

COA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – March 15, 2018

In attendance

Committee members: Isabelle Schoenfeld, Stephanie Edelstein, Syed Yusuf, Richard Jourdenais, Alan Kaplan, Judy Peres (by phone), Ryan Wilson.

Staff: Odile Brunetto, Director, Area Agency on Aging (AAA)

Approval of February Minutes

The minutes from the February Executive Committee meeting were approved.

Budget and Finance Advisor's Report - Syed

The COA account has a balance of \$5,662.31.

Chair's Report

Isabelle attended HHS Director Uma Ahluwalia's quarterly meeting with HHS boards, committees, and commissions. Uma provided guidance on what election-related activities are permitted/not permitted for B/C/C members. Isabelle will provide information about that issue at COA's March meeting.

Isabelle reported on a recent series of meetings with selected County officials. They included:

- Charles "Chuck" Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive (Isabelle and Stephanie);
- Robin Riley, Acting Director, Dept. of Recreation; (Isabelle and Stephanie).
- Uma Ahluwalia, HHS Director and Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services; plus Odile (Isabelle and Stephanie).
- Hans Riemer, President, Montgomery County Council; plus, Jason Fasteau (Isabelle, Stephanie, and Amoke).

The conversations were intended to obtain feedback on COA activities from County government leaders most involved in our work, and to learn how we could prepare for the upcoming transition in County leadership. All meetings were successful and informative. Isabelle will provide written highlights of the meetings later this month, but meanwhile shared some general take-away items, including the following suggestions that COA:

- be visible at all stages of County budget process;
- increase COA membership diversity (work with Office of Community Partnerships);
- support conducting a COA Diversity/Inclusion event at future COA monthly meeting

- prepare for the transition by developing a white paper on issues and challenges, programs, and activities related to older adults, including information on COA, Age-Friendly, and the Senior Initiative for distribution just before Thanksgiving;
- consider holding a summit on aging issues in December 2018;
- track candidate statements on aging issues and remind them of their commitments if they are elected.

AAA Director's Report

Odile reported that the 2018 Senior Resource Guide is now available at libraries and other locations where the Beacon is distributed. The guide includes two full page announcements about transportation resources.

The County has issued a new brochure on emergency preparedness for older adults. It is available at some locations in hard copy and can also be downloaded from the County website. It is being translated into 6-8 languages.

In response to concerns that the Executive Branch might be considering moving funds from the Transportation Services Improvement Fund into general fund, Roger Berliner has written to remind the Department of Transportation that the law requires this fund to be used only to improve the delivery of accessible transportation, transportation for eligible seniors, and transportation for persons of limited income.

Adult Day Care providers, who rely on Medical Assistance and other funding streams for reimbursement of transportation and other costs, are concerned that their funding is too low to meet the requirements of the new County minimum wage law. They have approached the Council about this concern.

Group home providers have been meeting with the Fire Marshall to try to develop guidelines for how group homes and residential care facilities of varying sizes and building structures can meet fire and safety codes. The Fire Marshall will have an information table at the March 28 Public Forum. Montgomery County is also participating in a new statewide task force looking into this issue.

The County Executive's budget will be released later today. Odile will send it out and will analyze it as it applies to COA budget priorities, so we can follow up with in-person meetings with Council members (see below).

Public Forum – March 28

Isabelle reported that planning for the Public Forum is in the final stages. The agenda is set, speakers are confirmed, and breakout session facilitators and recorders have been identified. Marcia Pruzan, AF Senior Fellow, has been instrumental in helping to organize the event and in

working with Isabelle on producing the Accomplishments Booklet that will be presented to CE Ike Leggett to honor him.

Approximately 100 people have registered. COA members who have not yet registered should do so, even if they will be working at the event.

Mr. Leggett has accepted the invitation to make remarks. Former COA chair Elaine Binder will moderate the forum. Hank Greenberg, Director, MD AARP will attend to announce that the Age Friendly Montgomery certification has been extended until 2020.

It was suggested that COA members' name tags be a different color from other participants.

Odile noted that the hall where the forum will be held was recently renamed in honor of the Buffalo Soldiers. The agenda will be updated to reflect this.

Committee reports

HSCS (Judy and Alan)

Judy reported that HSCS coordinated with PPC to draft a letter supporting a regulation to implement the state's electronic advance directives program.

HSCS also drafted a letter in support of a grant application by the Montgomery County End of Life Coalition to conduct a health decision making campaign. Judy thanked Odile for her assistance in getting the letter out on a very short timeframe.

The committee has decided to focus on assisted living affordability issues as its winter focus. They are identifying speakers for future meetings and will soon identify assignments for committee members. This focus means that there will be less focus on nursing home issues. Isabelle, who attended the last meeting, commented on the high level of engagement of COA members and of stakeholder attendees.

AIP/C&P (Dick)

The March meeting presenter was Sarah Reddinger from Habitat for Humanity, who discussed accessory apartments and accessory dwelling units, and the regulations governing those housing options. Isabelle also acknowledged the stakeholder guests' engagement in this meeting.

Public Policy (Ryan)

PPC is monitoring state bills that impact older Marylanders and sharing relevant information with PPC members and other committee co-chairs, with offers to help draft letters on issues that those committees deem to be of priority.

PPC has drafted – or coordinated in cooperation with the Aging in Place/Community & Planning (AIP/C&P) and Health Planning, Services, and Community Supports (HSCS) committees – the drafting of COA letters of support for several bills that have been introduced in the General Assembly, and that fall within COA priorities, including the following:

- SB 4 to establish a task force to study quality of care in nursing homes;
- SB 386 to set time frames for OHCQ to investigate serious complaints;
- SB 427 to change the residency requirement for seniors to get local property tax credit from 40 years owning the home to 25 years in the county (not necessarily in same home);
- SB 466/HB 556 to allow the register of wills to waive probate fees for low income heir when all that is involved is real property;
- SB 547 to allow state elections by mail (a letter of support was also sent Rockville City proposal for city elections);
- HB 956 to allow for attorneys' fees and treble damages in civil actions by elder abuse victims against perpetrator;
- HB 995 to allow Montgomery County to enact a just cause eviction law; and
- HB 1465 to protect homeowners from having house sold at tax sale if taxes owed are \$750 or less, and to provide other protections including notification of legal help and tax credit programs.

PPC is monitoring progress on these bills.

PPC also coordinated with HSCS to draft a letter supporting a regulation to implement the state's electronic advance directives program.

In response to a question about how COA identifies issues on which to engage in legislative advocacy, there was discussion about how COA priorities are not limited only to the County budget. They also guide COA's advocacy on legislation and program development.

There was discussion about the process for identifying issues on which COA should focus, and for reviewing letters, testimony, and other comments. Under the current process, PPC takes COA priorities into account when deciding whether to advocate on an issue. All letters, etc., are reviewed and signed by the COA chair. Letters not originating in PPC are reviewed by a PPC chair. A COA member who would like the COA to advocate on an issue that has not yet been identified, or that may not fall clearly within current priorities, brings that issue to PPC and the Executive Committee.

There was an acknowledgement that there are two different types of priorities which aren't always distinguishable. One is "budget priorities" and the other is "issue priorities." We need to define each of these and use those terms because mostly folks assume we're only talking about budget priorities.

There was discussion at the PPC meeting and the Executive Committee meeting today about how COA could be more active in Annapolis by testifying and meeting with members on issues of greatest priority. COA has done more testifying in the past. It was noted that testifying requires travel and can take up an entire day, and that it is not always easy for volunteers to make this commitment. This issue will be discussed at future PPC meetings.

It was also suggested that COA advocacy letters could be posted on the COA website. Currently, only testimony is posted. Stephanie will follow up on this.

Planning for April Councilmembers Visits

In April, COA members will meet with members of the County Council to discuss the budget and advocate for COA budget priorities.

Tremayne is setting up the times for those meetings and will create informational packets for Councilmembers. It was decided that if a Councilmember is not available at the requested time, we should ask for a time when the member is available, rather than meet only with staff.

PPC will develop talking points to go into the packets.

A sign-up sheet for COA members to identify who they will visit will be circulated at the COA meeting next week.

Isabelle will also testify in April on our budget priorities during a County Council hearing.

Agenda Review – March 22 COA meeting

The agenda for the March 22 meeting was approved.

Planning the April 26 COA meeting

Pam Zorich and others involved in the Senior Housing Affordability Study had been invited to present their findings at the April COA meeting. However, they will not be prepared to speak publicly about the study by this date. After some discussion, it was decided that instead, time on the agenda will be set aside for planning for the May and June meetings on Diversity and Inclusion (May) and on Preparing for the new Administration (June). We will break into two rooms for a brainstorming on each of these programs.

We do not know whether new members will be appointed in time to attend the April meeting. Isabelle will draft a letter of inquiry to Mr. Leggett.

Other

Isabelle asked for EC feedback regarding COA donations in memory of Commissioner's relative death. It was agreed that \$50.00 is a suitable donation.

The Montgomery County Resident Survey (Community Livability Report 2017) report was released last month. It indicates a drop – from 48% in 2009 to 42% in 2017 – in the percentage of respondents who would choose to retire in Montgomery County. Isabelle will check with Dennis Linders at CountyStat, to see whether other responses explain the reasons for this drop.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.