

**Montgomery County Commission on Health
Annual Retreat Meeting Minutes**

Date: May 15, 2025

Location: 401 Hungerford Drive Rockville, Maryland

Time: 5:00-8:00 pm

The Commission on Health for Montgomery County, Maryland convened in person and via Zoom on Thursday, May 15, 2025, for their annual retreat.

The meeting had a quorum

Present:

- **Commissioners:** Betty Smith, Gabriela Lemus (Chair), Susan Emery, Arthur Summerville, Beth Barrows, Brent Berger, Milan Patel, Rashida Dokes, Venchele Saint Dic, Donna Cawley, Laurel Fain, Adam Finkelstein
- **DHHS:** Dr. Davis, Dr Ashford, Meghan Sontag
- **County Council:** Tara Clemons Johnson
- **Guest:** Aruna Nathan (to replace Brent Berger for FY26)

Absent:

- Marcela Cámpoli

1. General Business

a. Welcome –

The meeting commenced with a welcome from the chair, Gabriela Lemus, at 5:30 with Call to order.

b. Approval of April Minutes

Motion to approve April 2025 minutes: Brent Berger. Seconded by: Laurel Fain. Minutes unanimously approved.

c. Outgoing commissioners

The chair thanked the commissioners with terms ending for their service: Brent Berger, Betty Smith, Laurel Fain, and Beth Barrows

2. Conversation with Councilmember Laurie-Anne Sayles

The Councilmember shared her background, motivations, and past experiences in public health policy, food insecurity, and some of the programs. Councilmember shared that there is a need to come up with more creative ways to grow the local economy.

3. Monthly Reports

a. Dr Davis – Provided monthly health officer report.

- Encouraged commissioners to think about their role in affecting change in Montgomery County and to lean into their expertise and reminded the group that work on priority area can be spread over years.
- Shared information about new dashboard to be launched in the Fall 2025 that will highlight some positive outcomes focused on Youth.

- Discussed grant funded by Juul to prevent/reduce youth vaping, tobacco and substance use in priority zip codes. Link:
https://gn.ecivis.com/GO/gn_redir/T/a1wb00sikqj7

b. Dr Ashford – Provided monthly Public Health Services Chief’s Report.

- Overview of the county budget. Everything recommended by the County Executive was approved.
- Proposed changes to Medicaid will create barriers (e.g. reapplication every 6 months, work requirements). There is a need to improve the reimbursement system to be able to recoup the costs of all services rendered by DHHS and how to better inform the community about Montgomery County programs.
- The African American Health Program will be hosting their annual community day on Saturday May 31st, 2025. There will be free wellness/other activities (per their website).
- The DHHS Strategic Roadmap was released and shared following the meeting.

c. Tara Clemons Johnson – Provided monthly County Council liaison report.

- The final budget approval will take place on 05/22/2025. A rising priority centers on the unknown landscape of future federal funding. The current budget has increased funding to support homelessness, but there is a need to find more innovative ways to help solve this issue. The idea of inviting a DHHS subject matter expert on homelessness to speak at future COH meeting was mentioned.

4. Officer Elections - The group voted by secret ballot for FY27 officers.

- **Chair Nominee:** Arthur Summerville
- **Vice-Chair Nominee:** Susan Emery

Meghan Sontag counted the votes, Arthur Summerville (Chair) and Susan Emery (Vice Chair) were unanimously approved.

5. Presentation of FY27 Priorities

- Discussed the seven priority areas compiled by the group.

6. Voting on Priorities/Formation of Work Groups

- Decision made to wait until new commissioners are onboard before voting on FY27 priorities and forming work groups.
- Top priorities at the retreat are (1) Funding for PHS’ Clinics Health Clinic Manager Position and (2) Policy: Public Health Budget Protection- This policy does not propose any new initiatives for consideration by the council and the executive. Rather, with budget cuts on the horizon, the proposal is that the Commission devote resources to identifying public health priorities that are slated for elimination but that should not be, and campaigning to remediate that elimination