

**Commission on Aging  
Meeting Minutes  
October 22, 2020**

**Location:** Zoom Call  
**Time:** 9:30a – 12:00p

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>
Jean Dinwiddie, Chair	Ruby Moone
Amoke Alakoye, Vice-Chair	Tho Tran
Beverly Rollins, Secretary	Hillery Tsumba
Ryan Wilson, Budget Officer	
Wayne Berman	<b>Alumni Members</b>
Neal Brown	Chuck Kaufman
Joyce Dubow	
Stephanie Edelstein	<b>Guests</b>
Mort Faller	Ellen Coren, Chesapeake Public Strategies
Arunima Ghosh	David Engle, GROWS
Richard Jourdenais	Seda Gelenian
Miriam Kelty	Kendall Mathews, Greater Stonegate Village
Morris Klein	Beth Shuman, County Council Legislative Aide
Karen Maricheau	
Nanine Meiklejohn	<b>Liaisons</b>
Karon Phillips	Adriane Clutter, Department of Recreation
Edgar Rivas	Denise Israel, Department of Transportation
Maritza Rivera	Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montgomery
Barbara Selter	Sean O'Donnell, Public Health Office
Ann M. Serafenas	Liz Rhee, Asian American Health Initiative
Monica Schaeffer	Robin Riley, Department of Recreation
Katie Smith	Sara Swarr, Department of Recreation
Mary Sweeney	Arlee Wallace, African American Health Program
Marsha Weber	
Arthur Williams	<b>Staff</b>
Janice Zalen	Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services
	Shawn Brennan, Department of Health and Human Services
	Tremayne Jones, Department of Health and Human Services

## **Welcome**

Chair Jean Dinwiddie opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and taking roll.

## **Updates from Area Agency on Aging**

Dr. Brunetto provided the following updates:

- The HHS Committee of the County Council will hold a meeting in November where Chair Dinwiddie will be able to present the CoA's FY22 budget priorities.
- Dr. Orlando Santiago has been appointed as the new chief of Behavioral Health Services. He replaced Dr. Raymond Crowell after Dr. Crowell was appointed as HHS director. The CoA may want to invite Dr. Santiago to speak at an upcoming CoA meeting.
- The County's Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is busy celebrating October as "Residents Rights Month." The theme of the celebration is "Connection Matters."
- HHS has partnered with Leisure World to be a testing site for COVID.
- The County has resumed prioritizing who is eligible for the Senior Nutrition program. On November 8 meals will not be delivered to individuals able to procure and prepare their own meals. The County is contacting those individuals now.
- The County's COVID Corps has been extended to October 31, 2020. There is no information on what activities will be conducted for affected groups after the program is stopped.
- Community Partnerships has a part-time position opening for a liaison with the LGBTQ community. Once the position is filled, the CoA may want to invite that individual to speak at an upcoming meeting.
- This month is the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dementia Friendly Initiative in Montgomery County. November is "Caregivers Awareness Month" and the focus will be on the Dementia Friendly Initiative. Montgomery County's Age-Friendly Initiative also celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary recently and the County Executive was able to join the celebration,
- A virtual ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on October 23, 2020 for a new apartment building for older adults in Silver Spring. It is called Willow Manor at Fairland and will include 120 units, 60 for lower income residents. It is a public/private partnership.

## **Public Health Update**

Sean O'Donnell, Administrator of the County's Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Program, provided an update on what the County has been doing for older residents during the COVID crisis.

Mr. O'Donnell reported that during their efforts the staff have worked with a lot of County agency partners as well as partners in the private sector. They began by working with community health care partners in congregate living settings, especially with obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE). Mr. O'Donnell's staff has also worked with congregate living settings on social distancing and obtaining and using disinfectants, and also on reopening policies. The County is still getting PPE out to caregivers.

In addition to PPE, staff are working on contact tracing to try to limit the COVID spread, and they also help with the County's testing events. For individuals who cannot visit a testing site, ready responders visit them in their home. The responders make visits on most days of the week. This information is available on the

County's website. Individuals can also contact the County's Call Center for information. The Call Center is staffed with nurses, and many of them are bi-lingual. There are also call lines that provide translations. Similar measures for non-English speakers are available at the test sites.

Turnaround for test results is still five days, although staff are now getting a lot of results back within the next day or two. Recently, staff started emailing results out to people, and they are sent every day. The program is looking into rapid response capabilities. Individuals with positive responses and people with no email addresses are contacted by telephone.

Private partners are conducting 90 percent of the COVID testing. The tests the County is using are uniform; shallow nasal swabs are being used. They are less uncomfortable. The County allows individuals to swab their own nose and collect their own specimen, but staff will assist if necessary.

Originally, health care workers were being tested every three to seven days but now it depends on whether the community where they are working has infections. These workers can now go without a test for as long as a month if there are no infections in the community.

## **Liaison Updates**

### ***Age-Friendly Montgomery***

Senior Fellow, Marcia Pruzan, provided a brief explanation of Age-Friendly Montgomery. This month when the Initiative received recertification it got a lot of praise for the work that has been completed under its auspices. The Initiative's 10 workgroups are now actively looking into the issue of social isolation.

Although there is no line item in the County's budget for the Initiative, every County department is instructed to set aside money in their individual budgets for older adult activities. Each of the Initiative's workgroups is chaired by a community partner and a County employee.

### ***African American Health Program***

Arlee Wallace was not available to report so will be asked to give an update on the program's activities at the next CoA meeting.

### ***Asian American Health Initiative***

Liz Rhee noted that she has just joined this staff but will have an update at the next CoA meeting.

### ***Department of Transportation***

Denise Israel reported that staff have been involved in several vital operations during the Pandemic. For one thing, the buses must be cleaned frequently, and partitions have to be installed. Face coverings are required, and bus fares have been suspended since March. Many bus service levels were dropped, including some routes. The County is still not back to full-service levels and some routes are still not being run. In January 2021 more routes will be added. The buses can only be partially filled. Ridership has dropped substantially.

The County started its Flash bus service on October 14, 2020 in eastern sections of the County. Its micro-transit bus service has been suspended during the Pandemic but will resume in November. The Call-n-Ride program has extended all recertifications for those services. Currently, individuals will have to recertify to qualify for the program by October 31, but the County is now revisiting that date. The Department has also started a central delivery service where taxi drivers can deliver groceries and other things. Because of COVID, there are new safety precautions in place for taxis and taxi drivers in the County.

### ***Department of Recreation***

Sara Swarr reported that Department of Recreation staff have been helping on several County projects including working with other organizations to deliver meals. Ms. Swarr noted that she will look into whether the CoA's fact sheet on hearing loss can be distributed with the meal deliveries.

### **Commission on Aging Business**

#### ***Approval of September CoA Minutes***

The CoA voted to approve the September meeting minutes.

#### ***Budget Report***

Commissioner Ryan Wilson reported that the CoA has \$4,945.11 in its budget.

#### ***Update on FY22 Budget Priorities***

Commissioner Stephanie Edelstein reported that the CoA's letter to HHS regarding its FY22 budget priorities must be limited to one page and only the two top priorities can be discussed. The CoA members decided that the letter should address funding for older renters who need legal assistance to avoid eviction, and funding for two additional social worker positions at HHS – one for the Adult Protective Services and one for the Public Guardianship program.

#### ***Seniors Today***

Former CoA member, Amy Harbison, originally accepted the position of host on an interim basis, 18 months ago. Amy has asked the CoA to find another host, but she will only remain the *Seniors Today* program host until the end of the year. Auditions will be held for a new host with Ms. Harbison and CoA alumni members, Austin Heyman and Marcia Pruzan, serving on the evaluating panel. Any CoA members interested in auditioning should send Chair Dinwiddie an email. The CoA will be looking for current or past CoA members to host.

#### ***Attendance Policy***

Commissioners can only miss three meetings in a rolling 12 month calendar year.

### ***Task Force on Dementia, Policing, and Racial Equity Recommendations***

The Public Policy Committee has reviewed the Task Force's draft report and recommendations and has provided comments. The next step in the process is for the Task Force members to review and address those comments. The Task Force has requested a meeting be scheduled with Task Force members and the Public Policy Committee to discuss the review comments.

### ***Update on Social Isolation Task Force***

The co-chairs of the Health and Wellness Committee and the Aging in Community Committee have met twice to discuss the issue of social isolation. The Committees would like to develop a Task Force and schedule a meeting within the next two weeks. Possibly, County employee Tina Purser-Langley, could work with them. Co-chairs for the Task Force are being sought. David Engle and CoA members Jean Dinwiddie, Monica Schaeffer, Maritza Riveria, Neal Brown, Barbara Selter, Miriam Kelty, Marsha Weber, Wayne Berman, and Amoke Alakoye volunteered to serve on the Task Force.

### ***Update on Nominations for 2021 Officers***

The nominating Committee working on the officer nominations for 2021 has held two meetings and has gotten a few nominations. Interviews will be conducted on October 28 with the interested parties. The Committee hopes to have a slate of officers prepared to vote on at the November CoA meeting.

### ***Gaithersburg Legislation***

The Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC) is attempting to purchase the Holiday Inn in Gaithersburg from the BF Saul Company. HOC plans to convert it into mixed-income apartments for older adults. The property is currently zoned for commercial use. HOC believes it should fall under a "public use" clause that would allow for residential use without rezoning. The city of Gaithersburg has proposed a Zoning Text Amendment that would prohibit residential use at that site. Chair Dinwiddie and Commissioners Eddie Rivas, Marsha Weber, Wayne Berman, Mary Sweeney, and Nanine Meiklejohn volunteered to look into this issue, along with guest, David Engle. A hearing will be held on November 16 with the Mayor and Gaithersburg City Council regarding this issue.

### **Committee Reports**

#### ***Aging in Community***

Aging in Community Committee members joined with members of the Health and Wellness Committee at their October meeting and met with E.A. Casey from the AARP Foundation to discuss older adults and social isolation. In November, the AiC Committee may look at the new Willow Manor at Fairland affordable housing building that is currently under construction. A speaker from Habitat America has been invited.

## ***Health and Wellness***

The joint meeting with the Aging in Community Committee regarding social isolation issues went well. The Health and Wellness Committee will start looking at other priority areas in November.

## ***Public Policy***

At its October meeting the Public Policy Committee discussed the CoA's budget priorities and the upcoming County Council meeting regarding the budget. The Committee is developing a memo for the CoA to submit to the Council. That memo will be discussed by the Public Policy Committee and the Executive Committee, and then Chair Dinwiddie will present it to Council on November 18.

A date has not yet been scheduled for the CoA's annual Legislative Breakfast. The Committee is looking toward a date in late November or early December. Because it will be a Zoom meeting it does not have to be a breakfast.

The Committee will be meeting on November 5 instead of November 12 and members of the Task Force on Dementia, Policing, and Racial Equity were invited to attend to discuss their report and recommendations.

## **Upcoming Events**

***November 18:*** Chair Dinwiddie will provide testimony on CoA FY22 budget priorities to the County Council

***November 19:*** Jack VanDerhei, Research Director, Employee Benefit Research Institute, will discuss the status of the Social Security Trust Funds

***TBD:*** Annual Legislative Breakfast

***December 17:*** Will Jawando, member, Montgomery County Council, will discuss housing and policing issues

***January 28, 2021:*** Barry Hudson, Director, Public Information Office

## **Adjourn**