

Commission on Aging  
Executive Committee  
January 21, 2021  
Virtual via Zoom

**Attendees**

***CoA Members***

Barbara Selter, Chair  
Jean Dinwiddie, Past Chair  
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, Public Policy Committee

***Staff***

Shawn Brennan, HHS

**Welcome–Barbara Selter, Chair**

Chair Barbara Selter opened the meeting with a roll call of meeting attendees. She then thanked Jean Dinwiddie, Past Chair, for her wonderful work as Chair and for her assistance as Barbara Selter transitioned to Chair. Ms. Selter asked that the Executive Committee be patient as she gains experience in her new role as Chair.

**Committee Reports**

***Aging in Community (AIC)***

Monica Schaeffer, AIC Co-Chair, reported that Wayne Berman is the new AIC Co-Chair and she is delighted to work with him. The AIC hopes to cover 5 broad areas this year: Affordable Rental Housing and Housing Models, Transportation, Food Insecurity, Seniors Fellow Program, and Technology.

The topic at the January AIC meeting was “Understanding the Challenges Providing Affordable and Accessible Rental Housing for County Residents” with an emphasis on Older Adults. Frank Demarais, Deputy Director of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs; and Stephanie Moore, Resident Services Supervisor of the Housing Opportunities Commission, addressed the AIC and responded to their many questions including how COVID affected budget plans and rent subsidy programs; and their perspectives on rent increases and stabilization post COVID, as well as the limitations of the HOC’s voucher program. These are critical questions given that 65% of renters who are 65+ in the County are rent-burdened (defined as paying more than 30% of income on housing). The AIC learned that there is a

cap on rent increases, the moratorium on rent increases is due to end January 31, and evictions are not being processed now although cases will pick up in March.

The AIC will identify action items from the January meeting, which will be discussed at their February meeting. In addition, Pazit Aviv, Village Coordinator, MC Aging and Disability Service will provide an update on the Village movement.

**Edgar Rivas suggested, and the Committee agreed, that a ten-minute item on the basics of Villages, with briefing materials, be added to the January Commission on Aging (COA) agenda.**

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

Co-Chairs Marsha Weber and Neal Brown reported that this year the HWC would be looking at: homebound services, SHIP follow-up, communications, senior buildings providing home-based care, an update on hearing devices, and County COVID vaccination priorities.

Regarding hearing devices, the HWC is reviewing a new Baltimore program to determine if it would be appropriate in Montgomery County. Josiah Yiu, Carrie Nieman, and Khoi Le, Access HEARS, will present on this issue at the CoA's March meeting. Regarding communications, the HWC plans to learn more about the "3000 line" and has invited Sean O'Donnell, Public Health and Preparedness Manager, MC Department of Health, to its next meeting.

Shawn Brennen explained that the 3000 phone line is a front door to services, via telephone, for seniors. At the last CoA meeting, Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, noted that this program is struggling to keep up with demand since COVID. The HWC would like to question Sean O'Donnell or maybe Jennifer Long, DHHS, Area on Aging, Information Services, about staffing issues, and how the overload is being handled.

#### *Public Policy Committee (PPC)*

Co-Chair Beverly Rollins reported that at the PPC's January meeting, members discussed fairness of vaccination priorities and delivery; importance of expanding the CoA's communications on budget priorities beyond its top two priorities; the Racial Equality Task Force Report; and how to keep abreast of all relevant County bills. **Regarding vaccination priorities, the PPC requested that the HWC help monitor the fairness of the COVID vaccine program in Montgomery County.** If the PPC or the HWC grow concerned that distribution is not equitable, the PPC will examine next steps that the CoA could take to make its concerns known. Regarding budget priorities, Shawn Brennan noted at the PPC meeting that the CoA limited its budget request to the County Council to its two top priorities, as requested by the County Council. However, at this time it may be appropriate to expand the Commission's ask of its additional priorities. Regarding County bills of interest, the PPC decided to invite a County Council staff person to attend the first fifteen minutes of its meetings in order to present an update of County bills of interest.

Finally, Beverly Rollins noted that it would be useful if all of the CoA Committees would help monitor General Assembly legislation and prepare or suggest language for advocacy letters the CoA could send in support of relevant proposed bills. Ideally, the Committees could craft the letters in their areas of expertise and the PPC could review them and send them to the Executive Committee for approval. This could serve to get more Commissioners involved in the CoA's important advocacy work and help to identify important legislation. **It was decided that: Beverly Rollins will forward the most recent list of relevant General Assembly bills to Barbara Selter who will distribute it to all Commission members asking that members sign up to draft letters in their areas of expertise. In addition, a brief agenda item will be added to the January Commission meeting on the importance of all Commission members helping to draft advocacy letters on**

**their areas of interest. Shawn Brennan, DHHS, will ask Tremayne Jones, DHHS, to prioritize posting of the Commission's 2020 letters to the General Assembly on the CoA's website so that members have sample models to follow. Janice Zalen offered to edit drafts of letters. Barbara Selter will talk to the COA Recruitment Committee about the importance of screening for new COA members who would be willing to take an active role in the advocacy work of the Commission.**

Finally, Beverly Rollins reported that she emailed briefing materials from the legislative breakfast to state legislators who had missed the breakfast meeting. She received several kind responses. Monica Schaeffer noted that the Commission should have a liaison with United Seniors of MD as they track all pertinent legislation. **Barbara Selter and Monica Schaeffer will handle this off line.**

### **AAA Report**

Shawn Brennan reported that the MD Department of Aging conducted monitoring visits with AAA staff. AAA hired a new staff person for the Senior Nutrition Program who has many years of experience with Montgomery County. Erin Smith, Ph.D, Aging & Disability Researcher, and Odile Brunetto are working on issues surrounding the vaccinations of the 75+ population in the County. The core problems are insufficient vaccine and not knowing how much vaccine the county will receive from week to week. A discussion related to the difficulties and frustrations relating to the vaccine ensued.

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

#### *January 28, 2021*

Barry Hudson, Director, Public Information Office is available for only a half hour. It was suggested that **Mr. Hudson be asked to keep his presentation brief so that there is time for questions.**

#### *February 25, 2021*

Greenhouse Nursing Homes

#### *March 26, 2021*

Speaker on the hearing aid pilot program in Baltimore and discussion of pilot expansion to Montgomery County

#### *Date to be determined: Public Forum*

The Committee discussed whether Racial Equity should be the topic, as was planned for last year before COVID led to cancellation of the Public Forum. It was determined that last year's plans relied on small breakout groups, which are difficult on Zoom and that the topic is better broached at in-person discussions rather than Zoom discussions. It was further agreed that social isolation, always a very serious problem for older adults, is now an even more serious problem due to COVID. Thus, it was thought that social isolation should be the topic this year. After noting that social isolation is an extremely broad topic and that racial equity remains extremely important, it was determined that racial equity should be focused upon under the broader topic of social isolation. The Public Forum Task Force will determine if additional subtopics should be added as they flesh out the details of the Public Forum.

The Commission then discussed the pros and cons of moving the Public Forum from March, when it is traditionally held, to May. May is Older Americans Month and the date change would allow the CoA to hear from speakers on social isolation prior to the forum. It was agreed that May would be a much better time for the Public Forum if this change is acceptable to the County. **Shawn Brennan will check if there are any conflicts with the**

**County.**

Motion: Assuming there is no conflict with the County, it is proposed that the COA Public Forum be moved from March to May and that the topic of the COA 2021 Public Forum be “Social Isolation as Impacted by Health and Racial Disparities.”

The motion passed unanimously.

Barbara Selter will talk with David Engels and Maritza Rivera, SILOS Task Force Co-Chairs, about the change in date and topic. It was suggested that the Social Isolation Task Force work on planning the Public Forum for May. **Barbara Selter will ask David Engel, GROWS, and Maritza Rivera, Commission member, if they would be willing to work on the planning for the Public Forum since the topic is so closely related to social isolation and the work of the SILOS Task Force.**

**Commission on Aging Business**

*November Meeting Minutes*

Committee members moved to approve the December meeting minutes, as amended by Jean Dinwiddie.

*Draft Agenda for December CoA Meeting*

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

*Budget Report*

Budget Officer, Richard Jourdenais, Past- Budget Officer Ryan Wilson and Chair Barbara Selter will meet at the bank on January 22 to file required paperwork and to ask about capacity to monitor the account electronically. Records will be turned over to Richard Jourdenais at that meeting. There appears to be a fraudulent check of \$200 to a termite company written on the Commission’s account, which will be looked into while at the bank.

*COA Contribution to Tommy Raskin Memorial Fund*

**Past Budget Officer Ryan Wilson will send a \$50 donation to the Memorial Fund.**

*Letter for delegates who did not attend Legislative Breakfast*

As reported earlier under the PPC report, letters were sent and kind responses were received.

*PPC Letter on Villages*

Barbara Selter received a phone call from Miriam Kelty, CoA member, about a letter sent out by the Villages administration concerning the confusion and lack of communication surrounding the roll-out of vaccines in Montgomery County. **Barbara Selter will call Miriam Kelty for more information** about this letter and what the CoA can do to support improved rollout of the vaccine to older adults in Montgomery County.

### *Public Forum Topic*

As reported under the Public Forum Date section of these minutes, the new topic of the CoA 2021 Public Forum is “Social Isolation as Impacted by Health and Racial Disparities.”

### *Update on Task Force on Dementia, Policing, and Racial Equity*

Hillery Tsumba, CoA member, reported that she and CoA member Arthur Williams had a good conversation on how to move the Task Force Report forward. The conversation focused on process, not substance. According to Hillary Tsumba, Arthur Williams would like the Task Force Report to be finalized soon and the substance of the recommendations to remain as is, but editorial changes are fine if edited by a diverse group.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that the CoA will hold a special meeting of interested members and alumnae to review each Task Force recommendation and that an external facilitator will conduct this meeting. If there are dissenting opinions, it will be the responsibility of those dissenting to write up their views. The document will be edited after this meeting, following usual procedure.

**The following actions were agreed to: Barbara Selter will announce this special meeting to the Commission and notify alumnae, and she and Eddie Rivas will follow up with telephone calls to alumnae and members to ensure strong participation. Shawn Brennen will contact Montgomery Conflict Resolution about a facilitator at no charge. However, if needed, the COA will utilize a paid facilitator.**

### *Update on Seniors Today*

Jean Dinwiddie reported that she has received a lot of good criteria for evaluating the panel. In the meantime, February productions will be repeats.

### **Potential New Ideas**

#### *Rules About Speaking Out of Turn*

The Committee agreed that Barbara Selter should discuss rules about speaking out of turn to the CoA and also that she will regularly ask if members on the phone wish to speak.

#### *Communications Task Force*

Jean Dinwiddie heads this resurrected task force and hopes that others volunteer. Wayne Berman volunteered.

#### *Addition of “New Business” segment to agendas*

Barbara Selter, concerned that Commission members may have concerns not on a COA agenda, suggested adding “New Business” to agendas. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that it is not

necessary.

Chair Selter asked that we send her new topic suggestions prior to the February Executive Committee meeting.

### **Mental Health Initiative/AARP Maryland**

**The Executive Committee will forward the AARP Resolution on Behavioral Health Challenges to the PPC for their review and assessment of further action.**

*Buddy System for New Commissioners and Survey of Commissioners' Interests for Speakers*

Tabled until next meeting.

### **Adjourn**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- I. Barbara Selter will compile and forward meeting materials for COA January meeting to Tremayne Jones who will forward to all Commission members. Chair Selter will make the following changes to the agenda first:
  - a. Add a 10-minute item on basics of Villages and include Villages briefing materials to meeting materials
  - b. Add item on importance of everyone assisting in letter-writing
  - c. Streamline the agenda by removing names and bullet points
- II. Per request by PPC, HWC will monitor vaccine distribution and alert PPC to problems.
- III. Beverly Rollins will take the lead in advocacy letter relating to rental issue, with assistance from Stephanie Edelstein and editing by Janice Zalen and PPC.
- IV. Chair will talk with CoA Recruitment Committee about importance of screening for individuals who will actively advocate, i.e., write letters
- V. Shawn Brennen will ask Tremayne Jones to prioritize posting of the CoA's 2020 letters.
- VI. Barbara Selter will ask Bruce Hudson to leave time for questions after his presentation.
- VII. Shawn Brennen will determine if the Commission can move its Public Forum to May.
- VIII. Barbara Selter will relay the new topic to Meritza Rivera and David Engels and ask if the SILOS Task Force would like to work on the new topic for the Public Forum.
- IX. Richard Jourdenais will follow up on fraudulent check.
- X. Ryan Wilson will send donation to Tommy Raskin fund
- XI. Barbara Selter will call Miriam Kelty regarding a letter on villages
- XII. Shawn Brennen will find an external facilitator for the special meeting on the Racial Equality Task Force recommendations.
- XIII. Edgar Rivas and Barbara Selter will telephone members and alumnae to encourage participation in special meeting on Racial Equality Task Force recommendations
- XIV. The Executive Committee will forward the AARP Resolution on Behavioral Health Challenges to the PPC for their review and assessment of further action.
- XV. Barbara Selter and Monica Schaeffer will discuss appointing a liaison to the United Seniors

of MD