

**Commission on Aging
Minutes of the Meeting
April 27, 2023**

Call to Order–David Engel, Chair at 9:34

Roll Call-attendance taken by screen shot.

Those in attendance: David Engel, Virginia Cain, Joyce Dubow, Janice Zalen, Marsha Weber, Morris Klein, Mary Sweeney, Beverly Rollins, Jean Dinwiddie, Ric Ricciardi, Yvette Monroe, Ryan Wilson, Arthur Williams, Mona Grieser, Nikiru Ezeani, Laurie Pross, Bob Levey, Arunima Ghosh, Betsy Carrier, Wayne Berman, Katie Smith. Staff and other attendees: Patrice McGhee, Pazit Aviv, Tremayne Jones, Monique Gardner, Odile Brunetto, Cecily Coleman, Marcia Pruzan, Austin Heyman, Stacy Sigler, Tara Clemons Johnson, Peter Flandrau, Kuo-Hwa Wang, Shane Rock, Gemena Murchison, Holly Mancuso, Lorraine Driscoll, Matt Losak, Ingrid Lizama, Julie Miller, Laurie Orlov, Shawn Brennan,

AAA Director updates – Dr. Patrice McGhee, Director Area Agencies on Aging

- Patrice introduced two new staff members: Peter Flandrau to replace Shawn Brennan. He is a social worker with long and varied experience in the county in the department of Health and Human Services; and Cecily Coleman, ARPA program administrator, who will develop a marketing program aimed at augmenting and raising the visibility of aging and disability. She has a broadcasting and advertising background.
- The Four-year Area Plan is being drafted. A survey is being circulated to get feedback from the public. This plan feeds into the state plan that is developed by the state Department of Aging that in turn, submits it to the federal Administration for Community Living. A draft is due to the state in May and final submission is due June 19. Austin asked if the CoA is involved in preparing the report. Patrice responded that it is not although the CoA is cited in the report and the commission chair is invited to review the report. She encouraged members to participate in the survey.
- National Health Care Decision Day was April 16. In this connection, the Department of Aging is promoting information on advance directives to help people share and document their preferences.
- The Maryland Secretary of Aging will visit MOCO on July 11. During her visit, she will attend a senior center and eat a senior nutrition meal.
- Today is the ribbon-cutting for the Montgomery County Durable Medical Equipment Reuse drop off at the Shady Grove Refuse and transfer Station. The Rockville Senior Center is still a donation collection site as well as a pickup site.

Liaison Reports –

- Lorraine Driscoll-
 - working on learning what is available and determining how to restart workgroups.
 - Developing a survey for grandparents raising grandchildren
- *Recreation Community Outreach Manager*
 - Stacy Sigler reported on plans for the centenarian celebration to be held on May 12, the June 23rd Barbeque Bonanza.

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- She encouraged everyone to examine the senior center digital newsletters that are available on the Rec Department's website.
- World Elder Abuse Day will be commemorated with skits that were developed by older adults that have been edited and recorded.
- A new assistant director for the Schweinhaut senior center will start on May 8.
- May is Older American's Month.
- *AAHP Monique Gardner-*
 - Participants have been signed up for a complementary medicine program
 - A mindfulness program continues.
 - Onsite program at Smithsonian continues.
 - Also conducted a program with East County Villages and used teens to teach the use of Chrome books to older adults.
 - They sponsored a quilting event and they created a quilt.
 - There be a preview on the diaspora in September at the Smithsonian.
- *Latino Health Initiative*
 - Ingid Lizama-reported that testing and vaccination work continues.
 - There will be a campaign with Department of Transportation to promote pedestrian safety.
- *Villages*
 - Pazit reported that conversations about the hub and spoke model for the Villages continues. They are hoping for funding to support the development of the planned not-for- profit.
- *JCA*
 - Shane Rock reported that the Kensington Club in Gaithersburg has been reopened. This is a program for people with early-stage memory loss that provides a safe space and offers caregivers a respite. The JCA operates three sites and is exploring additional locations.
 - They are considering a Senior+ program that is an Americorps program that offers lower-income older adults the opportunity to mentor kids in lower income areas. This would be a 3-year grant located in the east and up-county areas that have been identified as priority areas.

Invited Speakers.

- *Laurie Orlov*: founder of Aging and Health Technology Watch –and expert in market research, trends, blogs and reports that provide thought leadership, analysis and guidance about health and aging-related technologies and services that enable boomers and seniors to sustain and improve their quality of life.
- The term of art to describe related activities is "Age-Tech," coined by AARP. It is comprised of four categories, all of which are necessary: Communication and Engagement Technology; Learning and Contribution; Safety and Security; Health and Wellness.
- AI is playing an increasingly important role in Age-Tech. This is a boom time for AI and there is a lot of investment in it with respect to products addressing the needs of older adults. AARP is sponsoring companies under its Age-Tech collaborative. NIH and NSF are funding programs in AI and Aging- funding research, including pilot projects to identify the roles of wearables, sensors, etc.
- Predictive analytics, the aggregation of data to characterize populations, is an important

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- product of technology and has multi uses.
- Robotics are being used to address workforce shortages in nursing homes and home care organizations, as is to AI to help overcome issues such as preponderance of errors, symptoms analysis.
 - Voice technology is important and ubiquitous- part of multi-modal interactions.
 - Technology training- online for older adults. OATS-partnership with AARP- boosts access in training of technology for older adults. Questions-
 - Joyce asked about the cost of retrofitting older homes to accommodate the new technologies; she also asked about the challenges of remote monitoring that relies on human vigilance to make the technology useful. And finally, she asked about privacy concerns and the potential for misuse of personal patient information. With respect to retrofitting, many newer technologies are wireless and depend on satellite transmission. Ms. Orlov acknowledged that there is the potential for human error, even with the new technologies, and agreed that the privacy concerns are real and that abuses are possible. Finally, Ms. Orlov stated that opt-in options were preferable to opting out.
 - Laurie asked about the potential for ethical pitfalls and stated that she thought AI could be opening a Pandora's Box. Ms. Orlov agreed and added that discriminatory practices could also arise. She said that ethical questions were of greater concern in the context of consumers but less so with businesses that have chief ethics officers. She suggested that for older adults, the ethical use of technology is the responsibility of the entity that deploys it to ensure that the technology is properly monitored.
 - Betsy asked how older adults could vet and curate new products. This will be difficult for older adults to do on their own. Ms. Orlov noted that AARP screens new products. She proposed that Senior centers will have to assume greater responsibility to ensure the products they offer are appropriate and safe. Professionals will be required to conduct this function because it is likely beyond the capability of most volunteers. Therefore, this function will have to be included in operating budgets.
 - Beverly asked how can older adults continue to be alerted to new technologies. An individual can sign up for Google Alerts to receive information on specific topics. They can also routinely refer to websites such as AARP/technology.org.
 - Mona asked about the affordability of high-speed internet to support the new technologies. The Federal government is investing in widening access to the Internet. Satellite communications mean you do not have to wire your house. Computer stores are a good source of information and can provide information. They can educate about the discount methods that are available
 - Art asked about supports for people who are blind and disabled. There are many sources for support for blind people that are jointly supported by government and tech companies. Assistive technologies are programmed into many technologies to meet the needs of those who are blind, hearing impaired, or disabled.
 - *Matt Losak, CEO of Renters Alliance*
 - He characterized the current situation of increasing residential rents as "forced migration of working and low-income families." Rent increases ranging from 10-50 percent are forcing people out of their homes. Some landlords are taking advantage of housing shortages. By raising rents to levels that are unaffordable for many, they are destabilizing housing and whole communities. People cannot

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afford to live here and many are leaving the county. (The population of MOCO has dropped.) While evictions are tripling, many self-evict by simply leaving their homes in anticipation of an actual eviction.

- There are very few protections for those living in rental units. Emergency rental assistance during covid was available but was inadequate to protect all in need. Housing instability is costly on many fronts- crime, education, workforce.
 - As a response to this crisis two competing bills have been introduced in the County Council:
 - The HOME Act- Introduced by- councilmembers Mink and Jawando would establish an annual maximum rent increase for rental housing in the County. The maximum allowance for a rent increase would be up to 3 per cent or the rental component of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) percentage, whichever is lower; and
 - the Anti-gouging Rent Protection bill, introduced by Andrew Friedsen, that would prohibit annual rent increases for certain rental units in the County from exceeding the “rent increase allowance,” defined as 8 percent of existing rent plus the CPI-U for the Washington Arlington Alexandria Area. There would be many exemptions, including: a unit that has been offered for rent for less than 15 years; a building originally designed and constructed to contain only 2 dwelling units, one of which the owner currently occupies as a principal residence. Mr. Losak stated that in some cases increases as high as 12 percent annually could be allowed under these provisions.
 - Investment in new construction will be exempt in both bills. This would exempt tens of thousands of people from protection.
 - There are substantial differences between the two bills. On June 15 the Planning, Housing and Parks committee of council will consider both bills to seek compromise.
 - Mr. Losak proposed two principles to guide consideration of the proposals. 1- The legitimate expenses of the landlord should be recognized and 2-the need to maintain affordable housing for renters. Unstable housing for seniors is devastating.
- **Commission on Aging Old Business**
 - *Approval of March CoA minutes- approved as presented.*
 - *Action/Report on Previous Business*
 - Morris presented a list of state legislative bills approved. He circulated via email a list of bills passed of interest to the Commission
 - There will be an in-person meeting of the COA in June at Wheaton Recreation Center with meal following from Senior Nutrition Program
 - Access Hears will have a booth at the Forum expo portion
 - Council meetings have been scheduled and held.
 - *Chair's Report*
 - **Review of recent events:**
 - Last week, the Villages hosted Carmel Roques, Secretary, Maryland Department of Aging. Sec. Roques' identified two areas of focus for her administration: preparing Maryland to be “longevity ready” and to prepare for the 100-year life span; and encouraging cross-sector

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collaboration between and among groups focused on aging issues such as the Villages and the CoA. At the same meeting, the New York Academy of Medicine presented a case for their technology and having them help Maryland create a Multisector Plan of Aging. We will hear more on this in May.

- Barbara Selter participated in the presentation to the HHS County Council on the results of the Home and Community-Based Workforce Task Force Report. Barbara, Eddie Rivas, and Dr. McGhee participated in the development of the report. We look forward to an in-depth briefing on these important issues and how the Commission should proceed in implementing the recommendations of the Task Force.
- Upcoming events:
 - The CoA Public Forum May 4th. David encouraged members to send out the flyer and get the word out this last week before the event.
 - Meetings are scheduled with councilmember Jawando on Zoom today at 2pm and on Monday in person in Rockville with councilmember Sayles at 12 noon. The Fani-Gonzalez meeting is in the works to be rescheduled. David thanked members of the Commission for attending the councilmember meetings and expressed appreciation to Tremayne for arranging them.
 - David reported that he was at the Wheaton Recreation Center to promote the in-person June 22nd CoA meeting which will start at 9:30 a.m. Carol Craig, from the Senior Nutrition Program has confirmed they will supply lunch at the end of the meeting. Menu options will be forthcoming.
- David's Insights:
 - A March 2023 "Growing Old in Northern Virginia" report states that to live well as we age, most will need to change how we live. The report highlights three categories of priorities: **Family, Home, and Finances**. This report is useful in informing how the CoA can effect changes in MOCO. For example, it suggests the need to support the family as a priority entity by making it easier to enter and remain in a caregiver role. We must support the Home priority by increasing the supply of affordable and accessible housing. We must support the Finances priority by helping individuals plan, earn and save more. This topic is relevant as we complete the Budget Priority meetings with councilmembers, and finalize the H & W project on Life Transitions As We Age, and the Aging in Community is preparing to hold the Technology Public Forum. David urged the members of the commission to think about what is important to older adults when choosing the next areas of focus. He suggested that a

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review of the analytics of the October 2022 to March 2023 Mont. Co. Senior website might inform the selection of the next set of budget priorities and advocacy efforts: #1 page views HOUSING, #2 Transportation, and #3 Caregiving. The #6 highest number of page views is Employment.

- David's concluding observation addressed homelessness. The FY 24 budget has a very large increase for the prevention of homelessness. It is not on our radar because it is a cross-cutting non-age-related budget category. The County Executive just reported that Montgomery County received \$5 million dollars in a HUD Grant and 30 vouchers to support the effort to end Homelessness. We are the only County in Maryland to receive these funds. The County initiative is to end Homelessness for all. David will reach out to Christine Hong the new Chief, Special Needs Housing, HHS. This should be part of a multisector approach to improve life for older adults in Montgomery County. The combination of the end of COVID supports, the rise of increased costs for renters, the lack of affordable housing, and the potential of an economic recession could result in the perfect storm for older adult residents unable to afford where they live. David would like the AIC to keep the homelessness coalition collaboration on its agenda.

- *Budget Report*
 - Available funds were reduced by \$225.00 for the purchase of three tickets to allow three commissioners to attend the affordable housing conference in May.

- Update on Public Forum Planning Committee-
 - Everyone was urged to sign up and to attend the Forum

- Councilmember Budget Meetings
 - Three remain to be held. There will have been 11 meetings with council members.

Committee Reports

- *Aging in Community*
 - Mona reported on the last meeting of the committee that featured four speakers who addressed universal design. The committee is interested in pursuing the issue. Features of universal design can benefit people of all ages, not only older adults.
 - The next AIC meeting on May 9 will be a follow-up to the forum.

- On behalf of Wayne, David announced the names of the three awardees for the Lifetime Achievement award.

- Communications
 - Beverly described the Library Liaison program and asked commissioners to volunteer to participate—especially those not otherwise engaged in COA activities. Interested people (one liaison per library is needed) should contact Beverly or Jean. Janice asked if every library has an older adult section. Apparently, every library has one. Janice volunteered to attend the Commission on Libraries meetings.
 - Jean described the Ambassador program that will be piloted beginning in

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September. This will involve public speaking so those commissioners who feel comfortable in this role are requested to volunteer after the job description is finalized. Jean and Beverly have conducted one session and a second is planned at Schweinhaut on May 3 at 1 p.m. The focus will be to describe county programs and to request feedback from the public.

- Mona asked about posting on Next Door. Jean suggested that they would investigate but mentioned that there are restrictions due to our connection to county government. Pazit stated it is probably ok to post and encouraged conversation with Ms. Anderson to confirm.
- Jean described upcoming programs for 50+.
- Public Policy-
 - Last meeting addressed county council meetings, status of state legislation, and next steps regarding nursing home inspections.
 - David asked if the issue of the rent increases would be on next committee agenda. Morris noted that a new law regulates how rent increases are communicated to renters that will go into effect in October.
- Health and Wellness-
 - Marsha reported that work on the transitions project is coming along.
 - Barbara Selter will describe the Home-care workforce task force next meeting.
- Proposals for the committee's next project will be discussed.

New Business

- There was no new business.

Adjourn 11:43