requested documentation and a final report will be forthcoming.
- Erin Smith, Data Manager, left Montgomery County (MC) government and her position was posted internally until today when it will be posted externally. **Please alert qualified individuals to this opening.**
- Effective March 1, nursing home visits will resume in nursing facilities with no known COVID cases. Long-term-care ombudsman may visit only one nursing home per day. To date, one long-term-care ombudsman has had both vaccines.

During question-and-answer time, Arthur Williams requested that Patricia McGhee contact him off-line.

State Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) Decision Not to Renew County MOU for County Surveyors and Inspections – Enrico Lachica, Clinical Nurse Administrator, MC DHHS, Licensure and Regulatory Division

Enrico Lachica explained that OHCQ, which is the State regulatory agency, has had a decades-long contract with MC for the County DHHS to conduct surveys in MC nursing facilities. Ten county staff perform this function. At a FY2022 state budget meeting, OHCQ announced that it was eliminating this contract and would be creating 7 new positions at OHCQ instead. Only 4 of these new positions would be for nursing facility surveys and there is no guarantee that the 4 nursing facility surveyors would be dedicated to MC. Thus, this change is likely to lead to decreased oversight. Mr. Lachica is especially concerned because a poorly rated, private equity firm recently purchased two MC nursing facilities and less oversight could lead to cutting corners by this new owner. Also, the good relationship developed over many years between the Ombudsman Program and the surveyors allows for better care of residents and the resolving of issues in less adversarial and quicker ways. The following additional points were made during questions and answers:

- There is no guarantee that the 4 nursing facility surveyors would be dedicated to nursing facilities.

- By regulation, complaints must be investigated within 10 days. 2015-2020 state data show that the state took 30-35 days and the MC program took 20 days.
- The cost for the MC personnel is shared between MC and the State.
- It is possible that surveyors from outside the County may conduct some surveys. When a surveyor works in multiple jurisdictions, it is difficult to have intimate knowledge of the facilities and the local ombudsman program. (One Commissioner noted that this might be a good thing.)
- It is Mr. Lachica's understanding that the rationale for this change is that it is a business decision.
- Mr. Lachica suggested that before this change is made, a study of its potential impact is needed.

After much discussion about the appropriate CoA role in this issue, the following Motion and Amendment were made:

Motion: Barbara Selter will send an email to Dr. Nye, OHCQ requesting additional information; and she will set up a joint meeting with the Public Policy and the Health and Wellness Committees to determine and recommend CoA actions, and these recommendations will be brought to the full Commission for approval.

Amendment: Barbara Selter also will notify the appropriate County Council member about this issue.

The motion as amended passed.

Eileen Bennet, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, will send Barbara Selter the name of the appropriate County Council member.

Speaker: Robert Jensen, Green House Nursing Facilities

Robert Jensen presented on reforming nursing home care in the post-COVID era. He provided a wealth of information, including:

- MD is behind many other states in the percentage of Medicaid dollars allotted to home- and community- based services (HCBS).
- Nursing home residents in MD are 0.2% of the population, but accounted for 29% of COVID deaths.
- Green House/Small House is a solution to fortifying nursing facilities while making them better places to live.
- There were significantly lower rates of COVID infections in Green Houses and small houses.
- Research (2007-2011) found better quality of life, better outcomes and more direct care time per resident per day (23-31 minutes more) in these houses.
- As important as the physical environment is, the staff is even more important.

- Green houses have 10-12 private bedrooms with private bathrooms that surround the kitchen, living room and dining area. No areas are closed to residents. The front door is locked and visitors must knock. These are “homes,” not “home-like” residences. They replace top-down, clinically driven organizational models with a partnership between the clinical and direct care teams. Self-managed, direct-care teams work in a universal caregiver model, i.e., provide personal care, cook, clean, lead activities.
- Green House is a trademark term. Some adopters follow the full model. Some adopt all the practices, but do not join the Green House Program.
- 27 states have Green Houses, but there are no Green Houses in MD.
- Bill Thomas, Green House founder, drew inspiration from little homes such as you see in Oregon and Washington and MC.
- The challenges to implementing the Green House business model include:
 - Currently, there is little replacement or expansion of nursing facilities;
 - Green Houses require a reasonable number of private-pay residents;
 - It is a counter-intuitive model to people who are used to the traditional model; and
 - Nursing facility owners believe it is not economically feasible.
- Many Green House practices have been implemented in traditional nursing facilities
- While it is important to look toward increasing HCBS, there always will be some individuals in need of nursing facilities, so it is important to also work toward improving nursing facilities.
- State/County initiatives that could be implemented over the next 12 months include:
 - Rebalance long term supports and services to majority HCBS by increasing HCBS funding, expediting the eligibility process, enhancing case management and addressing identified gaps.
 - Nursing facility reform by pursuing a financial/business study that examines living wage for direct care staff, all private rooms, universal direct care worker role and self-managed direct caretakers.
 - Revising nursing facility rates.

Due to time constraints, there was little time for questions. Questions should be emailed to Barbara Selter or Joyce Dubow who will forward them to Mr. Jensen.

Commission on Aging Business

Approval of January Minutes

Minutes were approved.

Budget Report

Budget Officer Richard Jourdenais reported that there were no expenditures this month. The account balance increased as a result of a bank investigation of a fraudulent check. There is \$4,895.11 in the Commission's account.

COA Letters

- To date, the Commission has not received a response to its letter regarding COVID vaccinations in MC.
- Janice Zalen was thanked for writing a letter in support of SB204/HB216 on assisted living standards.
- David Engle was thanked for writing a letter in support of HB910, which would require that insurers provide a hearing aid benefit of \$750 per ear.
- Ryan Wilson was thanked for writing a letter in support of HB903, which would establish a task force to study MD's Public Guardianship Program.

Public Forum

The Public Forum will be held on May 18 or 19, depending upon the availability of the County Executive. The MC Public Information Office agreed to host the Forum. The Social Isolation and Loneliness of Seniors (SILOS) Task Force is hard at work planning the Forum and additional help is welcome. **Please contact Barbara Selter if you are willing to help with the Public Forum.**

Neal Potter Awards

Commission members Karon Phillips, Miriam Kelty and Richard Jourdenais are serving as judges. **It is important for all CoA members to promote nominations.**

Planning for Visits with County Council Members

Barbara Selter thanked Tremayne Jones for arranging meeting dates, and Shawn Brennan for preparing an on-line sign-up sheet. There will be a limit of three Commissioners at each meeting and Commissioners should not sign up for more than two meetings. Hillery Tsumba will be asked to present advocacy tips and the CoA's message at the March Commission meeting.

Update on Seniors Today Interviews

Jean Dinwiddie reported that interviews are ongoing. The first interviewee expressed interest in being a substitute host. The group with the team approach has withdrawn and two interviews are scheduled for tomorrow.

Update on Task Forces

- **Social Isolation (SILOS) Task Force:** Jean Dinwiddie reported that SILOS is making good progress planning the Public Forum. The theme of the Public Forum is

“Countering Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults.” Since it is Zoom, it will be a shorter meeting with only one panel.

- **Task Force on Dementia, Policing and Racial Equity:** Jean Dinwiddie reported that she, Arlee Wallace and Katy Smith are working together to finalize the Task Force’s Report. This working group replaces the recommendations meeting discussed at the January Commission meeting. The Commission will have an opportunity to vote on the document and all of its recommendations upon its completion.

New Initiatives

- **Communications Committee:** The first meeting of this new Committee will be held on March 15 at 9:15 am. **Please let Jean Dinwiddie, Barbara Selter, or Beverly Rollins know if you would like to join the Communications Committee.**
- **Enhanced Orientation and Buddy System for New Commission Members:** Because of time constraints, this topic is being handled by email. **Please email Barbara Selter your thoughts on where there are gaps and problems with the current orientation, your suggestions on how to improve the orientation and if you think it would be helpful to have a buddy system.** The current vacancies must be announced before there is any movement on looking for new Commission members. The Interview Committee is made up of Joyce Dubow, Miriam Kelty and Karon Phillips. They are asked to stress to the interviewees the importance of making active contributions to the Commission and having a high level of commitment.

Committee Reports

Health and Wellness Committee (HWC)

Co-Chair Neal Brown reported that at their last HCW meeting, Jennifer Long, DHHS, presented on the County’s 240-777-3000 number and noted that it has received over 20,000 calls. **She asked that the Commission help to promote the number.** Erin Smith, SHIP Contract Monitor, discussed the SHIP Program and asked that the CoA help to **promote the SHIP program.** The Committee also discussed the need for more home-based care particularly for individuals without Medicaid or other resources. This is the topic of their next meeting on March 2.

Aging in Community (AIC)

Monica Schaeffer, AIC Co-Chair, reminded everyone that this Committee meets on the second Tuesday of the month and all are welcome. She reported that at its February 9 meeting, they discussed the Village Movement in MC. There are 27 villages and a comprehensive guide and interactive map is available on-line. The March 9 agenda will focus on transportation and Sam Oji, Montgomery County Department of Transportation will give a short presentation on how the Commission can support better transportation.

Public Policy Committee (PPC)

Co-Chair Ryan Wilson announced that the PPC meets the second Thursday of the month and all are welcome. At the last meeting, members discussed preparations for the April visits with County Council members. No more legislative action is anticipated for this very strange legislative session. HCBS continues to be a big problem and this might be a good topic for a future commission meeting. **Barbara Selter, Monica Schaeffer, Marsha Weber, Ryan Wilson and Marcia Pruzan will communicate about this off-line.**

Communications Committee (CC)

The CC's next meeting on March 15 will focus on Seniors Today.

Liaison Updates

- Lori Marks, Link Generations, was introduced. Ms. Marks explained that she is not an official liaison, but was delighted to observe the meeting.
- Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montgomery, reported that there will be a regional age-friendly meeting in May. May 4 will cover regional issues and May 5 will have speakers on home-sharing and on crimes against seniors and vulnerable adults.

New Business

- Shawn Brennan noted that the auditory problems on the Zoom call today is a serious problem that needs to be fixed. **She will ask IT for their assistance, but asks that everyone do some research.**
- Chuck Kaufman suggests that ageism and financing home care should be considered as topics for the Commission as long as it is carefully focused on what the Commission wants to accomplish.
- Wayne Berman suggests that the Commission look into how the COA can be a force for innovation in MC.
- Barbara Selter noted that it is the role of the CoA to advocate for long term items and being visionaries.
- Edgar Rivas wondered if we could have a brainstorming session at a Commission meeting and other Committee business could be handled by email to allow more time to brainstorm.

Adjourn

Action Items

(These action items are based on a review of the minutes)

1. Let interested, qualified data managers know of the County's open position.
2. Barbara Selter will send an email to Dr. Nye requesting information on termination of County MOU, and will set up a joint meeting with the Public Policy and the Health and Wellness Committees for further discussion.

3. Barbara Selter will notify the appropriate County Council member about the OHCQ budget issue.
4. Contact Barbara Selter if you are willing to help with the Public Forum.
5. Promote nominations to the Neal Potter Awards
6. E-mail Jean Dinwiddie, Barbara Selter, or Beverly Rollins if you would like to join the Communications Committee.
7. E-mail Barbara Selter your thoughts on where there are gaps and problems with the current orientation, your suggestions on how to improve the orientation and if you think it would be helpful to have a buddy system.
8. Promote the County's 240-777-3000 number and the SHIP program,
9. Ryan Wilson, Marcia Pruzan, Barbara Selter, and Monica Schaeffer will communicate about HCBS off-line.
10. Shawn Brennan will ask IT about the auditory problems experienced during the meeting.
11. Everyone should attempt to research solutions or explanations of the auditory problems experienced during the meeting today.