

MINUTES
Commission on Aging
January 26, 2023

Those in attendance: Commission members: David Engel, Virginia Cain, Wayne Berman, Joyce Dubow, Betsy Carrier, Barbara Selter, Nkiru J. Ezeani, Beverly Rollins, Jean Dinwiddie, Morris Klein, Ryan T. Wilson, Marsha Weber, Marcia Pruzan, Mona Y. Grieser, Kendall D. Matthews, Rev Ruby Moon, Katie Smith, Mary Sweeney,
 Staff and others: Shawn Brennan, Denise Israel, Phoebe Shih, Stacy Sigler, Lorraine Driscoll, Patrice McGhee, Rev Vikram, Neal Brown, Austin Heyman, Chuck Kauffman, Eric Colchamiro, Janine Tursini, Aidan Scott

Call to Order- Mr. Engel called the meeting to order and announced that attendance would be recorded via screen shots. He introduced Dr. Patrice McGhee, Director Area Agencies on Aging, who provide the AAA Director's report.

AAA Director update- Dr. Patrice McGhee

For the benefit of those new to the Commission and a refresher for other attendees, Dr. McGhee described the origins of Area Agencies on Aging. Area Agencies on Aging were established in 1973 under the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) to respond to the needs of adults ages 60 and older in every local community. The AAA strives to develop a range of options that allow older adults to choose the home and community-based services and living arrangements that suit them best. The AAA is part of a national network of over 670 Agencies established to improve the quality of life for older persons by creating a network that maintains a holistic view of aging. The AAAs are mandated to "foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems to serve older individuals. AAAs exist in every jurisdiction, 19 of which are in Maryland. The AAA's are required to have advisory bodies. In Montgomery County, the Commission on Aging serves in this capacity. Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief Aging and Disability Services in Montgomery County serves as the director of the AAA as well. In Montgomery County, the AAA provides a variety of home and community-based services and staff support to the Commission on Aging. In conjunction with community partners, the AAA is actively involved in administering County and state grant awards to contractors for public education/outreach, networking and referrals.

AAA Updates:

- Dr. McGhee noted that the new Maryland Secretary of Aging is Carmel Roques, who has a background in long-term care. A new HHS secretary is to be name. Bernice Hutchinson will act in the interim.
- The AAA has completed its report for the had Older American Performance System that includes a review of programs conducted by the AAA.
- Gate Better- a program conducted in conjunction with Schweinhart, North Potomac, and Holiday Park senior centers- provides help to those with cognitive decline in need of gate assistance (involves apparatus to help people navigate obstacles). It is a six-week, evidence-based approach to mitigate falls. Eventually, there will be a full rollout.
- There are open positions in AAA: Community nurses, vacancies in ombudsmen and AAA administrator. The new caregiver manager to replace Lily Fischer is Lorraine Driscoll who introduced herself.

Other Liaison Reports

- *Loraine Driscoll*- Caregiver manager for AAA- Ms. Driscoll is reviewing federal law requirements, research, etc., to familiarize herself with the requirements of her new position.
- *Phoebe Shih*- Asian Americans Health initiative- AHI's safety pedestrian poster and magnets- available in several languages-- have been widely distributed to the community and have been deemed a great success. (<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-bEBbuWxc0Csl3eAaaCtZMaFMZc4o1xBlcKneF3jb0NUM0FVS1M1NzFXUUhLUEIwSFQ0RVlWkpMNY4u>) Ms. Shih reported that AHI is working with the county transportation department to extend outreach to the community on enhance educational efforts on safety.
- *Denise Israel*
 - The department is moving ahead with Ride On Reimagined and expects the work to yield significant changes. They are focusing on 5 different geographical areas. Ms. Israel was asked how the Commission could be involved in this initiative and she agreed to facilitate this idea.
 - They are continuing to hire and train new bus operators. Training emphasizes technical and customer service skills. New drivers will be required to pass a test that will include these areas.
 - Ride On buses' fareboxes have been upgraded and will provide new data when a senior Smart Card is used.
 - The Real ID deadline has been extended to 5/25.
- *Marcia Pruzan*
 - Announced release of progress report for Age-Friendly of Montgomery. It will be available on line at the Age-Friendly site. Shawn Brennan will replace Ms. Pruzan as lead of this program. She is in the process of acquainting herself with colleagues and programs. The question was asked as to why there is no budget for the Senior Summit scheduled for October 2023. Several commissioners expressed concern about the county's failure to allocate funds for this event. It was noted that the county executive is committed but without a dedicated budget commission members remain concerned. Mr. Heyman observed that in 2015, there was a full-time staff person who conducted focus groups. He suggested this was right approach to planning for the summit.
- *Pazit Aviv*- reported that the Villages program is working on its hub and spoke proposal. A meeting is planned for all of the Villages because decisions on the proposal have to be made. A report has also been prepared.
- *Stacy Sigle*- Recreation Department
 - They are looking for those 100 and older because an event honoring this group is planned.
 - Barbeque bonanza will be on June 23.
 - Most centers are wrapping up celebrations for Asian new year and looking forward to Black History month.
 - Each center is participating in a bowling event. Health stepping across America- track steps and get people moving. Also, several events feed into MD Olympics.
 - The new Silver Spring center scheduled in May.
- *David Engel* mentioned need for liaison to the library board.

Presentation –Dr. McGhee offered a rundown of DHSS' disposition of the ARPA funds.

\$3.5 million will be available over two years to expand and innovate aging programming. Funding is issued by ACL. She noted that each program has specified funding.

1. Hire a contractor to develop and implement marketing and outreach strategies targeting County seniors, and provide operating funds to implement strategies.
2. Hire a temporary, Spanish-speaking community organizer to reduce isolation among seniors and serve the Spanish-speaking senior community in other ways. The results will inform similar efforts on behalf of seniors in other ethnic and language communities.
3. Provide light chore services (Laundry cooking shopping) to seniors on a short-term basis until clients regain their abilities or qualify for more permanent assistance. Contract with Home Care Partners or a similar personal care organization \$143,000 (an expansion of an existing program).
4. Offer grants for minor home repairs to senior homeowners willing to rent rooms in their homes through the County's Home Sharing program. The Home Sharing program is provided through a contract with Housing Initiatives Partnership (HIP), a local non-profit. This pilot program's goal is to enhance older adults' ability to age at home by matching homeowners who have space in their homes with people seeking a place to live. In the first year of the program HIP identified as a barrier to successful matches the cost of making rental spaces livable.
5. Home repairs-\$60k- to help people home share in partnership with Housing Initiative Partnership. Expands work already underway. Help to make space livable
6. Fund a contractual social worker/care manager to assess members of the County's senior Villages, recommend care plans and integrate the Village into the care team. The social worker will be a part of the AAA team and the villages will have access to information about this person's services. This will help them provide the best support for this member in the community. The social worker will collaborate with the AAA Village Coordinator to establish the referral and screening process and assure fair access to this service. \$90k Position is posted.
7. Add temporary additional operating funds to support work of new senior Villages in recovery from COVID. Expenses will include the development of hybrid meeting spaces; hiring a consultant to address unique challenges posed by COVID. Additional funding to support senior Villages in recovery from COVID 40k.
8. Expand access for seniors to escorted transportation. Contract with the Jewish Council for the Aging of Montgomery County (JCA) to provide escorted rides to seniors. \$36k
9. Provide participatory arts programming for older adults in long-term care settings to combat social isolation and enhance residents' quality of life. \$100k
10. Enhance affordable recreation for seniors in areas affected by Senior Center and Community Center closures during the pandemic. \$16k expansion of services already provided.
11. Expanding outings to cultural events for older adults-\$23k and \$17k -2 funding sources
12. Expand seniors' access to dental services, especially for dentures - through the DHHS senior dental program. HHS Public Health Services has contracts with several providers of basic dental services and denture work \$53k
13. Distribute tablets loaded with evidence-based health and wellness software programs. Partner with community groups, as well as with senior apartment buildings and neighborhoods experiencing recreation center closures. Hire a half-time, temporary contractor to manage the program who will be under the supervision of our Health Promotion Manager. \$156,330 plus more from another budget line. A broker will be hired to manage the program.
14. Provide on-line and in-person lifelong learning and caregiver support programming to increase participants' capacity to access online resources and increase social engagement. This staff will be in the County's Office of Broadband Programs (OBP) and will manage the expansion of an existing OBP contract with the "Senior Planet" program. Curriculum may include subjects like Accessing Healthcare Support through Tele-Medicine, Avoiding Online Scams, Accessing County Resources and Online Social Engagement as well as performing internet searches and using email and interactive video platforms like Zoom.
15. Fund Access Hears to increase access to hearing care and decrease isolation. \$250k. Access Hears is a

non-profit organization that connects individuals with hearing loss to solutions they need to age well. They have proposed a program to provide education about hearing loss and access to inexpensive hearing aid alternatives.

16. Expand PEARLS program that addresses depression in older adults. \$20k
17. Encourage in-congregate meals program \$316,000- already have 8 new restaurants in this. Just local non-chain restaurants are participating but seeking more. Brokers already in place.
18. Hire contractors to perform lunch site quality control, and to offer immediate feedback and training on proper meal service and administrative practices in senior nutrition programs. \$450k
19. Develop print materials in multiple languages directed at older adults to reach caregivers.
20. Provide expanded respite care through the ARC especially for traditionally underserved caregivers.

Questions about the ARPA presentation:

- Is the salary for social worker position in villages adequate? Rate was set based on allocation amount- Patrice noted that this position is a broker and compensation reflects the HR-established classification.
- Will distribution of tablets include one-on-one training? There will be technical support to tablet users
- What is the connection between the tablet program and the Senior Connection program? They are separate. The tablet program is an expansion of the Asian and HOC program. The office of broadband services that distributes Chrome books is another program—intent is to advance lifelong learning and to ensure that people know how to use the available services, including access free broadband services. Patrice noted that there are already positions -client assistant specialists and connectors to help people whose roles are-to be in the community to inform and assist re health and disability services.
- Re social cultural outings- how will people know how to access these? They are working with Senior Connection to flesh out this program.
- Is there a single person who will be monitoring all these programs? It's a team effort. There will be biweekly meetings to assess progress and to monitor them. There are project leads. Patrice will report up to MDOA. The entire \$3.5 ARPA budget has been allocated.

Other Business

- Approval of December CoA minutes-approved as submitted
- Follow-up on issues raised at December COA meeting
 - Getting the word out on senior nutrition program remains an ongoing issue
 - There is no need to examine bylaws re job sharing for officers
 - Public policy meetings held with county council members. There will be follow-up with two additional council members who did not attend the December 12th meeting
 - A meeting was held with the Moore transition team
 - Lifetime achievement awards were distributed
- Chair's Report

The National Community Survey that addresses livability of MOCO- is a report about the "livability" of Montgomery County. Highlights of the report include:

- Montgomery County as a place to live – the proportion of residents reporting positively on this measure has increased from 86% positive in 2007 to 90% in 2021. However, when we see the result of MoCo as a place to retire the

- rate of positivity is only 45%. The good news is that it increased 4% in positivity since 2007. But what does it say about Mont County as a community for a lifetime? David observed we can do better.
- The availability of affordable housing increased from 15% positive results in 2007 to 24% in 2021.
 - Respondents reported that 28% volunteered time to some group or activity – that is down from 45% in 2007, likely due to the pandemic.
 - Only 16% of people reported they campaigned or advocated for a local issue, cause or candidate. David asked “If the general public is not working to make change – who will?” In view of this, he urged those in attendance to help in the commission’s advocacy by joining its Public Policy Committee.
 - Where does the County get high marks? Recreation programs and classes gets an 84% positivity rating and the public library services get a 91% positivity rating – but we know they can do better for older adults. Therefore, David requested a commissioner to volunteer to be a liaison to the Library Board.
 - People rated the Montgomery County Government value for services for the taxes paid at 53% positivity. It shows there is a lot of work to do on affordability of health care, transportation and Housing as well as improving communications about what is available to older adults.
- The COA is helping make progress and -its advocacy is working – but only through active participation in the 4 standing committees. David exhorted the commission to continue to strive to promote the positive things happening in the county so the residents know more about what is available and to focus on success as we work for changes.
 - Last week it was announced that—in partnership with Montgomery County, a firm called AHC, Habitat for Humanity, and the State government will develop 6 acres on the corner of Viers Mill Road and Randolph Road for homes for 195 households (the largest ever affordable housing project in MoCo) This will be deeply affordable housing and will include a few detached homes using universal design concepts. While it is a tiny percentage of what the County needs over the next ten years, it should be used as a model for the future and we should do what we can as a commission to promote more such developments. The County Executive said the county are working on 18 sites of county-owned land for additional affordable housing. Among our many other projects, the commission should be looking into that and determine how we can help more older adults obtain new affordable housing.
 - He encouraged members to watch 50+ in Montgomery- county exec Elrich will be the next guest.
 - There was considerable discussion about the tax burden of property tax and the need to find how to make the county attractive to younger people
- Budget Report-
 - There are no changes since last report. There is \$3,990.12 in the commission’s account.
- Update on Public Forum Planning Committee
 - Continuing to educate themselves re speakers. Now formulating agenda. Tentative title: Smart Homes, Smarter Care: Technology that supports aging in place. The event will take place on May 4.

- Update on Summit on Aging
 - Planning is in the early stages. It will be October 26. Some invitations have been extended. A theme—Reconnecting—post covid—is being considered but a catchy title is needed.
- Eric Colchamiro- heads government affairs at Alzheimer’s Association introduced himself. He identified several commission and staff who have worked with him in the past. MD dept of Health is looking for a dementia-specific staff person. Working to create an outreach program to dementia caregivers. He mentioned that a bill has been introduced in the state legislature to support outreach for people with dementia.

Committee Reports

- Aging in Community-
 - Wayne welcomed Betsy a new chair and thanked Mary for her work last year. Last meeting had a guest from Parks and Planning who talked about effects on housing of zoning requirements. There was also follow-up on Thrive 50 and discussion about the need for universal design in housing. Betsy noted that housing will be a focus of the committee and Mary will follow-up to learn more about innovations and interesting approaches in Fairfax County
- Health and Wellness
 - Marsha described the Life Transitions project intended to help people know what they need to know as they experience transitions as they age. The purpose is to have an accessible, usable source of information. A focus group at North Potomac was held to test possible titles. Participants offered good ideas. Consensus was that this is a worthwhile project.
- Communications
 - Beverly mentioned that Patrice described the ARPA communications hire and how it will affect the planned Ambassador program. The connectors will relate to the ambassador program and the committee will be considering how to work with this function. Work with libraries continues. All libraries have been directed to provide a place in the library for materials of interest to older adults. Katie interviewed Marc Elrich, county executive and Mr. Glass, President of County Council. The committee is in the process of planning the March show.
- Public Policy
 - Morris is tracking legislative proposals. He’s distributed a list of proposals that may be of interest to the commission and worthy of our support. Ryan described the process used by the policy committee to determine which bills the commission would write letters about. Timing of such letters is important if they are to be considered by the relevant committee. All commission letters of this nature must be submitted to Leslie Frey, although not approved by her.

New Business

- Janine Tursini- Arts for the Ages- goal is to reduce social isolation by means of arts programming. They are seeking sites in residential communities that don’t have participatory arts programming. Focus is to reach underserved groups that represent racial and ethnic diversity. They are also partnering with Kensington Club in the JCA building to allow multiple types of artists to connect with older adults who have early stages of member loss.

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Adjourn at 11:47