

**Communications Committee Meeting  
July 19, 2021  
Minutes**

**Attendees**

**CoA Members**

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-Chair  
Beverly Rollins, Co-Chair  
Wayne Berman  
Eddie Rivas  
Barbara Selter  
Katie Smith  
Marsha Weber

**CoA Alumni Members**

Austin Heyman  
Chuck Kaufman  
Marcia Pruzan

**Staff**

Jennifer Long, Montgomery County  
Joelle Modderman, Montgomery County Public Information Office  
Tracy O'Connor, Montgomery County Public Information Office

**Guest**

David Engle, GROWS

**Roll Call and approval of June 2021 minutes**

The minutes were approved after a small correction.

***50+ in Montgomery County update***

Jean Dinwiddie announced the show's new name – *50+ in Montgomery County* – and showed attendees a photo of the proposed logo. Joelle Modderman stated that once the CoA approves the logo it can then go to Mary Anderson of HHS for distribution.

Jean also announced that for the August show Marcia Pruzan will be featured to discuss the Age-Friendly Montgomery initiative, in particular its Senior Safety Domain. Jim Resnick of Montgomery County Fire and Rescue will also be featured as well as Tracy Rezvani of the

Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection. Their focus will be on senior public safety. The September show will feature faith leaders.

### **Follow up on June meeting with Mary Anderson of HHS**

Austin Heyman stated that progress has been made in recent years to get information out to the public about older adult programs because of the internet. The internet is thriving and the County is doing a great job getting out information through it. But a large section of the County is not being reached. More printed materials – like posters in senior centers – are needed. Lists exist of where to send information but it is not getting out. It is a huge job for the County to get the information out. The CoA has asked for a senior fellow for the County's Public Information Office but has gotten nowhere. The number of senior fellows in the Executive Branch has always been around seven. We need to expand the program. The CoA needs to advocate for that; it will not happen unless the CoA makes it happen. It is an item for the County budget but it is not in the DNA of the County government. A senior fellow could help get information out for older adults.

Jean Dinwiddie noted that printed materials to reach older adults are still needed. The CoA's press releases include information that goes out in emails to the public as well as to the press.

A question was asked about the senior fellow program that the County Council has embraced and Marcia Pruzan stated that it is different from the County's Executive Branch's senior fellow program. Barbara Selter commented that the CoA may want to ask Council staffer, Betty Ring, about the Councilmembers' senior fellow program. Marsha Weber stated that the CoA needs to rework the way the senior fellow program is presented to the County; it needs to be advocated in a different way.

Marsha asked whether the CoA could prepare press releases regarding factsheets that it compiled in the past. Eddie Rivas responded that it makes sense to do press releases regarding past CoA efforts but that we have to be careful about sending out too many press releases.

It was suggested that the Communications Committee have a liaison work with Mary Anderson. Beverly Rollins volunteered to be the liaison. Joelle Modderman reminded the Committee that Ms. Anderson will send out all initial CoA press/news releases and that she must approve anything that the CoA sends out.

Chuck Kaufman stated that the reason for print stories is to get more publicity, including publicity on the radio. He noted that getting a senior fellow to work with Ms. Anderson is a very good idea but, in his opinion, the person should be attached to the PIO and not part of HHS. Eddie Rivas commented that if the senior fellow is in the PIO, the CoA will not have as much control over him/her for CoA publicity.

Marcia Pruzan stated that a CoA liaison and a senior fellow should work with Ms. Anderson to get older adult information to the public. The question was raised on whether press releases have to be approved by the full CoA. Jean Dinwiddie responded that press releases stating CoA opinions would require CoA approval. Chuck Kaufman commented that the CoA's Executive

Committee can approve them. Marcia Pruzan noted, however that the CoA should use caution when releasing anything overtly political.

The question was raised about what other activities the CoA and Ms. Anderson can work on together. Posters in senior centers? Joelle Modderman stated that anything that would go through the PIO for older adults would go through Ms. Anderson. Those items would include things such as electronic signs and posters. Barbara Selter commented that anything that requires promotion with the public could be discussed with Ms. Anderson, including factsheets. Jean Dinwiddie asked whether someone from the CoA's Health and Wellness Committee could write a press release regarding the hearing factsheet that it prepared last year. Marsha Weber responded that she will work with David Engel to prepare a draft. Chuck Kaufman reminded Committee members that only a small percentage of County residents goes to Senior Centers.

Wayne Berman suggested that the CoA should prepare a press release on its "Find the Good in People" initiative when it is announced.

### **Communications Committee suggestions for CoA budget priorities**

Jean Dinwiddie reported that she and co-chair Beverly Rollins have suggested that the Communications Committee advocate for a senior fellow to work with Mary Anderson and possibly another senior fellow to work in the PIO. They also stated that there is a budget need for a campaign to get out information for older adults.

Beverly noted that last year when the CoA drafted its budget priorities it left the campaign a broad category with no designation on how it would be implemented. Eddie Rivas stated that it should be more focused, possibly target marketing to older adults and make better use of radio; do not duplicate what is already being done. Wayne Berman commented that an abstract campaign does not do much, but if the CoA can zero in on something specific it might be more successful. He stated that the CoA could effectively write the text for the campaign.

Jean noted that Ms. Anderson has no money in her budget to do things such as print posters. Wayne suggested that perhaps the CoA could use the money it has in its bank account for a marketing campaign.

Marsha Weber stated that more CoA members need to push the senior fellows program. Chuck Kaufman commented that we need to heighten awareness of the CoA. Individuals in the County do not know about it. Chuck suggested that the CoA should promote itself.

Eddie Rivas stated that the Communications Committee may not want to make the senior fellow position for Equity a priority but the CoA should have it on its list. Barbara Selter asked why the CoA is asking for a senior fellow in the PIO in addition to one for Mary Anderson. Could one person do both? Jean Dinwiddie responded that it wouldn't hurt for the CoA to request both; Ms. Anderson serves all of the HHS PIO needs as a one-person "team" and additional resources would help her get information out to the County's older adults. A senior fellow for the PIO would have a broader scope than one who works for Ms. Anderson.

A question was asked about whether the CoA could use a senior fellow program similar to the what the County Councilmembers have. Marcia Pruzan stated that the senior fellow program employed by the Executive Branch is better suited to the work that the CoA needs. Marsha Weber commented that the CoA does not have the power to request a senior fellow program similar to that of the Councilmembers.

Chuck Kaufman noted that the CoA needs a senior fellow to consolidate its messaging. That person should work with Mary Anderson.

The Communications Committee members agreed, for purposes of developing County government budget priorities, to ask for a senior fellow position to work with Ms. Anderson. The CoA's Aging in Community Committee will ask for other senior fellows as part of its budget priority list.

### **Status of CoA member handbook**

Beverly Rollins stated that her goal is to have the Handbook completed by August 31. Barbara Selter asked whether it needs to be approved by the CoA's Public Policy and Executive Committees. Eddie Rivas responded that it does not have to be approved by the Public Policy Committee. Jean Dinwiddie commented that there will be no new documents in the Handbook; i.e., no documents that need to be approved. When asked about the CoA's Mission, Vision, and Goals Statements that members are now reviewing, Eddie Rivas noted that the current Statements can be used for now and then amended later when the new Statements are agreed upon. Beverly noted that HHS staff will be responsible for adding the County government information that they want included in the Handbook.

### **Prepare a new briefing book?**

Jean Dinwiddie stated that in 2018 the CoA prepared a briefing book for Councilmembers and others to use to acquaint themselves with the CoA's work. She asked whether it is time to update or prepare another briefing book.

After a brief discussion it was decided that the Executive Committee will take the lead on preparing a new briefing book or updating the 2018 version. All of the CoA Committees will be tasked with writing parts of it and staff will also be asked to help. It was noted that the 2018 version was long and the new one should be shorter.

Jean Dinwiddie stated that she will ask Tremayne Jones whether there is a Word version of the existing book. If not, then we can convert a PDF into a Word document. Also, a new book should be sent to a wider audience and not just the Councilmembers. Marcia Pruzan commented that she would like to see a format of a short opening paragraph and then bullets for each section.

### **Adjourn**