

**Minutes of Commission on Aging Meeting
January 25, 2024- Convened by Zoom
9:30a.m.-12:10p.m.**

Commissioners Attending:

**David Engel
Yvette Monroe
Wayne Berman
Betsy Carrier
Laurie Pross
Nikiru J. Ezeani
Beverly Rollins
Jean Dinwiddie
Morris Klein
Kate Stein
Virginia Cain
Barbara Selter
Mona Y. Grieser
Bob Levey
Kendall D. Mathews
Joyce Dubow
Sibo Ncube
Ric Ricardi
Katie Smith**

Alumni Attending:

**Marcia Pruzan
Marsha Weber**

Liaisons:

**Shawn Brennan
Monique Gardner
Phoebe Shih
Jim Resnick
Christine Hong
Ingrid Lizama
Tara Clemons Johnson
Sara Swarr
Stacy Sigler
Denise Israel
Ama Lee (AAHP)**

Mary Sweeney

Arthur Williams

Janice Zalen

Linda Bergofsky

Marie Sloan

Kathleen M. McGuinness

Rena Eichler

Staff:

Pazit Aviv

Peter Flandrau

Patrice McGhee

Kimberly Johnson

Tremayne Jones

Kristin Cummings

Absent:

Arunima Ghosh

Anna Maria Izquierdo-Porrera

Norman Goldstein

Community Members:

Patty Hagan

Eric (Kuokwa) Wang

Greg Hunter

Leah

Janine Tursini

Sarah House

Paul Moss, CFL

David Engel, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed the commissioners and guests.

DIVISION UPDATE:

Dr. Kimberly Johnson addressed us as the newly appointed Director of the Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging, updating us on the caregiver manager, the LTC Ombudsman supervisory position, the

nurse manager and the 6 AERS positions-all are moving through the system. Patrice McGhee noted that both the LTC and the Dementia navigation groups will be meeting every 2 weeks with the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA).

There was a short description of Senior Care, an adult day program which currently has no wait list. It offers exercise classes, meals, certain medical supplies, reimbursement for prescriptions, tech supplies; age and citizenship restrictions exist and it is subject to means testing.

LIAISON REPORTS:

Asian American Health Initiative: Phoebe Shih reported on their outreach effort with the Alzheimer's Association called French Corner and their presentation on "Understanding Medicare", done in person and virtually.

African American Health Initiative: Monique Gardner noted that there are free, recreational and educational programs in abundance in Silver Spring but that she had nothing else in particular to report.

Latino American Health Initiative: Ingrid Lizama introduced us to an interactive online exercise program, paired with kits promoting healthy eating, walking and a resource guide printed in both Spanish and English.

Age Friendly Montgomery: Shawn Brennan gave us an update that includes Secretary Roques' Longevity Ready Maryland approach to aging. Maryland is working with 9 other states and with the Center for Healthcare Strategies. The MDOA plan involves looking at housing, transportation, care coordination with all the sectors working in collaboration.

Recreation: Stacy Sigler reported that there are plans in the next months around Valentine's Day and tax preparation assistance; the new Silver Spring Recreation Center is now open.

Fire and Rescue: Jim Resnick reported that Longbranch and Holiday Park are active. 2 new civilian positions have been added in Risk Reduction for a total of 6.

Transportation: Denise Israel announced that there would be 2 additional Ride-on routes beginning in the summer of 2024.

Great Seneca Transit Network:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/GST/index.html>

Phase 1A (Pink and Lime lines) will connect the Shady Grove Metrorail station to the Traville Transit Center at the Universities of Shady Grove. The refined route alignments provide the following benefits:

- **Pink Line:** Links the busy Shady Grove corridor with Life Sciences Center via Medical Center Drive
- **Lime Line:** Uses I-370 to provide an express route to RIO, Crown Farm, and the heart of the Life Science Center
- Pink and Lime routes will operate on separate alignments to serve different parts of the Life Science Center area
- Expanded route coverage will maximize ridership potential

For older adults, the no-cost smart cards will continue past this July.

Senior SmarTrip® cards: Senior SmarTrip cards are free starting January 16th, 2024.

Arts for the Aging: Janine Tursini and Sarah House gave us a short overview of the community block grant which has been received by Arts for the Aging aimed at reducing isolation in 6 HOC buildings. There have been presentations of 8 online programs and 15 in person in an affordable, multi-lingual housing setting.

GUEST SPEAKER ON HOMELESSNESS: Christine Hong, Director, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness (SEPH) was our guest speaker on this topic. She thanked David and Shawn for their participation in the recent “point in time” count of unhoused

individuals in Montgomery County. She also reported that, although there had been an 11% decrease in the number of unhoused persons in the county between 2013 and 2018, there has been a 6% increase in that number between 2018 and 2023. The causes are multi-factorial: lack of affordable housing, structural racism, rising evictions, 47% of renters being rent-burdened, landlords declining in numbers, influx from other jurisdictions. There are over-arching issues as well: long-term lack of housing affects longevity negatively. There is an intersectionality between age and vulnerability and another one between the impact of the pandemic on access to healthcare and housing stability. Ms. Hong's office had established the goal of reducing the number of months older adults are without a home from 6 months to 3 months. She explained that the components of SEPH focus on preventing evictions and on rental assistance. There are 6 emergency shelters and 3 family shelters in hotel spaces. The housing support is offered at several levels:

- Exit bonus, personalized for each individual, often involving an employment referral;
- Rapid re-housing with mid-level 12-24 month case management;
- Permanent supportive housing for the most vulnerable.

The goal is to stabilize families, to provide longer term case management rather than merely handing out money. To date, over 19,000 households have received assistance. All rental assistance funding will be exhausted by May of 2024 and 28 positions will be terminated in June of 2024. Continuing funding is SEPH's highest priority.

There will soon be 70 new supportive housing units with online case management and medication monitoring services included. Montgomery County is currently recruiting for landlords who would be willing to work in cooperation with the county. These units will be staffed by an Assertive Community Treatment team using an interdisciplinary approach.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

-Communications:

Black History is being featured this month on 50+. The Ambassador program is in its pilot phase; the Library Liaison program is up and running.

-Aging in Community:

Wayne reported that Somer Cross did a presentation on changes to the MPDU program to include more senior housing units and Kate Chance did one on faith-based communities housing opportunities. He announced that the date of the Public Forum has been moved and that in February the Committee topic will be an update on Villages.

-Public Policy:

Morris described several bills coming up: at the State level; a LTC insurance study, at the County level; the County Property tax credit requiring home ownership for only 25 years instead of 40, and one on the changes to the right of first refusal at the County level.

-Health and Wellness: Mental Health is the issue being discussed.

ACTIONABLE ITEMS:

CoA will schedule meetings with all of the Councilmembers to promote all of our priorities. These meetings will occur after the County Executive's proposed budget is released in mid-March.

Nursing Home Inspection status will be on the agenda for next month.

A flow chart for mental health services could be helpful as a guide.

CoA could request additional funding for Somatic and Behavioral Health to support the needs of the aging unhoused population by means of the wrap-around services and assistance with ADL's described by Christine Hong.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:10p.m.