



**Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards,
Commissions and Committees (BCC)**

Date: FY24 Q2 October-December, 2023

BCC: Commission on Aging (CoA)

BCC Representative: David Engel, Chair; Joyce Dubow, Secretary

Montgomery County's Commission on Aging (CoA) continues to serve as an advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of the County's older residents by identifying significant issues where its voice on the needs of older adults can make a difference. This report presents the advocacy and educational activities of the CoA for the period of October-December 2023.

Activities Updates

The Commission received updates on relevant activities from Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief of Aging and Disability Services, and Dr. Kimberly Johnson, Director of the Area Agency on Aging. In addition, the Commission received updates from several community liaisons, including the Montgomery County Departments of Recreation and Transportation; the African American Health Program; the Asian American Health Initiative; the Latino Health Initiative; Age-Friendly Montgomery; The Villages; and the Montgomery County Summit on Aging.

Committee Meetings¹

The Commission's standing committees held monthly meetings during the quarter.

- *Aging in Community* – During this quarter, the AIC devoted its meetings to exploring the important issues surrounding affordable housing for older adults. To advance its understanding of the issues, it organized a series of meetings with County agencies, private developers, and the faith-based community. Because it will be a major focus area for the AIC in 2024, these meetings led to the establishment of a working group on affordable housing for older adults that will prepare an action agenda to guide the Committee, including the preparation of a public forum on the topic in April 2024 (see below).
- *Health and Wellness* – The committee made copies of *Planning for Life Transitions as We Age* available at the October Summit on Aging. This document consisted of the fact sheets "How to Start the Conversation," "Taking Charge of Your Health Care," "Housing," and

¹ The Commission has four standing committees and an Executive Committee, each of which meets once a month. These committees are Health and Wellness, Aging in the Community, Public Policy, and Communications. All meetings are open to the public and members need not be Commissioners to participate. The Executive Committee consists of the officers of the Commission and the chairs of the committees. Occasionally, a working group will be established to work on a particular issue that reports to a particular committee.

“Legal and Financial Matters,” and also a Transition Planning Worksheet. The committee identified mental health as a focus of its work for 2024 and began examining the multiple dimensions of the issue as it relates to older adults.

- *Communications* – The committee continued working on its three major initiatives: the *50+ in Montgomery County* public access cable television program, the Ambassador program, and the Library Liaison program.
 1. Ambassador program: Volunteers were identified for the program and public sessions were held at the Schweinhaut Senior Center and the Clara Barton Community Center. At each session, materials were distributed (e.g., information regarding Access Hears, Maryland Durable Medical Equipment, and the Maryland call check program), and a listening session was held to receive comments and respond to questions from attendees.
 2. Library liaison program: Materials of special interest to older adults have been displayed/featured at County libraries.
 3. *50+ in Montgomery County*: Programming and guests have been identified for future 50+ programs.
- *Public Policy* – The committee planned for and conducted the annual Legislative Breakfast with members of the State legislative delegation from Montgomery County (see below.)

Advocacy for CoA FY 2025 Budget Priorities

In October, Commission chair, David Engel, presented the Commission’s FY2025 two top budget priorities: 1) hire a permanent Marketing and Outreach staff person in the County’s Department of Aging and Disability Services to promote the many County programs available to older adults; and 2) hire a full-time Implementation Manager to ensure that the County Executive-mandated Home and Community-based Services Workforce Task Force recommendations are fully recognized and implemented.

Legislative Breakfast

This annual event was held virtually on December 7, 2023. Over 15 State delegates/senators or their representatives attended, all of whom discussed their 2024 initiatives. The Commission heard that there will be numerous proposals addressing the needs of older adults during the upcoming State legislative session, including a study of how to develop a viable long-term care insurance program in Maryland. In addition, there was considerable interest among the members of the delegation concerning the failure of the Office of Health Care Quality to communicate with the County and the Commission about nursing home inspections. Several members offered to pursue this issue.

Education

The Commission routinely receives educational briefings on topics of importance to its work. The November meeting included a briefing on the Universal Design in Housing from Fatimah Aure, MPP, Director of Field Building and Capacity at Kelsey Building Opportunities Through Inclusivity, and Joseph Knackstedt, Deputy Manager of Community Development at the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development. Betsy Luecking, Outreach

Coordinator for Montgomery County, described the history and use of the Design for Life Tax Incentive Program in Montgomery County. She noted that it encourages development of housing options that accommodate a wide range of accessibility needs and seeks to help County residents remain in their homes as their physical needs change.

Summit on Aging

The Summit on Aging was held on October 26 at the Silver Spring Civic Center. Several members of the Commission collaborated in the planning and execution of this event. In addition, the Commission had a table where participants could ask questions and obtain a range of materials including the “*Planning for Life Transition*” packet; “*Smart Home-Smarter Care: Technology that Supports Aging in Place*” (a report of the Commission’s public forum held in May); and the Commission’s 2023 Briefing Book.

Community for a Lifetime Awards Ceremony

The purpose of the Community for a Lifetime Award (CLA) is to formally recognize the work being done in the County by individuals or organizations that contributes to the Commission’s mission. A nominating committee consisting of Commissioners and representatives of the public receive and consider nominees. The group is chaired by Wayne Berman, Commissioner.

The following individuals received 2023 CLA recognition:

Ms. Mary Jo Deering, Washington Area Village Exchange

Ms. Deering was recognized for her work in the Montgomery County Village movement and as president of the Washington Area Village Exchange (WAVE). Her work helps to achieve the CoA’s vision as demonstrated through efforts in the Village movement since 2014, when she helped create and lead an intergenerational, no-fee Village in her own neighborhood. Her success and leadership on the WAVE board led to a successful 2019 Village conference. She became the WAVE president in 2021.

Oasis Metro Washington Lifelong Learning Program

This award was given in recognition of Oasis’ long-term service and innovative programming to the older adult community in Montgomery County. Oasis is dedicated to serving older adults through lifelong learning, computer technology, health promotion, and volunteering (including intergenerational tutoring). It is committed to equity and access for all older adults through excellence in programming, partnerships, and practices. It has been a pioneer in healthy aging for 40 years and specifically has become a valuable asset for older adults in the County. Executive Director, Ms. Anna Stoke, accepted the award on behalf of the organization.

Stuart Rosenthal, Publisher of the Beacon Newspaper

The award recognized the long-term service and community leadership to the older adult community in Montgomery County that the *Beacon* newspaper has provided through its monthly

print and online editions. In addition, each year in partnership with Montgomery County, the *Beacon* and its team print and distribute, free of charge, the comprehensive directory, *The Montgomery County Seniors' Resource Guide*. Mr. Rosenthal's dedication to helping the older adults in Montgomery County is also demonstrated by producing the 50+ Expo each year with hundreds of exhibitors and also providing health screenings for older adults.

Other Activities

- In October, David Engel attended a "Services to End Homelessness" event at Bohrer Park to address the needs of unhoused County residents.
- An orientation was held in November for seven new Commission members.
- Mona Grieser, Commissioner, met at Wheaton library with Xenia Montenegro and Samnang Wu of AARP, who expressed interest in working with the Commission's Ambassador program.
- David Engel attended a November 17 Senior Housing Workgroup Session with Department of Housing and Community Affairs Director, Somer Cross, to discuss a potential requirement to encourage senior affordable housing for new developments that is similar to the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program.
- David Engel attended a public meeting held by the Office of Community Partnerships Faith Advisory Group.
- In December, a group of Commissioners and staff (Commissioners David Engel, Jean Dinwiddie, and Marsha Weber, and staffers Shawn Brennan and Peter Flandrau) met with newly elected council president Friedson to discuss feedback from the Aging Summit and the CoA priorities. They also discussed, through County activities, highlighting one senior priority per month.
- David attended remotely the County Executive's Budget Forum at Wheaton Library in December.

Upcoming Activities

The CoA's annual Public Forum – Thursday, April 25 at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg