

**Commission on Aging
March 23, 2023**

Minutes

Attendance

(Attendance taken via screen shot) Commissioners: David Engel, Virginia Cain, Joyce Dubow, Janice Zalen, Kendell Matthews, Marsha Weber, Morris Klein, Mary Sweeney, Beverly Rollins, Jean Dinwiddie, Ric Ricciardi, Yvette Monroe, Ryan Wilson, Sibon Ncube, Barbara Selter, Arthur Williams, Mona Grieser, Nikiru Ezeani, Laurie Pross, Bob Levey, Arunima Ghosh, Betsy Carrier, Wayne Berman.

Staff and other attendees: Patrice McGhee, Pazit Aviv, Tremayne Jones, Monique Gardner, Phoebe Shih, Odile Brunetto, Cecily Coleman, Tina Purser Langley, Chuck Kauffman, Marcia Pruzan, Austin Heyman, Faisal Khan, Stacy Sigler, Elaine Binder, Carl Morgan, Sara Swarr, Kat Close, Tara Clemons Johnson, Marla Lahat, Constance Row, Harriet Quinn, Mark Elrich, Shell Lady?

AAA Director update – Dr. Patrice McGhee, Director Area Agencies on Aging

Highlights of the Recommended FY24 Budget affecting older adults were presented. The FY24 proposal includes \$50.7M tax supported and \$21M in non-tax supported funds for older adults.

- **Area Agency on Aging (AAA)**
 - Increase funding: Aging & Disability Resource Unit (ADRU)- 7 percent increase
 - Increase funding: Senior Nutrition Program (SNP)- 4.5 percent increase
 - Increase funding: Respite Services- 4 percent increase
 - Enhance: Assessment, Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) 6 New Full-Time Employees (FTEs) (1 Nurse Managers/ 5 Community Health Nurses) to accommodate increased demand – FY23 legislation (SB639/ HB1403) to reduce waiver waitlist by 50 percent, beginning FY24
 - Increase funding: Community First Choice (CFC) increase of \$297,071 due to increased demand and to offset revenue
- **Community Provider Support**
 - Increase funding: Developmental Disabilities Supplement – increase 1.9 percent
 - Enhancement: 2 New FTEs Autism Waiver – to meet increased demand
- **Home Care Administration**
 - Increase funding: Senior Care – 8 percent increase
 - Increase funding: Adult Medical Day – 2 per cent increase
 - Increase funding: Adult Foster Care- 3 per cent increase

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Legislative Session Highlights

HB614 – Dementia Care Navigator program- requires AAA to develop a program which includes conducting dementia assessments (determining the diagnosis) and providing care coordination with hospitals and other clinical and community partners to provide social and physical support to persons with dementia. The latest update to this bill includes adding Long-term Care and Chronic Disease Navigation.

SB797- Legislation to convene a taskforce to focus on preventing and countering elder abuse. Local ombudsman and State ombudsman provided legislative support testimony. A&D recommended to include Adult Protective Services (APS) on the taskforce.

HCBS Workforce Taskforce

- County Executive (CE) appointed a taskforce to examine the current Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) landscape by fully examining the direct care service industry and offer solutions to address the needs of the direct care workforce.
 - HCBS Final Report submitted to leadership – sent to HHS leadership and CE special liaisons on Feb. 15th
 - CE and HHS Committee Chair Report Briefing scheduled for April 7th. The full Taskforce will receive invitation to attend in-person briefing. AAA is awaiting publication of the State HCBS taskforce for final report on workforce issues.
- ***American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-***
 - Cecily Coleman – Marketing Program Administrator – started March 7th. She is meeting with program managers to learn about current marketing strategies and has been directed to develop a robust branding plan.
 - MDOA also working to improve marketing of services and has reached out to the AAAs to request current strategies and plans to advance promotion of services

Questions: Janice asked whether Access Hears is open for business. They are waiting for insurance documentation. They have a Program Director, Shelley Stein and a plan of action that AAA must approve to get started.

Laurie asked about future funding for the positions now funded by ARPA. The incumbents know these are temporary positions.

Liaison Reports –

- ***Recreation-*** Stacy Sigler
 - “Free and 23” has been extended through 2024. Any resident may join to use gyms, weight rooms for free.
 - Centenarian invites have been mailed for a program on May 12. There are 400 people in MOCO who qualify.
 - Planning is underway for: a barbeque bonanza; fitness program to track steps and win prizes; senior summer camps at Schweinhut and Damascus senior centers; World Elder Day on June 15, MD senior Olympics and a Pickle-ball tournament.
 - A Cardboard boat regatta occurred that was reported to be a great success.
 - There is still no date for the opening of the Silver Spring Center.
 - The proposed FY 24 Budget is stable from previous year with no

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increases or decreases.

Art expressed concern about definition of aging- He opined that 50+ seems young and may make older people feel left out or disadvantaged.

- *Transportation- Faisal Kahn*
 - Ride On bus had a service change to address increasing ridership.
 - Ride On bus is planning a workshop for March 30 in Wheaton to get older adults comfortable with taking public transportation.
 - Adult bike and scooter classes will be offered this spring to adults 18+ to teach basic skills; there will be free scooter classes for those on Capital Bike Share. Helmets will be provided.
 - Ride on will conduct a food drive in partnership with Manna in May.
 - A review of the county bus network assessment along with other planned transit systems is underway and entering phase II. Public engagement is ongoing and requested.
 - The department is seeking feedback on pedestrian challenges via online survey. The last day to participate in this survey is March 24.

- *AAHI- Phoebe Shih*
 - They are partnering with The AAA's for a tablet program for isolated older adults, through September 30, 2024. They will offer online classes and help people stay in touch with others. They also provide tech support to community and faith-based organizations. They have helped other organizations with tech support to address the needs of Asian Americans.
 - They train staff to prepare and conduct presentations.
 - They conduct the safety posters and magnets projects in various languages continues.

- *African American Health Program- Monique Gardner*

They are working on several programs, including: with the Smithsonian on a dementia program; intergenerational programming to help seniors use chrome books; an alternative medicine program with U of MD; a mindfulness program for Montgomery County staff and residents.

- *Maryland National Park and Planning Commission- Carl Morgan*
 - There are several events in the parks for people 55+ designed to help them meet people and play. For example, on April 5, there will be a program on succulents led by a naturalist and a; yoga dance series.

County Executive, Marc Elrich:

The CE (County Executive) summarized his Recommended FY 24 operating budget Senior priorities: He observed that the Commission on Aging (COA) has advocated for increased access to home and community-based services, transportation solutions, and communications support for Aging and Disability Services. He reported that many of these priorities were met in this budget.

- Funding increases for HHS:
 - New additional AERS team: In response to the states' legislation passed to

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reduce the waitlist for the Community First Choice (CFC) and Community Options Waivers by 50 percent, the FY 24 CE recommended budget includes one FT Nurse manager and 5 nurses FT (total 6 FT positions) to address the increased workload • Increase CFC/Nurse monitoring by \$297,071 • Increase support to Medical Adult Centers by 2 percent: \$42,315 • Inflationary increase County funded contracts by 3 percent 2.

- Funding increases for Recreation Department Senior Centers: • The FY24 recommended budget includes an increase in funding of \$119,907 to expand senior centers, and maintains several transportation programs, including rides to the senior centers and short trips program. • The new Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatics Center will include Senior Programming as indicated below: Personal Cost increase: \$96,721 Operating expenses increase: \$23,186
- Transportation / DOT • Improve pedestrian crossings by re-timing all traffic signals to extend pedestrian crossing times to accommodate slower walking speeds, upgrade some traffic signals to include accessible/countdown pedestrian signals. • Continue to improve pedestrian access by using high visibility ladder bar style at crosswalks, focus on pedestrian access safety in work zones, and continue converting streetlights to LED. • Improve transportation services and address barriers for residents with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited incomes. Supported by dedicated revenues from Transportation Network Company fees, Transit Services has increased subsidies for wheelchair accessible taxicabs, continued Call-N-Ride co-pay assistance for low-income residents, and implemented new grants to nonprofit transportation service partners.
- Office of Grant Management • Provides for new \$1.5 million in the budget to support senior services program through the nonprofit sector. Grant awards will be decided during FY24. This is a new application process with a substantial investment in senior services to be delivered by community providers.
- County Staffing Issues DHHS has 2,000 positions in total. There are currently 313 vacant positions. In Aging and Disability Services the vacancy rate is currently at 10 percent. The challenge we continue to see is shortages of qualified nurses, therapists and social workers who apply for a position with us. The Police Department and Correction Department are also facing recruitment challenges.
- October 26, 2023 Summit on Aging The last Summit on Aging was held in 2015. Two of its successful outcomes were the decisions to enroll in the WHO/AARP Age Friendly Communities initiative and the Worldwide Dementia Friendly initiative. Much has happened since and so I look forward to gathering this fall to join the Summit on Aging on October 26th at the Silver Spring Civic Center. Another keynote speaker will be the State Secretary on Aging, Carmel Roques. I thank the Commission for actively participating in the planning of the summit and am excited to taking part in it.

The CE entertained questions from the commissioners:

Beverly commented that programs and services for older adults need to be advertised by means of better communications. The Ambassador program will send people out to communities to inform and to obtain feedback. Other counties have this but MOCO does not. This function needs a paid employee. The CE agrees the county needs to get word out to people. He committed to discuss the issue with senior staff. He noted that HHS is short on personnel now. David suggested that the marketing programs from ARPA could be used.

Art expressed support for the proposed tax increase to be dedicated to education. He urged

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support for the tax increase to maintain the education quality in the county—an important intergenerational issue. The CE agreed that the tax increase is needed. The school system requested a large increase in its budget, much of which will go to salaries. MOCO is now behind in pay compared to other places. Moderately priced housing is now out of reach for teachers because they cannot afford it. Salaries will make us a bit more competitive. DC teacher salaries start at \$75k. Without this increase, we will be way behind DC. Also, we have not been spending enough on school programs and have not kept up with inflation. We must put more money into the school system. An additional justification is that it will protect housing values, which should be of importance to older adults.

Marsha observed that the Senior Fellow program seems to have gotten lost among other priorities of importance. Is there a way to improve this program? The CE expressed a willingness to discuss the issue. Marsha will follow-up.

Chuck Kaufman express concern about the impact on older adults of the proposed tax increase. The CE said he was willing to examine some tax relief for older people as long as there is an income eligibility requirement. The current credit applies to people with incomes under \$60K with a net worth of under \$200k.

Mona asked about universal design in housing that is being developed. Are builders required to include features to keep people safe? The CE will investigate. Some of the single-family units do include some universal design features.

Pazit mentioned that some units have universal design but as a rule, they do not.

Presentation discussion: Marla Lahat, Home Care Partners (In-home aide services, Safe at Home, and Lite Care programs)

Presented a slide presentation about home care.

In-Home Aid Service (HIAS)

- County/state program
- Services: bathing, dressing, meal preparation assistance, etc. to frail seniors and adults with disabilities to help them remain in their own homes.
- Eligibility: Must be income eligible, must be receiving case management and the service is a part of a treatment plan to prevent or reduce the length of institutional placement; prevent or reduce the length of out-of-home placement of children; prevent or remedy abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation; or promote self-sufficiency
- Cost: Some clients pay a fee determined by sliding scale based on income.
- Service Hours: Very limited – visit length is often 2 or 3 hours and usually just a few times per week.

Medicaid home and Community-Based Services

- County/state program
- Services: bathing, dressing, meal preparation assistance, etc. to frail seniors and adults with disabilities to help them remain in their own homes.
- Eligibility: Must be income eligible and must be receiving case management and the service as a part of a treatment plan to prevent or reduce the length of institutional placement; prevent or reduce the length of out-of-home placement of children; prevent or remedy abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation; or promote self-sufficiency.”
- Cost: Some clients pay a fee according to a sliding scale based on income.

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- Service Hours: Very limited – visit length is often 2 or 3 hours and usually just a few times/ weeks.

Respite Care

- County/state program
- Respite is the short-term periodic and temporary care of individuals with developmental or functional disabilities in order to temporarily relieve the family or informal caregiver.
- The Respite Care program offers financial reimbursement for short-term temporary care in order to provide a period of rest and renewal to family caregivers by temporarily relieving them of the demands and stresses of caregiving responsibilities. Respite care is provided at planned intervals, in a time of crisis, or on an as-needed basis.

Agency Based

- Agency schedules the service, supervises the aide, pays the aide, and takes care of all taxes and other benefits.
- Agency should be licensed and have required worker's compensation and liability insurance
- Most require 4-hour minimum visit time; sometimes longer
- Costs vary but usually range between \$30 and \$40/ hour with shorter visits sometimes costing more.

Privately Arranged

Client and/or family may make private arrangements to hire a relative, friend, or other person to provide home care. Client/ family is responsible for all arrangements

Community Reach of Montgomery County

- Formerly called "Community Ministries of Rockville"
- Private non-profit serving residents of the City of Rockville
- Services for older, low-income residents of the City of Rockville, including home care services
- Comparable to "Light Care" - Most recipients of CRMC home care services receive only one or two visits per week and the focus is on light housekeeping and other chore services.
- No cost to CRMC clients.
- Home Care Partners is one of their home care providers.

Montgomery County Light Care

- Home Care Partners developed this program in 2003 in partnership with the City of Gaithersburg to provide a small amount of home care services to City residents who needed this type of support to remain safely in their own homes.
- Initial City of Gaithersburg funding was federal through a Community Development Block Grant but later was funded through City grant funding.
- Program expanded through temporary federal funding through the Housing Opportunities Commission to serve additional low-income housing in Montgomery County.
- Home Care Partners has continued the program even after the initial funding ended.

Light Care Services

- Certified home care aides help with personal care, light housekeeping, laundry, trash removal, shopping, meal preparation.
- A licensed social worker arranges and monitors the service and may make other referrals and assist with any service issues.

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- Aide Service is offered once or twice/ week for 2 – 3-hour visits.
- Clients must be adults with disabilities or older adults who need this type of support to remain safely in their homes.
- Clients must be able to manage independently when the aide is not present.
- Service is prioritized for low-income residents; there is no charge for the service.
- Most services are currently provided to residents living in Senior buildings as this allows more efficient scheduling and minimal travel time.
- Most current clients live in Gaithersburg, Silver Spring and one subsidized building in Bethesda.

Home Care Partners also provides services in DC. These were described because there is a general impression that MOCO does not offer similar programs. Pazit noted, however, that if we examined the components of the DC programs described, several are offered in MOCO as well.

D.C. Caregivers Institute

- Funded through federal Title IIIIE funding of the Older Americans Act
- Provides social work case management, support groups, educational programs, various respite options paid directly by the program, and reimbursements for family caregiver expenses for supplies or respite care if they pay themselves.
- No income requirements; both family caregiver and care receiver must be DC residents.
- DC Safe at Home
 - Safe at Home 1.0 Provides Occupational Therapy assessments and home modifications up to \$6,000 per person.
 - Examples of home modifications include stairlifts, grab bars, ramps and equipment such as power recliner chairs.
 - Safe at Home 2.0 is a new initiative to provide additional fall reduction activities to those at highest risk including balance and exercise classes, vision screenings and medication screenings.
 - Income limits are very generous – almost \$80,000 annually for an individual.
 - Funding is primarily through local DC. government funds
 - *Must be DC resident*

Challenges

- Workforce Shortages
 - There are not enough trained, certified aides.
 - Training and certification process is challenging
 - Pay is too low
 - Many are leaving the field for jobs in retail or other settings where this type of training is not required, the work is steadier and the pay is comparable.
- Serving clients in some locations in Montgomery County is difficult due to the large geographic size of MOCO
- Some aides will not accept cases that are less than 4 hours in duration; some will only accept 8-hour cases
- Funding for Light Care is less certain than other contracts and various sources of funding must be combined.

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Questions: Marsha: How long have the DC programs been existence? One over 20 years. Safe at home since 2016- it's expensive to run, around \$5 million. Has there been an effort to bring these types of programs to MOCO? Not directly
Laurie: Has there been any experience with "cluster care"? The light care model is based on this concept. It's a good model but takes coordination and organization and requires a threshold of people to make it work.
Pazit. mentioned that some of the components of the DC program exist in MOCO such as programs offered by two nonprofits that offer home modifications, Senior Reach, Habitat and one other. She suggested we do an inventory of some of these programs.
Barbara: Do these programs use any remote monitoring, virtual case management or the like? Most of the services they offer require hands on care. However, the aides use technology for reporting, record keeping, etc.

Old Business

Approval of February CoA minutes

The minutes were unanimously approved.

Actions/updates-the nominating committee for community for a lifetime has been established; A letter of support for end-of-life legislation was drafted and submitted.

Chair's Report

David noted that he was presiding from the Margaret Schweinhut Senior Center. I urged commission members to visit the county's senior centers.

- In connection with the work of the Health and Wellness Committee's work on planning for Life Transitions as We Age, David noted that the Montgomery County Palliative Care and End of Life Coalition is having a National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD) 2023 event on Tuesday, April 18, 2023 titled "Understand the difference between an Advance Directive (AD) and the Maryland Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST)". This is an online event. A key goal of NHDD is to demystify healthcare decision-making and make the topic of advance care planning actionable.
- David reported that he receives numerous emails from Commissioners and thanked them for these communications and said that he reads them and tries to respond to them. These emails have information about events or articles of relevance for the older adult community. He provided examples of the types of information contained in some of the emails.
- The Neal Potter Path of Achievement award nominations committee is made up of members of the Commission on Aging. David asked if anyone was interested in serving on this year's committee. He noted that the deadline for nominations had been extended into April.
- The Commission on Aging, Community for a Lifetime Award deadline is the end of the month and urge members to nominate worthy candidates. He thanked those who had volunteered for the review Committee.

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- David asked if members of the commission favored an in-person meeting at the new Silver Spring Aquatic Center when it opens in the summer.
- Tremayne has been reaching out to the Council and securing days and times for meetings with members of the County Council. He encouraged members to respond to Tremayne with the names of the Councilmembers they would like to meet with.
Everyone is invited to scheduled meeting on March 24th at 11:30 am with Council Vice President Andrew Friedson on Zoom. The meeting will provide the opportunity for the Commissioners to hear the presentation of the FY24 Budget Priorities in real time before you have your meetings with the other Councilmembers.

Budget Report-

There were no transactions during this period.

Update on Public Forum Planning Committee-

Wayne provided an update on the Forum- Dr. McKnight, superintendent of schools will come to the Forum to discuss intergenerational opportunities. Plans are moving along well. The working groups is focused on getting a flyer distributed by the beginning of April.

Community for a Lifetime Award update Tuesday

The deadline for nominations is Mar 28.

Committee Reports

- *Aging in Community*
 - Betsy reported that at the last meeting on 3/24 Pazit presented on the hub and spoke model for the villages. They are refining a consortium model that will give villages flexibility with respect to their relationship to the organizations. Mona is working on a program on universal design.
- *Health and Wellness*
 - Marsha reported they are continuing to work on the project- Life Transitions as We Age. A few sections (e.g., legal) have been sent for peer review to ensure their accuracy. The next step is to compile a list of resources to amplify the information in the fact sheets.
- *Communications*
 - Beverly reported that they are establishing a 6-month pilot ambassador program. They are also setting up a library liaison program and are seeking commissioners to work with their local libraries to check on materials they are featuring for older adults. The 50+ program for March will feature intergenerational opportunities. The April program will highlight and discuss the forthcoming Forum. And, in May, the program will feature MOCO centenarians.
- *Public Policy-* Ryan- During its last meeting, the committee prepared for the upcoming meetings with county council members. The committee also discussed the nursing home inspection issue. Monday was crossover day when bills between the House of Delegates and Senate are exchanged. All bills must be passed by April 3

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and the end of session is April 10th. Morris reviewed the status of the bills about which the commission commented, some of which made it out of committee while others did not. A final status report will be made next month.

There was no new business.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

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