

**Communications Committee  
Minutes  
March 15, 2021**

**Attendees**

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-chair  
Beverly Rollins, Co-chair  
Wayne Berman  
Austin Heyman, Alumnus  
Chuck Kauffman, Alumnus  
Dick Jourdenais  
Marcia Pruzan, Alumnus and Age-Friendly Montgomery  
Eddie Rivas  
Maritza Rivera  
Barbara Selter  
Katie Smith  
Hillery Tumba  
Revathi Vikram, Alumnus

**Staff**

Shawn Brennan, Department of Health and Human Services  
Jennifer Long, Department of Health and Human Services  
Stephanie Moore, Housing Opportunities Commission  
Sara Swarr, Department of Recreation

**Guests**

Monique Gardner, African American Health Program  
Stuart Rosenthal, *Beacon Newspapers*

**Welcome**

Co-chair Jean Dinwiddie opened the meeting welcoming everyone to the first meeting of the reinstated Communications Committee. Co-chair Beverly Rollins took roll and volunteered to take notes.

***Seniors Today* discussion**

Jean announced that CoA member, Katie Smith, will be the new host of *Seniors Today*. Jean stated that one goal for today's Committee meeting is to plan the next show, which will be shot late March/early April and aired in May. Topics for the episode will need to be determined along with guest speakers to address those topics. Each show usually touches on three different topics.

Committee members brainstormed possible show topics and speakers. Their discussion included:

- Chuck Kauffman suggested that an upcoming episode should feature a video of the Senior Jazz Group which Mike Bloom taped. It should be finished and ready to be aired.
- Maritza Rivera stated that she would like to see an episode highlight the issue of social isolation and also the negative impact COVID has had on older adults.
- Jean Dinwiddie suggested an update of the status of Montgomery County's implementation of the COVID vaccine and possibly feature Sean O'Donnell, Montgomery County's Public Health and Emergency Preparedness Manager, or Dr. Earl Stoddard, Director of the County's Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. Jean also suggested that the episode advertise the CoA's annual Public Forum which will be held in May.
- Revathi Vikram stated that the episode should also discuss vaccine hesitancy, and what activities individuals can engage in after they have received the vaccine.
- Eddie Rivas suggested that the episode feature a segment on the County's budget and how it addresses older adult issues.
- Austin Heyman stated that the current chair of the CoA should be interviewed. In addition, Stuart Rosenthal could discuss summer programs that are available for older adults.
- Wayne Berman suggested getting a physician to discuss COVID. Also, in a later episode, discuss new and anticipated technology that would be of benefits to older adults.
- Marcia Pruzan noted that the County Recreation Department is planning in the Fall to have a hybrid in-person/remote program available. That could also be featured in a later episode. She suggested that CoA Chair Barbara Selter could discuss how the County's budget affects older adults instead of having the County Executive discuss it.
- Chuck Kauffman stated that the show's segments, although they are usually 8 minutes long, do not have to be. Chair Selter's segment could be 10 minutes and she could discuss the CoA's agenda, advertise the Public Forum, and discuss the County budget. Eddie Rivas, however, stated that he thinks that a County employee should discuss the budget.
- Hillery Tumba reminded Committee members that the shows should be informative but they can also be entertaining.
- Revathi Vikram suggested that the April and May shows feature Public Service Announcements that discuss the CoA's Public Forum that is scheduled in May.

Jean Dinwiddie summarized the show topics/speakers discussion and asked the members to vote on the suggestions. The topics that the members accepted for the May show were:

- A segment regarding the COVID vaccine with a discussion of why individuals are hesitant to get it and also what activities individuals can engage in after they receive it. The segment will feature a physician and will include time for viewers to call in and ask questions of the physician.
- There will be a 5-minute segment regarding the County's budget and how it addresses older adult issues.
- A third segment will feature an interview with CoA Chair Barbara Selter where she will discuss CoA priorities.

Jean next asked for suggestions for guests to discuss the topics that the Committee members agreed upon. Suggestions included for the COVID vaccine discussion were:

- Dr. Travis Gayles, Montgomery County’s Health Officer and Chief of Public Health
- Dr. Earl Stoddard, Director of the County’s Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
- A physician from Johns Hopkins, the National Institutes for Health, or the Center for Disease Control
- A local physician who is well-versed in COVID, one who has some expertise in public health issues

Jean Dinwiddie stated that for the discussion of the County’s budget, she will invite Dr. Patrice McGee, Montgomery County’s Director of the Area Agency on Aging. The Committee members agreed.

### **Frequency of Committee Meetings**

Committee members decided to hold meetings the third Monday of the month, 1:00p-2:30p. A subcommittee will be formed to plan *Seniors Today* and members of the subcommittee will include a short discussion of the show’s activities at the full Committee meeting for member input and approval. Jean Dinwiddie, Beverly Rollins, and Katie Smith will meet to discuss the forming of the subcommittee. Austin Heyman and at least one other Committee member will be included.

### **Activities of the Communications Committee**

Committee members held a brief discussion regarding what Committee activities should include. Comments and suggestions offered were:

- Austin Heyman suggested that the Reingold Report that was issued several years ago be made available to all Committee members. Marcia Pruzan stated that she will forward it to Beverly Rollins who will then send it to Committee members. Hillary Tsumba, who worked on the Report, said that the Committee can review it and decide what communication activities are appropriate for the CoA to engage in and what should be the County’s jurisdiction.
- Chuck Kauffman stated that the CoA needs to be represented on the Age-Friendly Montgomery Communications Group. The CoA should package the information that it wants to get out to the public — frame the message — and then send it to the County’s Public Information Office. Austin Heyman stated that the CoA should advocate that the Public Information Office send out relevant information.
- Jean Dinwiddie and Beverly Rollins will review an outline that CoA alumnus, Isabelle Schoenfeld prepared of what information should be included in the CoA “New Member Guide.” Committee members agreed that it should be a day-to-day manual and not an overload of material. Barbara Selter also suggested that a “buddy system” be put in place for new members. Jean Dinwiddie agreed. Martiza Rivera suggested that the Committee invite the Montgomery County Community Action Agency to help with the handbook with regard to how to be an effective advocate.

- It was also suggested that the full CoA engage in the Community Action Agency's advocacy training. Maritza Rivera stated that she will contact the Agency to see whether it would be possible for them to hold training for the entire CoA, including the alumni members. Revathi Vikram suggested that the training would be a good idea for a summer program.
- Jean Dinwiddie stated that perhaps at the Committee's next meeting the members could discuss developing metrics for success for:
  - Seniors Today*
  - The CoA's Annual Report
  - County and CoA brochures for older adults

## **Adjourn**