



**Marc Elrich**  
*County Executive*



**Darren M. Popkin**  
*Sheriff*

**Office of the Sheriff**  
**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**  
**Thursday, March 11, 2021**  
**5:00 PM – 7:00 PM**  
**Via Microsoft Teams due to the COVID-19 Crisis**

**Minutes**

Attendees: Debbie Feinstein, Chair (Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney); Tom Manion, Vice Chair (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff); Spencer Cantrell (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse); Nicole Drew (Montgomery County Commission for Women); The Honorable Karen Ferretti (District Court for Montgomery County); The Honorable Sidney Katz (Montgomery County Council); Tina Michaels (Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation); Assistant Chief Ron Smith (Montgomery County Department of Police); Vikhyana Gonzalez (Student Member); Maura Lynch (Community Member); Amy Palumbo (Community Member); Michelle Maxberry (Community Member); Mindy Thiel (Community Member); Ronald Whalen (Community Member); Smita Varia, Staff (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff);

Absent: Laurie Duker (Court Watch Montgomery); Ingrid Gonzalez (Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – Parole and Probation); Dorne Hill (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services); The Honorable Karla Smith (Circuit Court for Montgomery County); The Honorable Rebecca Smondrowski (Montgomery County Public School – Board of Education);

Guests: Captain Amy Daum, Lt. Gerald McFarland (Montgomery County Police Department); Danie Stewart, Intern, (Montgomery County Sheriff's Office); Maya Falb, Intern (Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney); LaSheena Williams, Member of the Public); Carolyn Hoffman (Court Watch Montgomery); Shin Young Park (Korean Community Center); Vita Larkin (Community Member, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America); Shin Young Park (Korean Community Center); Alia El Radi (House of Ruth)

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

**II. Guidelines for the Virtual Meeting**

**III. Approval of January Minutes**

The January 14, 2021 DVCC meeting minutes were reviewed. Nicole Drew proposed a motion to approve the minutes without revision. The motion was seconded by Amy Palumbo and passed.

#### **IV. Announcements**

Smita Varia shared that RespectFest is planned for April 18<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> during National Victims' Rights Week. The annual Choose Respect Video contest has received 238 entries so far, which is more than ever.

Debbie Feinstein reminded everyone that the District Court is still up and running, and dockets have continued since reopening last June. Circuit court jury trials are to resume on April 26.

#### **V. Committee Reports**

##### **A. Offender Program and Policy Committee – *Tina Michaels, Chair***

The Abuser Intervention Program has started back up again and is offering the program to respondents from the backlog of protective orders before they get to offenders with criminal orders. They are going to start with virtual classes. Judge Ferretti said that since Protective orders expire after one year, there is a rush to get them into the program before that time is up.

The Committee is also working on how to bring the Abuser Intervention Program to the serious offenders who are serving time in jail. One goal is to train detention center and counseling staff in how to run the Abuser Intervention Program (House of Ruth Maryland is offering trainings), and another idea is to have offenders who are incarcerated participate in the program virtually with the in-person groups.

The committee is also continuing to address the transition between an offender going from pre-trial services to probation after sentencing. The Pre-Trial conditions are strict, but once they are sentenced to Probation, there is a lag time to when conditions start with Probation. The transfer should be more seamless.

##### **B. Legislative and Policy Planning Committee – *Spencer Cantrell, Chair***

Spencer Cantrell and Smita Varia have been working on the process of how the DVCC can formally endorse Senate Bill 250, which is the Repeal of Marriage as the Defense of sexual assault. Marriage can currently be used as a defense for sexual assault when the victim is incapacitated. As the law stands right now, marriage is not a defense to forcible rape, but it is an excuse for incapacitated rape (i.e. drugs, alcohol, mental and physical disabilities). A vote on the Bill will be held on March 12, 2021 in the Judicial Proceedings Committee. Spencer Cantrell will write a letter on behalf of the DVCC to show support for the Bill. Smita Varia will circulate the letter to members of DVCC and if approved, will send it to Annapolis. Debbie Feinstein also encouraged everyone to contact Representatives in Annapolis to support this Bill.

Debbie Feinstein also mentioned Bill 11-304 - Out of Court Statements – Child and Vulnerable Adult Victims. This procedure limits children's statements so they are considered hearsay. The Bill in question will adjust this procedure so that if a child under 13 makes a statement to a certain list of individuals (social worker, forensic interviewer, school teacher, therapist, guidance counselor, medical professional), the statement can be used in court if they express crimes of violence. This would mean that for children who witness domestic violence and are under the age of 13, the initial statements they make can be used in court. This would eliminate the risk of children being forced to recant their statement to protect a parent or adult. This is the third year that some variation of this bill has been proposed, but first year that crimes of violence has been added.

Debbie Feinstein also mentioned Bill HB720 - Intercepted Communications - Penalties and Admissibility of Evidence. This Bill would make exceptions to the wire tapping law and allow use of recordings that have been collected under circumstances that are considered violent crimes. Currently, if a victim recorded violence or abuse without consent of abuser, it would be a wiretap violation.

**C. Victim Services Committee update - *Tom Manion, Chair***

The Committee is trying to connect the FJC with a service provider who could assist victims of domestic violence who are also experiencing addiction issues. Maura Lynch and Ngozi Obineme have connected with Suburban Hospital and Johns Hopkins University to set up a potential partnership.

DVS Legal Services just recently hired a new attorney who can take protective order cases as well as Family Law cases.

Tom Manion also mentioned that the Victim Services Subcommittee has met to look at the future evolution of victim services in Montgomery County to include providing services to victims of all power-based violence. During the next meeting, the Executive Director of the Sojourner Family Peace Center in Milwaukee, WI will share their lessons learned.

**D. Education and Outreach Committee - *Debbie Feinstein, Chair***

Smita Varia said the awareness cards for the Family Violence Prevention Campaign are still being distributed. Court Watch Montgomery volunteers have called Safeways, Giants, and CVS stores. Danie Stewart, the FJC intern this semester has contacted Latin markets and sent some there as well. 130,000 cards have been distributed to date and the efforts will continue.

The Choose Respect video contest is going well, and the deadline is this weekend.

Respect Fest is in full swing of planning. The week will be opening up with a survivor speaker who is a senior at Johns Hopkins University. There will be different events throughout the week and Smita Varia will send out a schedule of events for everyone to share. Zoom events will be recorded and offered in Spanish as well.

**VI. Adjournment**

Debbie Feinstein, Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:47 pm.

**The next DVCC meeting will be on May 13, 2021, 5pm-7pm**

**Domestic Violence Coordinating Council**