

Commission on Aging  
Executive Committee  
February 18, 2021  
Virtual via Zoom

**Attendees**

***CoA Members***

Barbara Selter, Chair  
Jean Dinwiddie, Past Chair and Co-Chair, Communications Committee  
Edgar Rivas, Vice Chair  
Janice Zalen, Secretary  
Richard Jourdenais, Budget Officer  
Neal Brown, Co-Chair, Health and Wellness Committee  
Marsha Weber, Co-Chair, Health and Wellness Committee  
Wayne Berman, Co-Chair, Aging in Community Committee  
Monica Schaeffer, Co-Chair, Aging in Community Committee  
Beverly Rollins, Co-Chair, Communications Committee  
Ryan Wilson, Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee  
Morris Klein, Co-Chair, Public Policy Committee

***Staff***

Shawn Brennan, HHS

**Welcome–Barbara Selter, Chair**

Chair Barbara Selter opened the meeting with a roll call of meeting attendees and a welcome.

**AAA Report-Shawn Brennan**

Shawn Brennan provided the following update:

- The Senior Nutrition Program will be receiving additional funding through CARES.
- The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is fully staffed.
- Effective March 1, visitors will be allowed in nursing facilities that have no COVID cases.
- The Food Access Call Center and the Food Access page on the County website are both extremely helpful for individuals needing food. **It is important to promote both the call center, (callers call 311 and ask for the Food Access Call Center) and the website ([www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19-food](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19-food)).**
- Transportation to vaccination sites is being studied, but anyone in need of a ride should call Connect-A-Ride at 301-738-3252. **It is important to promote this phone number.**
- Progress is being made in getting the COVID vaccine to individuals in senior living sites and this effort is expanding.
- Ms. Brennan developed a short video on major sources of transportation support for County staff, which is also of value to others. **Ms. Brennan will send the link to the Executive Committee members.**

## **Commission on Aging Business**

### ***January Meeting Minutes***

Committee members moved to approve the January meeting minutes, with correction to spelling of “Brennan.”

### ***Draft Agenda for February CoA Meeting***

Committee members moved to approve the draft agenda, as amended.

### ***Communications***

Committee members moved to institute a CoA Communications Committee, in accordance with the mission statement and outline shared by Jean Dinwiddie and Beverly Rollins. Jean Dinwiddie and Beverly Rollins are the Co-Chairs of this new Committee.

### ***Budget Report***

Budget Officer Richard Jourdenais reported that on January 30, there was \$4,695.11 in the account and today there is \$4895.11. The increase is explained by the fact that the bank resolved a complaint about a fraudulent check.

### ***Discussion of CoA Funds***

In a recent County meeting, Shawn Brennan learned that County Commissions are not supposed to have bank accounts. Barbara Selter and Shawn Brennan spoke with Beth Gochrach, Staff of Boards, Committees and Commissions about whether the CoA can maintain its own bank account. The Attorney and Special Assistant will provide clarification. Until we learn more, the Commission will not plan on making any additional donations.

### ***COA Letters***

- To date, Barbara Selter has not received a response to the Commission’s letter regarding COVID vaccinations. **Shawn Brennan will check on this.**
- Janice Zalen wrote a letter for the Commission in support of SB 204, Health Care Facilities – Assisted Living Programs – Memory Care and Alzheimer’s Disease Unit Regulations.
- In response to questions about the process of writing and sending letters and the effectiveness of letters sent after the first hearing, Public Policy Committee (PPC) co-chairs Morris Klein and Ryan Wilson explained the process as follows: A letter is usually drafted by a member of the PPC or sometimes by an interested member or another committee. The draft is reviewed by the PPC for consistency with previous letters and CoA policy, then forwarded to the EC for its approval. The co-chairs noted that time is of the essence during the legislative session so rarely can these letters go to the full Commission for its approval. Because the EC includes all committee co-chairs, input from the entire Commission is obtained via the EC. Beth Gochrach is checking with the County Attorney to determine if it is acceptable to send letters to CoA members for their review and approval when time constraints are an issue and count non-responses as sustained votes in responding to letters going out

for CoA review. Also because of the time constraints, a boiler-plate paragraph describing the CoA was developed last year and is used in all letters. The co-chairs noted that the PPC is not a gatekeeper. The co-chairs agreed that letters are not very effective if they are sent after the first hearing.

### ***Public Forum***

The Public Forum will be held on either May 18 or May 19, depending upon County Executive and Public Information Office availability and assistance. The Public Forum likely will be two hours and the SILOS task force is working on the agenda is making great progress.

### ***Neal Potter Awards***

Commission members Karon Phillips, Miriam Kelty and Richard Jourdenais are serving as judges. **It is important for all CoA members to promote nominations.**

### ***Movement to State-wide contract for Medicaid Transportation***

Wayne Berman explained that states have the option to delegate Medicaid non-emergency transportation to counties, as is the current system, or the state can set up a broker system throughout the state, which is what the state is now considering. Both systems have pros and cons. Before the CoA can take a stand, it needs more information about why the State wants to move to a broker system, how the program is currently working in Montgomery County and a timeline. **Shawn Brennan and Wayne Berman will call Sam Oji, County Department of Transportation for additional information. Wayne Berman will conduct additional research on the issue and report back.**

### ***Budget Priorities***

After a brief discussion on whether the CoA's current budget priorities should be re-visited, the EC passed the following motion:

The EC moved to continue using the Budget Priorities that were passed by the full Commission.

At the upcoming March Commission meeting, Hillery Tsumba will present information on standardized messages to use when advocating on behalf of the COA and provide training on how to advocate.

### ***Planning for Visits with County Council Members –Online Sign-up Sheet***

It was agreed that there should be no more than three Commissioners at each meeting and that Commissioners should not sign up for more than two meetings. **Shawn Brennan will prepare the on-line sign-up sheet and Tremayne Jones will arrange the meeting dates.**

### ***Update on Seniors Today Interviews***

Jean Dinwiddie reported that interviews are scheduled for next Wednesday and Friday. At that time, there will be mock interviews to assess ability to make the guest be the star of the show.

### ***Update on Task Forces***

- **Social Isolation (SILOS) Task Force:** SILOS is making good progress planning the Public Forum. The theme of the Public Forum is “Countering Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults.”
- **Task Force on Dementia, Policing and Racial Equity:** Jean Dinwiddie and Arthur Williams met via telephone and agreed that some recommendations may be modified (e.g., police officers should not be disarmed) and that rearranging the task force report is appropriate. **They will work together, along with Katy Smith and Arlee Wallace on behalf of Arthur Williams on redrafting the task force’s final report.**
- **Communications Task Force:** Per earlier motion (see above), this task force is now a committee. A committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 15 at which time participants will discuss the committee’s mission statement.

## Committee Reports

### *Health and Wellness Committee (HWC)*

Co-Chair Neal Brown reported that at their last HCW meeting, Jennifer Long, DHHS, presented on the County’s 240-777-3000 number; and Erin Smith, in her last week as SHIP Contract Monitor, discussed the SHIP Program and noted that the CoA can help by **promoting the SHIP program**. The Committee also discussed the need for more home-based care particularly for the “GAP” population.

Morris Klein noted that the State Legislature has asked the Health Department to conduct a study of home-based care. Also, the Health Department has asked for an extension of its home- and community-based waivers, but with fewer slots.

### *Aging in Community (AIC)*

Monica Schaeffer, AIC Co-Chair, reported that at its last meeting, Wayne Berman presented a template that lays out the Committee’s annual plan, which can be shared with the Commission. In addition, Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator, MC Aging and Disability Service, provided an in-depth explanation and update on the Village movement. The Committee also received an update on COVID vaccinations. Because the AIC March meeting is devoted to transportation, a discussion on housing was tabled until April. This April meeting likely will consist of one hour on housing and one hour on food insecurity. Currently, the AIC is looking for suggestions for someone to present on food insecurity or they may consider working with the HWC on the issue. For the March transportation meeting, the following speakers are scheduled: Sam Oji, Montgomery County Department of Transportation; Sara Fought, Jewish Council for the Aging; David Anspacher and Khalid Afzal, Montgomery County Planning Department; and Shawn Brennan, DHHS

### *Public Policy Committee (PPC)*

Co-Chair Ryan Wilson reported that at the PPC’s February meeting, members discussed preparations for the April visits with County Council members, anticipated cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services budget, and the process of getting Commission letters drafted, finalized and sent to the General Assembly. Ryan Wilson explained that the Commission writes the letters that are then forwarded to Shawn Brennan and Tremayne Jones who forward to the Department’s legislative liaisons. Finally, the PPC

discussed upcoming legislation and drafted and sent one letter as described earlier. **Ryan Wilson will send an email to the PPC to vote on whether or not the Commission should write a letter of support for SB652, which requires the Department of Health to publish materials to assist State residents with long-term care family planning.**

### **Invited Speakers for Upcoming Meetings**

*February 25, 2021*

Robert Jenkins, Greenhouse Nursing Homes

*March 26, 2021*

Josiah Yiu, Carrie Nieman, and Khoi Le from Access HEARS, and potential expansion of project in Montgomery County.

*April 22, 2021*

Speakers on social isolation, Empowering the Ages, intergenerational programs

*May 18 or 19, 2021*

Public Forum

*May 27, 2021*

Long term care in the future with a focus on a report by the Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, entitled *Rethinking Care for Older Adults*. **Wayne Berman and Edgar Rivas will work together to develop this session.**

*June 24, 2021*

Affordable Housing – basic programs, initiative including the County’s Home Sharing Project that matches people who have auxiliary housing with people that need housing, **The AIC and HWC will work together to help structure this session.**

### ***Suggestions for Future Meetings:***

Neal Brown was in touch with Michael Friedman, AARP about promoting mental health and Mr. Brown suggested putting Michael Friedman on the agenda at some future time. **Barbara Selter** also has been in contact with Michael Friedman and **will bring up the AARP Resolution on Behavioral Health Challenges to the PPC for their review and assessment of further action.**

### **Proposed New Initiatives**

#### ***Enhanced Orientation for New Commissioners***

Barbara Selter explained that the enhanced orientation could include a buddy system and an on-line manual and she asked for suggestions for moving forward. After a lengthy discussion, the following Motion was made:

Move to supplement current orientation with the option for a buddy and with a responsibility that co-chairs provide in-depth explanation of their committees to new Commissioners.

Amendment to Motion: The CoA conduct an orientation that focuses on Commission expectations of new members.

Motion as amended passes with two abstentions.

It was agreed **that this will remain an agenda item for the next EC meeting so the EC can further refine plans to better orient new Commissioners.** It was suggested that Shawn Brennan could provide an overview of aging services and activities in the County. **Shawn Brennan will look into when new Commissioners start their terms of office** so that the EC can determine best time to schedule its orientation. In addition, **Barbara Selter will ask, via email, all Commission members their suggestions on how to improve the orientation process.**

**Adjourn** at noon.

#### Action Items

1. Promote the County's Food Access Call Center and the Food Access Page on the County's Website. **Callers call 311 and ask for the Food Access Call Center and go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19-food](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19-food)).**
2. Promote Connect-a-Ride at 301-738-3252 for those needing transportation to COVID Vaccine sites.
3. Shawn Brennan will send all EC members a link to a video on major sources of transportation support.
4. Odile Brunetto will ask the County Attorney and Special Assistant for clarification on Commission's maintaining a bank account.
5. Shawn Brennan will try to find out if there has been a response to the Commission's letter on COVID vaccination problems.
6. Promote nominations for the Neal Potter Awards.
7. Shawn Brennan and Wayne Berman will call Sam Oji.
8. Wayne Berman will conduct additional research on state proposal to change Medicaid non-emergency transportation framework and report back.
9. Shawn Brennan will prepare the on-line sign-up sheet for April advocacy meetings.
10. Tremayne Jones will arrange the advocacy meeting dates with County Council members.
11. Jean Dinwiddie, Katie Smith, Arlee Wallace on behalf of Arthur Williams and Arthur Williams will edit the Task Force on Dementia, Policing and Racial Equality final report
12. Promote the SHIP Program.
13. Ryan Wilson will send an email to the PPC to vote on whether the Commission should write a letter of support for SB652,
14. Wayne Berman and Edgar Rivas will develop the May Commission meeting session on long term care in the future.
15. The AIC and HWC will work together to structure the June Commission meeting on affordable housing.
16. Barbara Selter will bring up the AARP Resolution on Behavioral Health Challenges to the PPC.

- 17.** Shawn Brennan will find out when new Commissioners start their terms of office.
- 18.** Barbara Selter will send an email to all Commission members asking for their suggestions on how to improve the orientation process.