

**Communications Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
February 27, 2023**

**Attendees**

**CoA**

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-Chair  
Beverly Rollins, Co-Chair  
David Engel  
Bob Levey  
Yvette Monroe  
Barbara Selter  
Katie Smith

**Alumni**

Rev Vikram

**Staff**

Jennifer Long, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services  
Tracy O'Connor, Montgomery County Public Information Office

**Roll Call**

Jean Dinwiddie called the roll. The January meeting minutes were approved.

**Discussion of Ambassador Program**

Jean Dinwiddie asked Jennifer Long how she sees the Ambassador Program and the County's newly hired Connectors interacting. Jean suggested that we invite the new Connectors to the Communications Committee's meetings or ask them where they are conducting their outreach and ask them for suggestions. Jennifer asked what the CoA envisions the Ambassador Program will do – conduct listening sessions with the County's older adults? She stated that the Connectors will be doing that. Jean responded that listening is important and the Ambassador Program will be focusing on that. She added that the Ambassador sessions will provide useful information to older adults and also listen to them to obtain information.

Jean reiterated that she thinks the Connectors should attend the next Communications Committee meeting. She asked Jennifer whether they will be giving presentations at older adult functions. Jennifer responded that staff did not originally envision Connectors making presentations; staff do not want to have to train someone to do that. But now it does look like the Connectors will be giving presentations. They do not have a formal PowerPoint presentation, however. The Connectors will be attending health fairs and similar functions and answering questions.

Currently there are two Connectors and they are only on board until June, 2023; though the money supporting them has been around since July, 2022. Jennifer said that she believes the turn-around process between receipt of the Maryland Department of Aging grant filling of the position accounts for the gap in time. The Connectors have just recently been hired.

David Engel stated that we should look at this as a transfer of duties from Connectors to the Ambassador Program. Jennifer responded that we need to determine what the Ambassadors will be doing. She does not know when the marketing and outreach person – the “Broker” – will be hired with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies or what that person will be doing. Jean commented that Patrice McGhee’s explanation of one of the Broker’s duties will be to develop a master marketing and outreach plan for the AAA.

Bob Levey stated that this is budget season for Montgomery County; the County Executive needs to develop a budget and present it to the County Council in March. The Council then reviews it and can move it around. The CoA should lobby for an extension for funding for the Connectors with the County Executive and the Council. Jennifer responded that the Connectors were presented to the County Executive as a one-time only event. Jean said that it would make a good budget priority for the CoA, however, the CoA will not be setting its budget priorities again until July or August. David suggested that maybe the CoA can add it to the priorities that were developed last summer; i.e., nuance the first priority (the one that deals with the marketing of the County’s older adult programs) to include it.

Marsha Weber commented that maybe the CoA could ask the County to make the Connectors a permanent position. Barbara said that it is really beside the point on whether it is paid out of ARPA funds or the Montgomery County budget.

Jean reminded the group that the County Executive has to submit his budget request to the County Council by March 15. The CoA members visit Council members in early April. The Council finalizes its budget in June. Barbara noted that there are usually public budget hearings, and it would be great if CoA members could attend those meetings en masse.

Jean again suggested that the Committee invite the Connectors to attend its next meeting. She said that maybe the CoA could launch a pilot program for the Ambassadors to get information to be discussed at the Summit. David reported that there will be a meeting tomorrow (February 28) of the Steering Committee to talk more about the focus groups that are planned to develop ideas for the Summit. That Committee includes David, Marsha Weber, Chuck Kaufman, Robin Riley, Monique Gardner, Arlee Wallace, Ingrid from the Latino Health Initiative, Marcia Pruzan, Betty Romero, and Danielle Moxley. Patrice McGhee was invited to attend the February 28 meeting and Odile Brunetto will also participate. The February 28 meeting will be the fourth meeting of the group.

Beverly Rollins asked what the Committee’s next steps should be with regard to the Ambassador Program. David responded that members can identify five communities to reach out to. He will be visiting a few communities in the next few weeks and will ask them for their ideas regarding an Ambassador Program. Jean stated that the Committee could contact Mona Negm’s group and Vivien Hsueh’s group. Barbara commented that we should not limit ourselves if we cannot get a

crowd when we meet with the different groups. Information spreads even when only a few individuals show up.

Rev Vikram noted that she just met with her Jai Ho group at Nancy Dacek. They want to know more about County resources. One of the Connectors, Carol Smith, attended. There were 25-30 people there. Carol is scheduling events to meet with older adults. Interestingly, Carol stated that it is her responsibility to get older adult information placed in the libraries. The CoA needs to figure out with Carol what resources she is getting placed. David said that he visited Wilshire Estates, a senior living community, and heard that 75 percent of the calls they receive are from people who need government assistance. It's a challenge for people to find housing.

Jean suggested that she and Beverly start working on the Ambassador Program's Operational Plan. In the meantime, Committee members can ask the County's different communities what they would like to see with the Program. The Ambassadors can use the presentation that Jean and Beverly developed and used at a past older adult event. Barbara noted that it would be helpful to have a draft Operational Plan to show the Connectors; it is easier for individuals to react to something, and the Committee might be able to engage them. Jean commented that the Committee will proceed with the hope that the Connectors will go further than the end of June. Jennifer said that what is learned from the ARPA hire can also be shared with the Connectors. The Connector position will not be a wasted effort.

Marsha said that the Operational Plan for the Ambassador Program has to include diversity, including economic diversity. The Committee should talk with Stephanie Moore. Barbara suggested that an agenda item be placed on the agenda of a full CoA meeting asking folks to do presentations. Jean responded that not every CoA member will be suited for the Ambassador job. A vetting process will need to be developed to determine who will be an Ambassador. David said that once the Strategic Plan and the Operational Plan are written they can be presented at a Communications Committee meeting.

Jean noted that she would like to get some community feedback to help the County develop a program for the Summit on Aging.

See below for Action Items stemming from this conversation.

### **Status of Library Materials**

Jennifer stated that the older adult materials that the Communications Committee requested be sent to the County libraries were sent out this week. A printout of the email that the CoA sent to the Regional Managers was included with the materials so there would be no confusion.

Jean asked what the next steps should be with the library materials. Should the CoA ask the Regional Managers whether they received them? Marsha stated that she will ask about the materials at the Olney library. Barbara commented that the document that the Health and Wellness Committee is working on would be a great document for the libraries.

David asked Jennifer whether it is difficult for the County to send CoA factsheets out. Jennifer responded that it is a 2-prong process: they have to be printed (Tremayne should be contacted about that) and then they have to be sent to the libraries. David suggested that we decide on a distribution schedule to the libraries. Beverly stated that we should develop a schedule of when to send the materials. Jean responded that we first need to determine whether the libraries got the materials.

David commented that he can send a note out to the CoA members asking them to be library liaisons and visit their libraries to see whether they received and are exhibiting the information. Rev noted that we need to find out what materials are moving faster than others. How can we keep track of that? Have someone there inform us? Or ask CoA members to check for us? Beverly and Jean volunteered to write a description of what is expected of the liaisons. Barbara suggested that CoA members be assigned their own library to visit and explain to them that they will be expected to report back to the Communications Committee about the status of the older adult materials. The CoA members will need to make a commitment to their work. It was suggested that the Library Liaison be included in the CoA Operations Handbook and its Orientation Booklet. David said that he will craft an email and send it to the Committee members for comment. Jennifer noted that there are 20 libraries plus a couple of other ones that are not on the County's list.

### **Website Update**

Jean described the status of the new CoA website and that Arunima Ghosh will be working with staffer, Tremayne Jones, to keep it updated. Jennifer reported that the latest edition of *50+ in Montgomery County* is not on the new site. Tracy O'Connor said that she will look into it and follow up.

### **New Projects?**

Jean said that it would be nice if the Communications Committee had a bigger voice in planning the upcoming Senior Summit. It does not have a theme yet. It will feature the Villages, the CoA, and Age-Friendly workgroups; each group will have three breakout sessions (with a total of nine sessions). The County has still not allotted any money toward it. Barbara said that it makes sense for the Communications Committee to shepherd the CoA breakout sessions. David suggested that the County's ARPA Broker should help, too.

### ***50+ in Montgomery County Update***

Jean reported the following plans for upcoming episodes of *50+*:

February program—Evan Glass, Council President

March program—Intergenerational Programs with Kathy Dennis from Heyman Interages and Tracy \_\_\_ Benson from Empowering the Ages.

April—the CoA's forum topic. David will be one guest and another guest will also be invited.

Jean also noted that Katie Smith and Robert Williams, the individual making the PSAs, have scheduled a meeting for March 20 to discuss the PSAs.

Jean reminded everyone that the 50+ Planning Committee meets the first Friday of each month.

### **Action Items**

- Jennifer Long will invite the County's Connectors to the March 20, 2023 Communications Committee meeting.
- David Engel will tweak the CoA's FY24 budget priorities to include an extension of funding for the Connectors and the ARPA Broker
- David Engel and Jean Dinwiddie will reach out to different County communities regarding developing an Ambassador Program to gauge interest in receiving presentations:
  - David will contact staff at the Margaret Schweinhaut and Holiday Park Senior Centers
  - Jean will contact Stephanie Moore at the County Housing Opportunity Commission, Mona Ngem at the American Muslim Senior Society, and Vivien Hsueh at Chinese American Senior Services
- Beverly Rollins and Jean Dinwiddie will prepare a first draft of the Ambassador Program's Operations Plan
- Beverly Rollins and Jean Dinwiddie will prepare a draft of the CoA's Library Liaison job description
- Tracy O'Connor will ensure that the CoA's website is updated to include the February production of 50+ in Montgomery County

### **Adjourn**