

AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the June-July 2024 Budget Priority Meetings
9:30 am to 11:30 am

“CoA Budget Priority Planning Part #1 and #2”

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

Commissioners In Attendance: Wayne Berman (co-chair), Betsy Carrier (co-Chair), Laurie Pross, Mary Sweeney, Mona Grieser, Linda Bergofsky, Barbara Selter, Joyce Dubow, Kate Stein, Sibio Nicube, Norman Goldstein, David Engel, Barbara Selter

Staff: Pazit Aviv, MoCo (at June 11th meeting); Shawn Brennan (at July 9th meeting)

Guests: Sarah Fought, (JCA, Jewish Council for the Aging); April Stup Partners in Care; Kat Close / Marie Brodsky, Wise Cities

NOTE: These minutes reflect the discussions and outputs of the two AIC meetings devoted to identifying and preparing the 2026 budget and advocacy items.

OPENNING REMARKS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS: Wayne and Betsy welcomed everyone and stated that the purpose of both the June and July AIC meetings were to identify and prepare important budget and advocacy items that the Committee would like to recommend at the full Commission meeting on July 25th. At the full Commission meeting, all committees will present their budget and advocacy priorities for consideration. The intent of the July meeting is to present the ideas and then at the July meeting shape these ideas into short write-ups that can provide a more detailed understanding of the priority item. It is anticipated that the proposed items would support that AIC’s work over the past year, especially in the areas of affordable housing for older adults. Other areas of AIC work include transportation at recreation centers, universal design, and villages.

DISCUSSION NOTES: At the beginning of the discussions, two points were made that guided the committee’s thinking. First, it was agreed that it is important the write-ups be as complete as possible and to the greatest extent the write-ups need to be evidenced-based. The second point agreed to was that the write-ups help to reframe aging by using words that do not diminish the stature of older adults in the community.

At the June meeting, the following points were made by the Committee members:

- Make the case for village consortium gap funding.
- A very important aspect of each budget and advocacy item write-up needs to be to state an overall policy goal. The committee agreed that a good overall policy goal would be “to build community”. The policy goal(s) would need to frame budget and policy into a broader context of building community, etc.
- Another aspect of the policy goal would be “equity” A suggested overall policy goal might be “a more equitable community through policies that support longevity, older people, etc. Committee members agreed to work further on developing this policy for the July meeting.
- It was also suggested that the committee members work to meet more often with key County Council members.
- It was mentioned that the WISE program is working on a reframing aging campaign
- The committee needs to get more statistical or anecdotal data / evidence to frame our items.

- It was strongly suggested that the budget / advocacy items focus on basic services to fill a gap and not try to be all things to all people - Need to focus on basics for the County.
- Following a lengthy discussion, the committee agreed to move forward on four budget / advocacy items:
 - a. Transportation at Rec Centers. Wayne agreed to frame this item.
 - b. Universal design needs to move forward again. Mona agreed to revise this item from 2025 and move it forward 2026 consideration.
 - c. Fostering Villages in underserved communities. Continued support and advocacy is needed in the future.
 - d. Housing for older adults, that might include aspects such as:
 - i. Gap in funding for missing middle housing.
 - ii. Funding for a low interest loan for Auxiliary Dwelling Unit's (ADU')
 - iii. Tax incentives and tax breaks
 - iv. Zoning changes
 - v. Renters
 - vi. Development of naturally occurring retirement community (NORC)
 - vii. Establish criteria for the right type of housing for older adults?? Identify outcomes.

At the July meeting, the draft policy statement and the three draft proposed budget and advocacy items were presented, refined, and discussed. The committee decided that any budget or advocacy item related to support the Village program be deferred until interim funding support is determined.

The draft overall policy statement that was agreed to is “The overall mission for the CoA’s Aging in Community (AIC) Committee is to build a more equitable and inclusive community for older adults through policies, programs, and practices that enable longevity, accessibility, community building, and livability.”

The three agreed upon draft budget / Advocacy items presented that are as follows:

1. Statement on Transportation

The MC Commission on Aging (CoA) has heard from staff at the Recreation Department about several instances where older adults and people with disabilities have been left stranded when scheduled Metro Access or Ride-on transportation services were excessively late or did not show up at all. The JCA also noted of a few instances where their buses were late. Although evidence does exist that these instances have occurred, no data or statistics on these instances have been kept. Considering this, the (CoA) urges the County to provide additional funds the Department of Transportation (MCDOT) for a pilot program that enable them to arrange “back-up” transportation services with already contracted providers on an as-needed basis, when requested from the Department of Recreation. The service would be modeled after MCDOT’s very successful Emergency COVID Vaccination Transportation Service, which leveraged pre-existing contracts with Connect-A-Ride and local taxi companies to ensure access to vaccination clinics.

During FY25, the CoA will advocate and collaborate with MCDOT and the service providers to formulate the conditions under which this backup service would work and how the funds requested in FY26 will be provided

For FY26, The CoA urges the allocation of funds necessary to support a pilot program that will allow MCDOT to provide additional funds to currently contracted transportation service providers to implement the backup service as needed and make it available to the Department of Recreation.

2. Statement on Universal Design

The MC Commission on Aging (CoA) urges the development and implementation of a Universal Design (UD) training and certification program for all developers and builders in Montgomery County as well as staff from the County's offices of Housing and Aging and Disabilities. Currently, Montgomery College offers curricula in Construction Management (Degree and Certificate) as well as Building and Construction Technology (Degree and Certificate) but no courses address UD specifically or its application in housing for older people. Adding specific training programs in Universal Design would expand the skill sets of individuals who are currently property developers or will be entering into the construction trades or into construction management. County staff would also be able to apply learning from this curriculum in their day-to-day work. Adoption of UD features routinely in building construction or renovation increases the accessibility and relative value of all housing, particular for older people and people with disabilities. This effort would be done jointly with Montgomery College, the MC Offices of Aging and Disabilities, Office of Permitting Services, and the Housing Opportunities Commission.

During FY25, the CoA will advocate for UD to build a constituency and support. Work with County, State, and national organizations to frame a concept for a training and certification program.

FY26, the CoA will request sufficient funding to prepare curricula within Montgomery College (the programs mentioned above and the Gudelsky Institute, leading to Universal Design certification (or degree if warranted), recruit faculty, identify on the job training and mentorship opportunities. as well as relevant UD guidance for developers.

3. Statement on Affordable Housing for Older Adults

Bringing together public and private stakeholders, non-profits, community groups, property managers, and citizens to advance ideas and actions on affordable housing for older adults in Montgomery County was the primary goal behind the Montgomery County Commission on Aging's public forum "Reimagining Housing for Older Adults - Ideas and Actions to make Housing Available, Affordable, and Accessible." The forum took place on Thursday, May 16, 2024; 9:30 am to 2:30 pm at the Montgomery County Executive Office Building, Rockville, MD. As a result of the Forum, the CoA in FY 25 is advocating for the continuation and/or expansion of an existing DHCA working group between County, developers, and non-profit organizations to promote accessibility, affordability, and availability of housing for older people and to advocate for specific projects, funding, and regulations. This advocacy and the following budget request of this priority item was derived for the discussions and outcomes of this public forum.

For FY26, The CoA supports sufficient funding to advance the ability of older people in Montgomery County to age in the community in safe, accessible, affordable and desirable housing by funding crucial initiatives such as:

- the development and implementation at Montgomery College of certification materials and curriculum to train property managers on how to make existing housing for older adults more accessible, affordable, and available.
- the independent development of criteria and a user-friendly tool for analysis of Attainable Housing Report, including all zoning changes, bills brought before the County Council, and all master plans that go before the Planning Commission.
- the development and dissemination of multilingual and accessible information regarding affordable housing, including know your rights training for older people

The discussion of the FY 26 budget / advocacy items wrapped with Wayne agreeing to refine the transportation statement to be more evidence-based, Linda agreed to work with Mona to refine the Universal Design statement, and Wayne agreed to work with Linda and Betsy to refine the Housing for Older Adults statement.

Wayne and Betsy will submit the three statements to David once they are finalized and in time for the full Commission meeting on July 25th.

BUSINESS MEETING: As time was limited, a short business meeting followed at which these items were discussed:

- Pazit gave a brief update of County and Village activities, that also included an update on legislation.
- Wayne and Betsy led a discussion on proposed themes for AIC meeting in September through December. It was agreed that three of the themes should be technology, County updates on Housing for Older Adult initiatives, and multi-generational caregiving. It was suggested that the multi-generational caregiving theme be co-supported by the Health and Wellness Committee. Betsy and Wayne will identify the theme for the September AIC meeting.

UPCOMING MEETING: Our next meeting is planned for Tuesday, September 10, 2024. The meeting theme is to be determined by Betsy and Wayne. We will also review the outcomes of budget / advocacy process.

MEETING ADJOURNED: Motion was made and seconded to adjourn meeting at 11:25 am