

**AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE
OF THE
The COMMISSION ON AGING**

Date: January 12, 2021

9:30am-11:30 am

“Virtual Meeting”

In Attendance: Monica Schaeffer, Wayne Berman (co-chairs, AIC), Barbara Selter, Mary Sweeny, Nanine Meiklejohn, Marsha Weber, Richard Jourdenais, Miriam Kelty, Maritza Rivera, Karon Phillips, Eddie Rivas

Staff: Pazit Aviv, Marcia Pruzan

Guests: Frank Demarais (DHCA), Stephanie Moore (HOC) Deirdre Harris (HOC), Sara Fought (JCA), Stephanie Edelstein, Isabelle Schoenfeld

Topic	Discussion Points	Decisions/Follow-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and Introductions • The 	<p>Monica welcomed members and guests and invited her co-chair, Wayne Berman to introduce himself. Wayne is a retired traffic engineer who worked for the Federal Highway Administration. He has volunteered for many organizations, including Life Board member of the JCA and past chair of the Transportation Committee for JCA, Long-Term Care Ombudsman for the County at an Assisted Living Facility. He is past president of his synagogue’s men’s’ club. He is a graduate of Senior Leadership Montgomery.</p> <p>Wayne’s interests include accessible and affordable transportation, especially for older adults, technology use by older adults, housing and aging in place.</p>	

<p>December Meeting Minutes were approved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Affordable Rental Housing: <p>1st presenter: Frank Demarais (DHCA)</p>	<p>Nanine introduced invited speaker Frank Demarais, Deputy Chief of the Division of Housing, Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) who spoke on “Understanding the Challenges in Providing Affordable and Accessible Rental Housing for County Residents, especially the County’s Older Adults.” He described the scope and structure of DHCA and then spoke about affordable rental housing, focusing on issues impacting older adult renters.</p> <p>Currently over 55% of older adult renters over 65 are rent-burdened paying at least 30% on rent. Some lower income older adult renters spend as much as 50% of their income on rent.</p> <p>DHCA manages several programs to reduce the number of housing cost burdened older adult renters. They include: Federal voucher programs, projects to preserve existing affordable rental units and construct new ones to maintain and expand the number of income-restricted units. DHCA works with developers, (e.g., Victory Housing) to expand the number of affordable units through partnerships involving the County, state and private sector. Using the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF), the department has preserved or produced 1,570 income-restricted units for older adults over a 10-year period (see spreadsheet on senior housing projects). The HIF has about \$30-\$35 million for financing such projects. Funds from the CARES Act have allowed DHCA to maintain the current level of activity, but future expansion is unlikely. DHCA is asking the County Council to establish an acquisition fund for the preservation of existing affordable rental units.</p> <p>Mr. Demarais also talked about the moratoriums on evictions and rental assistance. The department is very concerned about an increase in evictions in March when some moratoria on evictions are currently scheduled to end.</p>	
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<p>2nd Presenter: Stephanie Moore (HOC)</p>	<p>There are several rental assistance programs for renters who are delinquent in paying their rent. Older adults have lower delinquency rates and, therefore, few benefit from these programs.</p> <p>The County has established a Covid-19-related short-term assistance program with about \$20 million for delinquent renters who lost income due to the pandemic. It has supported about 7,000 – 8,000 households. It is closed now, but they expect to be able to double that number with funds from the December pandemic assistance program enacted into law in December. DHCA has made several modifications to the application process to make applying easier. In preparation for the third round of the program, applicants will be able to self-certify income, assets, and citizenship status. This will eliminate the need for them to gather several months' worth of bank statements, pay stubs and other documentation. See link for program and eligibility: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS/RightNav/COVID19_RentReliefProgram.html Also, here is the direct link for joining the waitlist: https://forms.montgomerycountymd.gov/f/CRRPwaitlist</p> <p>The County also has capped rent increases during the Covid-19 crisis and maintains a separate Rental Assistance Program emergency fund for tenants at risk of eviction who have an assigned court date.</p> <p>AIC attendees asked how CoA can support the work of DHCA. In response, Mr. Demarais said that increases in affordable units that DHCA has been able to finance are offset by higher rents elsewhere in the County. The recommendation is to advocate for increasing affordable housing units and maintaining existing ones. Also wider communication about the programs is needed. The AIC was referred to the County website and to 311.</p> <p>Stephanie Moore, Resident Services Supervisor, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) was introduced by Mary Sweeney and briefed the Committee on the responsibilities and programs of her agency.</p>	
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<p>Potential future topic for AIC</p>	<p>HOC provides affordable housing opportunities through owning, operating and developing housing through Montgomery County. HOC provides opportunities to adults, families with children and seniors. The biggest challenges are a lack of resources to meet the overall housing needs within the county and the costs to manage housing in the County. HOC and DHCA work collaboratively to administer affordable housing opportunities within the County. DHCA provides funding to HOC to operate several affordable housing programs for low and moderate-income households.</p> <p>There is a Project Based Rental Assistance Housing Program in which vouchers are issued that stay with the rental unit. Renters pay 30-40% of their adjusted income. The waiting list for HOC vouchers is long. HOC administers the voucher pursuant to the federal (HUD) guidelines. 33% or 2459 of the vouchers are utilized by seniors. https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet Vouchers are distributed in the order they are on the wait list, but in an emergency, applicants are advised to call 311 to be connected to a housing specialist for emergency assistance.</p> <p>COA members asked what can be done to help seniors have a better understanding of HOC programs that are available to them. Advocacy around funding for new affordable units in the County is always appreciated. The HOC website (hocmc.org) has a list of all the housing programs with names of properties under each category. . Communications is needed regarding connecting services and programs to the community. The CoA can also help push for more funding housing, advocacy, and rent stabilization. HOC also now has a list of Resident Services programs and services listed under the Enrichment Tab that list all ongoing programs for families and older adults.</p> <p>Another issue raised is that many seniors as they age need more support than is available in independent living. If they cannot afford nursing homes, there may be no appropriate place for them. HOC does not currently partner with home care agencies.</p>	<p>Follow-up: At next meeting members will select action steps to take.</p>
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Next Virtual Meeting: February 9, 2021		