



Commission on Aging - Montgomery County  
Meeting Minutes - February 27, 2025  
Time: 9:15 AM

**Attendance:**

Wayne Berman, Linda Bergofsky, Yvette Monroe, David Engel, Laurie Pross, Peter Illig, Dr. Patrice McGhee, Dr. Kimberly Y. Johnson, Tremayne Jones, Tara Clemons-Johnson, Ama Lee, Denise Isreal, Kate Stewart, John McCarthy, Michael Conrad, Eric Friedman, Mario Wawrzusin, Becky Donahue, Elizabeth Barnes, Dixie Butler, Virginia Cain, Betsy Carrier, Dr. Vernell De Witty, Joyce Dubow, Norman Goldstein, Mona Grieser, Morris Klein, Dr. Willie (Don) McCullough, Kathleen McGuinness, Anna Maria Izquierdo-Porrera, Marie Sloan, Kate Stein, Janice Zalen, Marcia Pruzan, and Odile Brunetto.

**Meeting Summary**

**Council Priorities and Budget Challenges**

Council President Kate Stewart addressed the Commission on Aging, discussing the Council's priorities, particularly regarding the office of the President. She highlighted efforts to ensure residents have accurate information, particularly amid ongoing national political challenges. Kate also emphasized budget constraints due to the state's financial situation, detailing a proposed housing package and a bill to modify the homeowner's tax credit. Additionally, concerns were raised about the office of Grants Management and potential nonprofit closures.

**County Issues and Housing Integration**

Kate Stewart expressed concerns about delays in addressing county challenges and suggested that assistance from the County Executive and Rich Madaleno could facilitate progress. David Engel emphasized the need for a more inclusive system, while Kate Stein proposed dedicated funding for childcare and senior care to enhance labor force participation. The discussion also covered concerns about housing integration and the risks of resegregation, with Kate Stewart advocating for improved housing expansion and transportation infrastructure.

**Support for Aging Populations**

Kate Stewart underscored the necessity of expanding support and care programs for seniors. She highlighted Montgomery County Public Schools' role in providing resources to families and referenced legal assistance from Casa and Ayuda. Concerns about community distrust were

raised, with Anna Maria emphasizing the importance of continued education and support. The discussion also touched on the impact of deportation on families, and ongoing webinars and online resources were noted as tools for assistance.

### **Community Needs and Budget Cuts**

Wayne acknowledged the team's efforts and discussed the need for a comprehensive approach to community needs. Dr. McGee and Dr. Johnson provided updates on the recruitment for an Ombudsman Program Manager and the development of a nursing home resident survey. Concerns were raised about potential budget cuts to senior care programs, prompting a commitment from Linda, Dixie, Joyce, and Becky to assist in drafting advocacy testimony.

### **Financial Exploitation and Scam Prevention**

Panel Discussion: The newest tactics in preventing and addressing financial exploitation of older people

- John McCarthy, State's Attorney for Montgomery County
- Michael Conrad, Montgomery County Police Department KSS (KEEPING SENIORS SAFE) Providing Community events (33 events in 2024), looking to partner in 2025 at vendor events
- Eric Friedman, Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection
- Mario Wawrzusin, Montgomery County Adult Protective Services

Linda introduced experts on financial exploitation prevention. John McCarthy, Montgomery County State's Attorney, stressed the importance of educating seniors on scams such as the gold bar and woodchuck frauds. Mike Conrad from the Montgomery County Police Department detailed the volunteer-run Keeping Seniors Safe program, which offers fraud and identity theft awareness sessions. Eric Friedman from the Office of Consumer Protection warned against sharing personal information online and advocated for interagency collaboration to combat scams. Mario from Montgomery County Adult Protective Services provided insights into financial exploitation prevention. He emphasized staying vigilant, seeking second opinions, and safeguarding personal data. He also explained the public guardianship process and the role of Adult Protective Services in protecting vulnerable individuals.

### **Surveys, Projects, and Events**

Linda led discussions on various projects and events. Dixie, a long-term care Ombudsman Volunteer, advocated for including assisted living facilities in the Nursing Home Resident Survey. Dr. Johnson committed to sharing the survey details. Patrice highlighted the need for a relationship builder for an upcoming river contractor project. Stacy from the Recreation Department discussed the closure of the Damascus Senior Center and upcoming events like the Fashion Boot Camp and the Cardboard Boat Regatta. Denise from the Department of Transportation provided updates on outreach initiatives, including travel training workshops and participation in the Active Aging Expo.

### **Policy Updates and Advocacy**

Denise and Becky provided organizational updates, and Linda reviewed upcoming agenda items. Joyce and Janice called for a more proactive approach in establishing official policy positions. Linda agreed to circulate a document summarizing previous letters and testimonies. Action items included finalizing the March agenda and coordinating a meeting with the County Council. Wayne also announced a public forum on revaluing caregiving to foster county-wide discussions on family caregiving.

### **Event Planning and Community Engagement**

Wayne detailed plans for an event on May 21st focusing on caregiver interviews and focus groups. Volunteers were encouraged to participate. Linda reminded members to review budget priorities and complete the community health needs assessment survey. Betsy provided updates from the Aging and Community Committee, which included a deep dive panel on the Harp and Design for Life programs. David encouraged participation in the Ambassador Program and the Library Liaison Program. Morris provided legislative updates, particularly on proposed bills affecting nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Kate Stein emphasized the importance of attending public policy meetings and immigration task group discussions. Linda concluded the meeting by urging participation in upcoming one-on-one meetings with County Council members and the County Executive session.

### **Next Steps & Action Items**

- **Review Budget Priorities:** Commissioners to assess last year's budget and propose adjustments in response to the budget crisis.
- **One-on-One Meetings:** Commissioners to sign up for individual meetings with County Council members via Tremaine's email.
- **Caregiving Forum Participation:** Interested commissioners to contact Vernell and Kate for interview opportunities.
- **Library Liaison Program:** Volunteers needed for package distribution (Contact: Beverly).
- **Ambassador Program:** Interested commissioners to coordinate with David, Marie, or Kathleen.
- **Community Health Needs Assessment:** Complete the survey link by the next day.
- **March Meeting Preparation:** Commissioners to sign in at 9:15 AM.
- **March Agenda Finalization:** Linda to confirm, potentially featuring a speaker from the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission.
- **Public Forum Planning Document:** Wayne to correct and distribute to the group.
- **Caregiving Forum Planning:** Continues Tuesdays at 4 PM.
- **Communications Committee:** Review feedback forms and develop an FAQ sheet (March 17th meeting).
- **Immigration Task Group:** Led by Kate Stewart, meetings every Friday at 9 AM.

**Adjournment:** The meeting concluded with final remarks and reminders for upcoming commitments. The next meeting is scheduled for March 2025.