

**Communications Committee Meeting
Minutes
September 20, 2021**

Attendees

Commission Members

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-Chair
Beverly Rollins, Co-Chair
David Engel
Sibo Ncube
Eddie Rivas
Marsha Weber

Alumni Members

Austin Heyman
Chuck Kaufman
Revathi Vikram

Staff

Jennifer Long, Montgomery County
Joelle Modderman, Montgomery County Public Information Office
Tracy O'Connor, Montgomery County Public Information Office
Betty Ring, Montgomery County Councilmember Sydney Katz' office

Guest

Stuart Rosenthal, *Beacon Newspapers*

After roll call, the attendees approved the minutes of the August 2021 meeting.

Austin Heyman

Alumni member, Austin Heyman, requested time to speak to the group because he will not be able to attend meetings for the foreseeable future. He noted that it is good that the committee is functioning; the updated Member Handbook looks wonderful and the new member Orientation Booklet was well done. It was good to share member bios in the Booklet to let the new members see the current member resumes. He reminded the group that there is \$10,000 in the County budget for printed materials for older adults. Austin doesn't know what department's budget it is in – possibly the Public Information Office? – but someone should follow up on that. In addition, the printed materials should be written in many languages to accommodate the County's diverse population.

Austin asked the question: how can we get information to the County's diverse populations? The Office of Community Partnerships should be helping the CoA with that. Also, is information going out to the faith communities? There is a new position in the Office of Community Partnerships that can help with this. Pazit Aviv, who works with the Villages, can help, too.

He commented that a strategic place to put printed materials is in the County libraries. At one time there was a Senior Section in the libraries. The CoA should look into whether the libraries are still segregating older adult information. Also, County Regional Centers have places to provide printed materials. The CoA should also check to see whether the Regional Centers are still doing this for older adults.

Austin asked what are the best ways to communicate with older adult facilities? Years ago the CoA tried to provide taped copies of the *Seniors Today* programs. Many of these facilities have their own networks and could air *50+ in Montgomery County*. It would be a good idea to approach them and provide them with older adult information. He noted that in the past the CoA has tried unsuccessfully to get the County's Recreation Centers to air *Seniors Today*. That would be a great opportunity to get information to the public.

He asked about non-profit organizations; how are they getting information about older adults and how do they get that information out to their clientele? And he noted that the CoA should find a way to work better with the *Beacon Newspapers*. This should not be under the purview of the Age-Friendly Montgomery initiative.

As for the suggestion to have a CoA Speakers Bureau: this is not a new idea. He recommended that we consult with Kathleen Stobie of the now defunct Vital Living Committee. Or talk to someone like Mona Negm of the American Muslim Senior Society. A Speakers Bureau would be a challenge to implement but it is a great idea.

Austin commented that having a Senior Fellow working in County government to help facilitate getting older adult information to the public would be a boon. But where – what department – should that position reside? The last head of the Public Information Office would not request one. And it is frustrating that the County departments will not expand the program. To reap the most benefits for older adults, the Senior Fellows should not be assigned to a whole department but to a specific person, possibly Jennifer in the Aging and Disability Department.

Marsha Weber stated that she and CoA member, Monica Schaeffer, are currently taking a look at the Senior Fellows program. They are trying to develop ideas to get a better way for the program to work. It's pretty inefficient. She commented that anyone interested in working with her and Monica should contact them. All of the Senior Fellows within the different Departments do their own thing. They get paid to work 11 hours a week, a maximum of 600 hours a year. Within the Departments, someone has to agree to supervise that person. Chuck suggested that maybe the CoA should lobby for getting a Senior Fellow at an executive level. Beverly Rollins asked how the Senior Fellows program differs between the County Council and the County Departments? Marsha responded that she and Monica are trying to find the answer.

Jean stated that she has made inquiries into which Department has the \$10,000 budget for printed materials for older adults but she has not gotten a response. She is following up on it.

Chuck Kauffman stated that we should be looking at getting older adult information out on the radio. It is a popular means of communication, especially among ethnic and faith-based groups. As for the Senior Fellows, he asked where one would be most effective for CoA purposes? Is the CoA trying to get older adult messages across using Senior Fellows? He said that the County's efforts to get older adult information out is kind of piecemeal.

Austin commented that the CoA should ask a County staff person to follow up on the things he discussed. And he agreed with Chuck about getting messages out by radio. He noted that Latino radio is an important instrument.

50+ in Montgomery County Update

Jean noted that the October program's featured guests will be Elizabeth Necka, Program Director of the NIH Individual Behavioral Processes Branch; Regina Morales, Deputy Chief of Montgomery County's Behavioral Health and Crisis Services; and Eddie Rivas, Vice Chair of Montgomery County's CoA. The theme of the show is two-fold: Eddie will announce the show's new name, *50+ in Montgomery County*, and the other speakers will discuss mental health issues in older adults. And, because October is Spanish Awareness Month, Eddie will also discuss that.

Jean reported that David Engel prepared a press release announcing the show's new name and stated that it was sent to HHS staffer, Mary Anderson, so that she could take it through the proper channels for release. Jean asked whether the press release could also be featured in the County's Executive's periodic newsletter.

Jean reminded everyone that the *50+ in Montgomery County* Planning Committee meets the first Friday of each month.

Status of Committee Projects

CoA Member Handbook: Beverly reported that the new Handbook will be announced at the September 23 CoA meeting. Jean commented that hopefully the CoA will review the Handbook on an annual basis.

Press names: HHS staffer, Mary Anderson, sent the Committee the list of names and organizations that she sends press releases to. Shawn Brennan had her summer students place all of the names in an Excel spreadsheet and then Beverly and Jean sent it to a few individuals for review and suggestions for additional names. Chuck Kauffman made a number of suggestions which will be incorporated. He stated that he will send Beverly and Jean a few other names that he thinks should be added. He suggested that Village contacts be added. We also need ethnic organizations and faith-based groups.

Jean asked what the final goal is of having this list: to ensure that all of the organizations listed on it get CoA and relevant older adult information? She noted that we are unsure of how often

Mary Anderson updates her list. Joelle Modderman reminded the attendees that everything the CoA wants to send to the press and other organizations must go through Mary Anderson. The question was asked about whether Mary is open to the CoA adding names to the list. Chuck responded that she is.

David noted that individuals can sign up for various County-sponsored lists on its public.govdelivery.com page. He stated that he is not sure whether any older adult-related lists are available on that page. Perhaps the CoA could establish an “opt in” list on that site? That would help to build a CoA list of important information such as relevant press releases. Joelle stated that we need to discuss this with Mary Anderson.

Jennifer Long stated that the .govdelivery page *does* offer an opt-in list for older adults – it is entitled “Senior News.” Odile Brunetto, Montgomery County’s Chief of Aging and Disability Services, blesses it. It is listed under “Health and Human Services.” She suggested that all CoA members should be subscribed to “Senior News.” If the CoA has content it would like to include in “Senior News,” she (Jennifer) is the person we need to contact. It doesn’t have to go through Mary Anderson. The information should not be too lengthy. Barbara stated that if the CoA ever has information it wants to promote, it should send it to Jennifer as well as to Mary. “Senior News” does not get posted to a website. Eddie asked how long information is posted on the “Senior News” site. Jennifer responded that she is not sure. Jean asked whether the CoA can post a link on the website and who should be contacted to do that. Jennifer responded that Tremayne posts things on the website. David suggested that a link to it be posted on the CoA’s website. Marsha suggested that it be mentioned on the show, *50+ in Montgomery County*. Jean noted that a link to “Senior News” should be posted on the CoA’s website, and also a link to the “Senior Site.”

Renaming of the “Senior Site:” Jean stated that she looked into whether the name can be changed to remove the word “Senior” but it’s not going to happen, at least not soon. The site was developed after the County’s Senior Summits. It is under the PIO’s purview. Eddie stated that it may not be something we want to tackle now, but maybe in the future. David asked whether the CoA can get input into what is listed. Jean asked for clarification: is the “Senior Site” under the PIO? Tracy O’Connor responded that she thinks it is under HHS’s purview. Jennifer commented that she thinks Mary Anderson would be the contact to inform of errors or expired links. Beverly noted that the CoA may want to look at the “Senior Site” to ensure that it is up-to-date. Jennifer responded saying that it is not completely outdated; it is updated periodically.

Beacon Newspapers Expo: Stuart Rosenthal reported that the *Beacon Newspapers* will hold a virtual expo this year, and not an in-person one. It will be held November 1 through January 31 and will provide lots of useful information. He asked whether the CoA would like for an episode of *50+ in Montgomery County* to be featured. He said that the *Beacon* would appreciate any publicity the CoA can give it. The event will be called the “Beacon Virtual 50+ Expo” and the County is helping to underwrite it. CoA members can participate at no cost. Stuart requested the YouTube link for *50+ in Montgomery County* be sent to him. The *Beacon* needs videos to use for the Expo. He commented that they will post CoA information if we send it to him. Jennifer requested that any information that the CoA sends to Stuart also be sent to her and it could be featured in the “Senior News.” She also stated that although Mary Anderson has to bless all CoA

press releases, after Mary is finished with them we should send them to Jennifer and she will get them posted on “Senior News.”

Update on Work with Mary Anderson: Beverly asked whether a press release will be written for the social isolation flyer. Jean stated that after the full CoA approves it a press release will be written.

New Projects Discussion

Briefing Book: Beverly stated that the Committee will be updating the Briefing Book and it will be given to the County Council and the County Executive. It will also be distributed to the State legislators at the CoA’s Legislative Breakfast. It will discuss important State and County issues affecting older adults and also include information from the CoA’s most recent Annual Report. Eddie suggested that it also include aspects of the convergence report that was discussed at the May CoA meeting, or at least include links to it. Jean stated that we need to keep it brief and Barbara reiterated that the topic discussions should be kept brief. David suggested that maybe the briefing book could be a supplement to the Annual Report, and don’t include the Annual Report material in the Briefing Book. Jean suggested that we use the Hierarchy of Needs of Older Adults that is part of the Positive Aging material and also Montgomery County’s newly released Census data. Marsha commented that visuals are important. Beverly, Barbara, Jean, David, and Marsha volunteered to help with the new Briefing Book. Jean will send out a copy of the Hierarchy of Needs. She stated that Committee members can see a link to the last Briefing Book on the CoA website. Jean will send out a Doodle poll to see when the volunteers can meet to discuss it. She stated that we should finish it prior to the Legislative Breakfast. Eddie suggested that we invite Morris Klein and Ryan Wilson, co-chairs of the Public Policy Committee to sit in on the meeting to discuss it.

Topics for Future Meetings

Steve Gurney: Jean asked the members whether they want to invite Steve Gurney from “Positive Aging” to speak at the November meeting. Chuck thought that would be a good idea. He could discuss how he communicates his work; basically ask him to talk about everything he does. The question was asked, “what should we say in our invitation to him?” Some data he might have access to is “where is the interest for topics relevant older adults?” We could ask him what his takeaways have been during the past 18 months of the pandemic; and how he’s reaching diverse groups and faith-based groups. He could also discuss how he networks himself, and how the CoA could do its own marketing. It was suggested that we could ask how he has created networks with other community groups, and also what he’s learned. Have him talk for 1 hour.

Notetaker for October Communications Committee meeting: Beverly will not be available for the October meeting so Barbara graciously volunteered to take notes.

Press list: Eddie will reach out to Pazit Aviv for Village contacts. Chuck will send the list that he has compiled to Beverly and she will get it to Mary Anderson.

Action Items

- Find out which County Department budget has \$10,000 for printed materials for older adults.
- Contact Pazit Aviv about having the Villages help with getting older adult information out to County residents, especially the diverse and faith-based communities.
- The CoA should look into whether the libraries are still segregating older adult information.
- The CoA should look into whether the County Regional Centers are still distributing printed materials for older adult information.
- The CoA should approach the older adult facilities in the County and ask them to air *50+ in Montgomery County* on their private networks.
- The CoA should approach the County's Recreation Centers about airing *50+ in Montgomery County*.
- The CoA should find a way to work better with the *Beacon Newspapers*.
- The Committee should consult with Kathleen Stobey of the now defunct Vital Living Committee or Mona Negm of American Muslim Senior Society regarding establishing a CoA Speakers Bureau.
- The Committee should clarify whether the press release announcing *50+ in Montgomery County's* new name can be featured in the County Executive's periodic newsletter.
- Beverly should get the additional press contacts from Chuck Kauffman and incorporate his other suggestions to the Press Excel Spreadsheet.
- Barbara stated that if the CoA ever has information it wants to promote, it should send it to Jennifer as well as to Mary Anderson.
- The Committee should find out how long information is posted on the "Senior News" site.
- The Committee should find out whether the CoA can post a link on the "Senior News" website and who should be contacted to do that.
- The Committee should ask that a link to "Senior News" be posted on the CoA's website.
- The CoA's website, as well as "Senior News" should be mentioned on the show, *50+ in Montgomery County*.
- Eddie will reach out to Pazit Aviv for Village contacts.
- Stuart requested that the YouTube link for *50+ In Montgomery County* be emailed to him.
- Jennifer requested that contact sent to Stuart, also be sent to Jennifer.
- The Committee should prepare a press release for the social isolation flyer.
- The Committee should begin work on updating the Briefing Book. A Doodle scheduler will be sent and a meeting will be scheduled. We should invite the co-chairs of the Public Policy Committee to join us.
- Jean will send the older adult Hierarchy of Needs paper to the Committee.
- From CoA meeting: Distribute the racial equity task force paper.