

**Communications Committee Meeting
April 15, 2024
Minutes**

Attendees

CoA

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-chair
Beverly Rollins, Co-chair
Linda Bergofsky
Stephanie Edelstein
David Engel
Bob Levey
Yvette Monroe
Barbara Selter
Marie Sloan

Alumni

Marcia Pruzan
Rev Vikram
Marsha Weber

Staff

Christopher Daniel, **Manager III, Web Solutions Team**
Jennifer Long, Aging and Disability Staff

Guests

Chris Doyle

Roll Call

Jean Dinwiddie called roll and asked for approval of the minutes from the March Communications Committee meeting. The minutes were approved.

Guest Speaker: Chris Daniel, Manager, Web Solution Team
Brainstorm Session on Development/Advocacy for a Montgomery County “Senior”
Application for Computers and Phones

Chris is the manager of the County’s web solution team. The team maintains and manages the County websites. There are about 145 websites now.

Jean explained why Chris was invited to the meeting. Committee members are thinking that an older adult “phone app” would be very helpful to our County’s older population; i.e., a button-based application that would be easier to navigate than the County’s current Senior website.

Chris stated that his team is not developing a phone app but is working on website templates for users’ browsers that will serve well for older adult applications. Beverly Rollins asked what the difference is between an app and a website. Chris responded that an app is developed to work with a specific operating system; it is native to the specific device that the person is using. Apps cannot be deployed on a web server. Web pages are called non-native; programmers do not need to develop a site to work specifically with a system such as Apple.

Chris described what a phone website would look like and noted that what the user would see on the phone would also be available on a desktop computer. Chris’s team would prefer a responsive website and not necessarily a phone app. Developing an app would take a lot of time to develop and would require getting security clearance and approval. A responsive website can be used on a smart phone like an application.

Jean asked how far the County has gotten in improving its Senior website. Chris responded that it should be done by the end of May. He stated that the website could be useful on a phone.

Linda Bergofsky noted that the County’s Senior website is very sedate and sleepy. It is not colorful. She asked whether there are things that can be changed to make it perkier. Chris responded the team is working on making the Senior site perkier. Chris stated that he would send some of the ideas they are working on to Jean to share with the Committee. Once his team has a more solid prototype they will know more about how the website will look. For instance, there will be a video page where people can go and see instructional videos.

Linda commented that visuals are needed that are inclusive, to ensure that all cultures are included. Chris responded that yes, the website will be inclusive.. He stated that he can have his team set up a meeting with CoA representatives to ensure they are including information that the CoA wants.

Chris showed the group how responses would look on a phone. Marie Sloan asked whether and how information is translated into different languages on the website. Will the entire page be translated? Chris responded yes, the entire page is translated and replaces all of the text.

Marcia Pruzan said that she really likes the new look of the website. What worries her, however, is that the CoA has done a number of Factsheets and often individuals do not know how to find them. How can the website be made simpler so that they are easier to find? Chris responded that website designers can promote content and add information to the County website. They can also add search criteria to promote links or web pages in search engines.

Marie asked whether it would be helpful if there was a category on the Senior website about what the CoA is. Jean noted that the CoA’s website is more for the CoA’s use; the County’s Senior website is more for the public. They have different audiences.

Marsha Weber asked whether the Vital Living Network is still around because it was on the draft website that Chris was showing the group. Chris responded that a lot of the information on this draft version are just place holders.

David Engel commented that when the CoA tried to make changes to its website it was flatly denied. He asked whether there would be a method for making change requests on the revamped Senior website. Because it will not be a CoA site, will there be a way for the CoA to request changes? Chris responded that the team will make prototypes and will welcome requests for changes or revisions. They have a tool to identify broken links.

David stated that one thing he is interested in doing with a phone app is to have “hot buttons.” He asked whether the new Senior website will have hot buttons. Chris responded that there will be ways to do that, things that members of the public will be able to see immediately.

Marcia stated that maybe the new Senior website should try to mesh with what the State is saying on its website. Jean agreed that is a good idea.

In closing, Jean reiterated that the County is building some responsive websites to help the older adult population. After Chris logged off, Linda stated that the CoA will need to test the new Senior website. And the CoA may want to put up signs at senior centers and ask individuals to test the new site. Marcia asked David whether he contacted WiseCities to see what they have. David responded saying that he does not know what information will show up on WiseCities. He commented that if a user searches for something in Montgomery County, maybe WiseCities will direct users to the County’s site? Perhaps staffer Jennifer Long can provide the Committee with information regarding the top five types of calls that go to the 3000 number.

Library Liaison Program

Jean reported that the CoA’s Life Transitions folders are flying off the library shelves. We will soon need to assemble more of them. Stephanie Edelstein asked whether we have more of those folders to provide to the libraries. Jean stated that if the liaisons have a relationship with their librarians then Jennifer could send 10 folders to those librarians through the County’s Pony system. Jennifer agreed and asked the liaisons to email her if they wanted the 10 folders sent to their librarians. Jean asked folks to cc her and Beverly to keep them in the loop. Marcia asked whether the Committee should develop a flyer regarding the Life Transitions folders for the libraries with a link to the CoA’s website. Jennifer agreed that it would be a good idea to do that.

Marcia said that she would vote for using the term “Senior” for the County’s older adult website because a lot of folks use the term “senior.” Linda said that she likes the term “Longevity Friendly.” Marsha said that most people know what the term “senior” means. She also asked for a count of how many of the Life Transition folders are left and where they are being housed. Jennifer said that another count needs to be done because we do not seem to have as many as we thought.

Rev Vikram said that she has no issue being called senior. She commented that all of the documents that the CoA has produced need to be marked as done by the CoA.

Jean asked for a volunteer to review the CoA documents that we are using at the libraries and the Ambassador presentations to ensure that they are still accurate. We should also place the CoA logo on them and the date they were last reviewed. The documents that are being used include the Social Isolation and Loneliness Factsheet, the Hearing Loss Factsheet, the Age-Friendly Resources Factsheet, and a factsheet prepared a few years ago regarding older adult dental issues.

Stephanie volunteered to review the Resources Factsheet, Linda said that she will review the Social Isolation Factsheet, and Marie Sloan stated that she will review the Hearing Loss Factsheet. Jean will contact Jennifer regarding locating the dental factsheet. Jean noted that any web links and phone numbers should be verified and the reviews should be completed by the end of May. David commented that a paragraph should be included in the Hearing Loss Factsheet about over-the-counter hearing aids. It should also be confirmed on whether the ARPA funds have expired for the Access Hears project. Stephanie asked whether the formatting for all of the documents is consistent and whether they should be. Marsha responded that the last three Factsheets that the CoA prepared are consistent.

In closing the Library Liaison discussion, Jean noted that the Committee was able to place a link in the County's library newsletter for the Life Transitions document.

Ambassador Program

Jean reported that the Program has taken off and more volunteers are needed. It has been hugely successful. However, an individual is needed to assist with the administrative coordination. Jean stated that she had no solution for that. David said that the budget request for a marketing person for the Program is going to be included in the testimony that he gives before the County Council. Aging and Disability is relying on the Public Information Office to develop a marketing plan and if they do get a plan they will need a team to manage it. David suggested that the CoA may want to look for a non-profit organization to do it. Jean responded that a non-profit was approached but A&D staff stated that even if a non-profit got involved a County supervisor would still be needed to oversee it. She said that the coordinator position would be a great opportunity for a Senior Fellow. The Program has been extremely popular. Marie is keeping a spreadsheet of how many presentations have been done and how many people are attending them.

Marsha asked whether anyone has tallied the evaluation forms that the audiences have been completing after the presentations. Linda volunteered to tally the evaluation forms if they are sent to her. It was noted that a standard way of collecting the information from the evaluations should be developed. A review of the pilot project is also needed. David suggested that a report be written in June.

Rev said that maybe the people writing the reports could keep the statistics. Barbara suggested that once the pilot report is completed the County staff could again be approached about hiring a coordinator.

Marcia commented that she is close friends with the director and program manager at Oasis and asked whether she should ask if they would be interested in having an Ambassador do a Fall presentation there? The Committee agreed that Marcia should ask.

David asked how everyone could get the most up-to-date version of the presentation. He also asked how new slides could be included. He suggested that any new slides should be sent to Beverly and Jean to include in the presentation.

Marie said that there should be an outline of what should be in the slides. She also asked that if we are dealing only with older adults at these presentations, how different would the audiences be? Jean and David responded that there are different needs in different parts of the County. Marie noted that we need to keep a file on the different slides we are using. A coordinator is needed.

Jennifer said that the County's Connector program was not renewed. It was a successful program. David commented that the Ambassador Program should incorporate what the Connectors were doing.

50+ in Montgomery County Update

- April program – Dancing
- May – Longevity Ready Maryland (Guests Carmel Roques and Kimberly Johnson)
- June – WEAAD (World Elder Abuse Awareness)

Planning Committee meets 1st Friday of each month

Adjourn

Action Items

1. Chris Daniel of the County's Web Solution Team will send some of the ideas they are working on for the County's Senior website to Jean Dinwiddie to share with the Committee.
2. Chris Daniel will have his team set up a meeting with CoA representatives to ensure they are including information on the County's Senior website that the CoA wants.
3. The CoA will need to test the new Senior website
4. The CoA may want to put up signs at senior centers and ask individuals to test the County's new Senior website.
5. Ask Jennifer Long to provide the Committee with information regarding the top five types of calls that are received by the 3000 number.
6. Library liaisons should email Jennifer Long if they want 10 Life Transition folders sent to their librarians. The liaisons should cc Jean and Beverly on their requests.
7. The Committee should develop a flyer regarding the Life Transitions folders for the libraries with a link to the CoA's website.
8. Either staff or Committee members should do a count of the Life Transitions folders to see how many are available.
9. All of the documents that the CoA has produced need to be marked as prepared by the CoA. The CoA logo should be placed on them along with the date they were last reviewed.
10. Stephanie Edelstein will review the Resources Factsheet, Linda Berkofsky will review the Social Isolation Factsheet, and Marie Sloan will review the Hearing Loss Factsheet. Any web links and phone numbers should be verified and the reviews should be completed by the end of May.
11. Jean will contact Jennifer regarding locating the dental factsheet.
12. A paragraph should be included in the Hearing Loss Factsheet about over-the-counter hearing aids.
13. It should be confirmed whether the ARPA funds have expired for the Access Hears project.
14. The CoA may want to look for a non-profit organization to coordinate the Ambassador program.
15. The attendee evaluation forms of the presentations should be reviewed and tallied for record-keeping purposes. Linda volunteered to tally the evaluation forms.
16. A standard way of collecting the information from the evaluations should be developed.
17. A review of the pilot Ambassador project is needed. A report be written in June. The individual writing the reports could keep the statistics.
18. Once the pilot report is completed the County staff could again be approached about hiring a coordinator.
19. Marcia Pruzan will ask the program manager at Oasis whether they would be interested in having an Ambassador do a Fall presentation.
20. Any new presentation slides should be sent to Beverly and Jean to include in the presentation.
21. There should be an outline of what should be in the slides.
22. A file should be kept regarding the different slides that are being used.