

**APPROVED JANUARY 28, 2025**

Montgomery County Community Action Board  
Zoom Meeting  
November 19, 2024

**MINUTES**

**CAB Members in Attendance:** Rachel Bonas, Beverly Coleman, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Summer Cook, Luz Cuenca, Denise Fredericks, Jeffery Johnson, Will Kenlaw, Pamela Lockett, Evelyn Okutu, Timothy Robinson, DaVida Rowley-Blackman, Claudia Simmons, Kemmesha Thomas, and Helen Winder

**CAB Members Absent:** Mike Subin

**CAA Staff:** Shantá Johnson, Charlene Muhammad, Aizat Oladapo, and Leah Goldfine

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm.

**Consent Agenda**

Timothy moved to approve the consent agenda and Claudia seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The consent agenda included the October 2024 meeting minutes; October 2024 meeting evaluations summary; Executive Director's Report; Head Start Report; HS Community Needs Assessment; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison's Report; Budget report and P Card update; TESS and Navigation reports; VITA report; CAB testimony: Joint Delegation Hearing; CAI Pre-Program Survey; County Executive's FY26 budget forum presentation; CAB letter to County Executive Elrich; and CAA Strategic Plan.

**CAB Updates**

Prior to the meeting, Board members received a detailed written report from the staff liaison with updates on the board's activities since the last CAB meeting. Staff shared that the CAB had not formally approved the Community Action Agency's Strategic Plan, completed the previous year, although board members were involved in the strategic planning process and received updates during this process. Board members received the document ahead of the meeting. Denise moved to approve the Strategic Plan and Tim seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Staff shared that the first CAI workshop went very well and thanked Erika for leading the session.

Board members were reminded of the opportunity to join the CAB Advocacy Committee for the legislative session.

Staff started an ongoing discussion about how to increase Community Action's visibility. CAB members were encouraged to start thinking about strategies to increase the agency's and the board's visibility as the federally-designated anti-poverty group.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Prior to the meeting, board members received a detailed Executive Director's report with updates on the agency's programs, along with program reports from TESS and Navigation, VITA, and budget and P Card reports. Shantá noted that the TESS Center remains closed until further notice.

### **Head Start Report**

Ahead of the meeting, Board members received a detailed written Head Start report, along with the Head Start Community Assessment. Charlene shared that the program is required to complete an assessment for the grant application. The team collected a lot of data and found that the trends have not changed a lot. A quarter of families are dual language learners. One of the biggest challenges the team faces is explaining the need in the County is that our County is viewed as wealthy and the assumption is that we have no needs. We know that our community has needs but we need an effective way to tell our story.

Charlene noted that the priorities remain to serve more children zero-three. The report discusses the changes in Early Head Start services, including Sheppard Pratt relinquishing their grant and changes with the Lourie Center program. Another priority is more mental health services for families and staff. The lack of these services contributes to the very high turnover rate for staff.

The board expressed concerns about the many groups working on early childhood education and the lack of coordination.

Evelyn moved to approve the Head Start Community Assessment for 2025. Tim seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

### **Contracts**

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency's contract partners. Aizat noted that the annual partners' meeting went very well and was well-received but noted that many of the grant agreement recipients were not present. Aizat shared that the County has consolidated food contracts and placed them under the Office of Food Resilience for FY26. Aizat also shared that the County Council approved funding for the Newcomers Program.

### **Announcements**

Board members were reminded that the Head Start Stakeholders' Meeting would take place on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. This annual meeting focuses on the recruitment process.

**Adjournment:** The meeting ended at 6:57 pm.