

AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the October 8, 2024 Meeting
9:30 am to 11:30 am

“A County Update on Affordable Housing Programs for Older Adults”

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 9:30AM

Commissioners In Attendance: Wayne Berman (co-chair), Laurie Pross, Mary Sweeney, Mona Grieser, Linda Bergofsky, Barbara Selter, David Engel, Joyce Dubow, Norm Goldstein

Staff: Pazit Aviv, MoCo; Shawn Brennan, MoCO

Guests: Sarah Fought, (JCA, Jewish Council for the Aging); Lisa Givoni, MoCo; Sommer Cross, MoCo; Becky Donahue, Winter Growth

OPENNING REMARKS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS:

As part of his opening remarks for today’s meeting, Wayne reviewed the CoA public forum titled "Reimagining Housing for Older Adults - Ideas and Actions to make Housing Available, Affordable, and Accessible." The Commission on Aging (CoA) established three specific goals for the public forum:

- Modifications to governmental regulations, institutional policies, and financing strategies to achieve increased affordability, accessibility, and availability of a range of housing types.
- The actions needed to overcome the obstacles that deter and or disincentivize the public and private sectors from developing and offering housing to older people with different characteristics (e.g., income, race, physical and mental status), and
- Actions that the CoA, County, and other stakeholders can take to advance the goal of increasing the affordability, availability, and accessibility of housing to meet the needs of the older adult community.

As a follow-up to our Forum, the meeting today featured speakers from two of the County’s agencies that are directly engaged in addressing the problems of affordable housing. They will be presenting updates on their agency ‘s activities and policies to provide more affordable housing. The speakers are today’s meeting were:

- Sommer Cross, Manager II, Housing Division, MoCo Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs, presenting an update on County policy to provide affordable housing.
- Lisa Govoni, Acting Housing, Infrastructure, and Zoning Supervisor, MC Department of Planning,

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION NOTES:

1. Some Cross led off the discussions and noted that the proposed Affordable Housing for Seniors (aka Moderately Priced Senior Living) program is now planned to be included in an update of the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program. Work is progressing on that effort and is expected to be part of the FY 26 budget request. The DHCA is asking for a lot more funds for affordable housing as part of this program update. Somer suggested that it would be of great benefit if the CoA could be an advocate to the County Council in the spring for this initiative. A draft paper is due at some point soon and may be shared with the CoA, if possible. Depending on the update of the MPDU initiative, Somer hopes to restart the working group that will include older adults.

Somer also noted that the County Council is considering changes to the Design for Life Program that would make it more accepted and better utilized by County residents. She noted how successful the HARP program has been and the desire to create success for the Design for Life program. Somer said that she would come back to the AIC in February or March to give a better update and suggest opportunities for advocacy.

2. Lisa Govoni discussed the Attainable Housing Strategies (AHS) program of the MoCo Department of Planning. The AHS program is intended to look at zoning reforms that will allow multi-family housing units (e.g. duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes) between existing single-family units. Lisa discussed the AHS Listening Sessions that took place around the County that had over 2000 people attending. She noted that the most were not controversial except for the one in the Bethesda Chevy Chase area, in which the attendees came out strongly in opposition to the AHS initiative. All the information compiled in the Listening Sessions as well as the AHS proposal is expected to be presented to the County Council later this year or early in 2025.
3. The final part of the conversation with Somer and Lisa focused in on actions that the CoA (through the AIC) can take to support the MPSL and the AHS initiatives we discussed. This was a lively discussion with Committee members actively engaged. The following points were made by the Committee:
 - In the early spring, the CoA needs to prepare to advocate for the FY 26 budget that includes funding for the revised MPDU program and the AHS initiative.
 - The CoA needs to review and understand the revised MPDU and AHS programs to properly comment and advocate for them to the County Council.
 - Support the Senior MPDU (aka MDSL program) at the State level, with the State Department of Housing
 - Keep the conversation on housing going with the County, especially Lisa and Somer.
 - Become engaged in revising and improving the Design for Life program, possibly in association with the Commission on People with Disabilities.
 - Get engaged in understanding and advocating for Rental issues in the County.
 - Understand issues and advocacy needs of groups like the Renters Alliance, the Housing Opportunities Commission, the Montgomery Housing Alliance, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, and the Faith-based communities.
 - It was pointed out that the discussion on affordable housing needs to include the East County health and wellness needs.

BUSINESS MEETING: A short business meeting followed at which these items were discussed:

- Future AIC meetings will also have a conversation on the role and actions that the CoA can take as follow up to the Affordable Housing Forum. Small working groups may be formed to carry out some smaller, manageable actions.
- Pazit gave a brief update of County and Village activities, that also included the status of key hirings and an update on legislation. Hiring for the County Outreach Manager position is moving along.

UPCOMING MEETING: Our next meeting is planned for Tuesday, November 12, 2024.

MEETING ADJOURNED: Motion was made and seconded to adjourn meeting at 11:15 am