

COMMISSION ON AGING

January 23, 2025

9:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Linda Bergofsky, Yvette Monroe, Wayne Berman, Laurie Pross, Virginia Cain, Betsy Carrier, Joyce Dubow, Morris Klein, Kathleen McGuinness, Marie Sloan, Kate Stein, Janice Zalen, Liz Barnes, Dixie Butler, Dr. Eleanor Tanno, Dr. Vernell DeWitty, Dr. Willie(Don), McCullough, Marsha Weber, Kendell Matthews, David Engel

MocCo Go: Peter Illig, Tara Clemons-Johnson, Ingrid Lizama (LHI), Dr. Kimberly Johnson, Tremayne Jones, Denise Isreal, Shanw Brennan, Stacy Siglar

Guests: Mansi, Gosalia, Joan Novell, Lisa Cook, Eric Kuo-Hwa Wang, Becky Donahue

Linda Bergofsky called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed current, past and new Commissioners and several guests.

Director, Area Agency on Aging (AAA), COA Report_ January 2025

Dr. Johnson provided updates on the AAA, including the hiring process for an Ombudsman program manager, the implementation of branding for Aging and Disability services, and the launch of commercials and radio ads to promote aging and disability programs. Dr. Johnson also discussed the A & D participation in the ambassador program and the consolidation of state-funded MDOA programs in proposed General Assembly legislation. Janice raised concerns about the renewal of the Older Americans Act, which Dr. Johnson confirmed had been authorized for the first quarter of 2025.

Shawn Brennan, coordinating the Age-Friendly Montgomery initiative, gave a brief tutorial on the concept of Age-Friendly communities, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and the role of various sectors in creating a welcoming space for all. The conversation ended with plans to share Shawn's presentation via email for further review.

Shawn discussed the overlap between the Age-Friendly initiative and the Commission on Aging, highlighting the importance of communication and collaboration between the two. She also shared plans to send a PowerPoint presentation with images of older adults engaging in community activities. Shawn emphasized the importance of Age-Friendly initiatives in Montgomery County, citing the successful implementation of free ride-on bus services for older adults. She also mentioned the upcoming Longevity Ready Maryland initiative, which will involve cross-departmental collaboration and strategic planning. Linda and David provided additional information on how to find out about age-friendly programs and resources at <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/LRM.aspx>.

The Commission approved the minutes with a unanimous vote. Linda then shared updates on the Commission's activities, including letters sent to the County Executive, Council, and senior leadership in HHS regarding the nursing home inspection MOU. She also mentioned a call with Delegate Bonnie Cullison and a discussion about legislation to reinstate the MOU. Linda

introduced the Reframing Aging movement, emphasizing the importance of positive language and avoiding ageism. There was a discussion about the distinction between being positive about aging and ableism.

Janice requested that letters sent by the commission be posted on the website, and Betsy praised the commission's work on the nursing home review letters.

Linda discussed the agenda for the upcoming year, including suggested topics and the possibility of deeper dives by committees. She also mentioned the need for feedback on the proposed topics. Kate suggested discussing the topics now or sending an email for feedback. Linda then handed over to Wayne to discuss the Public Forum topic for the year, which was centered around the theme of "Revaluing Care" and strengthening formal and informal care networks in Montgomery County. The conversation ended with a discussion on potential topics for the Public Forum, including mapping care networks, intergenerational caregiving and housing, and the economics of caregiving.

Wayne discussed the upcoming Public Forum, set for May 20th. He encouraged new commissioners to join the working group to gain a better understanding of the commission and its workings. The working group will narrow down the broad topics into more specific goals and purposes for the forum. Kathleen expressed interest in joining the working group and offered to present on care navigation for older adults. Vernell asked about the purpose of the forum, to which Wayne responded that it's a mix of education, information, and advocacy.

Betsy reported on the Aging and Community Committee's priorities for the upcoming year, which include affordable housing, healthcare access, and support through villages.

Laurie reported on the Health and Wellness Committee's progress on fact sheets and upcoming topics.

Kathleen reported on the Communications Committee's plans for the year, including the first ambassador presentation of the year. Marie sought volunteers to help with the Commission on Aging website and discussed the possibility of creating a fact sheet on ageism. The discussion also focused on the development of a toolkit for new commissioners to become ambassadors, with Marie, Kathleen, and David leading the discussion. The Comm Committee discussed the next presentation scheduled for January 30th. Linda suggested the idea of having business cards with a QR code for easy access to information.

The CoA discussed the potential of using Zoom for surveys during meetings.

The Public Policy Committee report touched on the issue of immigration and the impact it has on older adults in the county. Kate raised the concern about the impact of Trump's executive orders on immigrants and refugees, and proposed forming a task-oriented mini work group to support older Montgomery County residents who are immigrants. The CoA also discussed the delegation of nursing home inspections to counties, with Linda explaining the proposed legislation and the need for the county to pay 50% of the costs. Joyce expressed her concerns about the State retaining funds designated for this function and the county not sharing the entire amount. The CoA agreed to include these concerns in their letter of support for the bill.

Commission on Aging Updates and Actions

Beverly Rollins has been working on a new orientation booklet that provides comprehensive information about the Commission. The Commission needs to form a nominations committee of at least three commissioners to review and recommend potential new commissioners to the County Executive. They also need volunteers for a Forum planning committee. Linda plans to invite speakers on preventing financial exploitation and scams targeting older adults. The Communications Committee discussed potential updates to the Commission on Aging website while ensuring compliance with accessibility requirements. The Commission will follow up on various action items, including sending out formal letters, obtaining additional details on data reporting, and coordinating website updates.

The Commission on Aging discussed the process of sending letters and communications on behalf of the public body. They debated whether all members of the Commission should review and approve these letters or if the responsibility could be delegated to the Executive Committee. The group also discussed the possibility of posting these letters on the Commission's website for public transparency. Additionally, they discussed the potential for more interviews to fill vacancies on the Commission. The conversation ended with a discussion on the logistics of in-person meetings, with a focus on finding a suitable location that could accommodate all members.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.