

**Communications Committee Meeting
Minutes
March 18, 2024**

Attendees

CoA

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-chair
Beverly Rollins, Co-chair
Linda Bergofsky
Virginia Cain
Stephanie Edelstein
David Engel
Bob Levey
Marie Sloan
Katie Smith
Marsha Weber

Alumni

Austin Heyman
Marcia Pruzan
Marsha Weber

Staff

Nordea Lewis, Public Information Office
Jennifer Long, Aging and Disability Staff

Guests

Chris Doyle

Roll Call

Jean Dinwiddie took roll and asked for approval of the February minutes. The minutes were approved.

Library Liaison Program

Jean reported that she and Linda Bergofsky went to the Rockville library on Friday and worked with documents from the League of Women's Voters to make them ready to post in the County libraries. She and Linda delivered them to the Main Library Administration Offices, who will

distribute them to all the libraries. Regina Holyfield-Jewett was very cooperative. Jean was delighted that the process was so easy.

David Engel stated that the Gaithersburg library is accepting the materials that the CoA is requesting the County libraries to carry. He asked whether the liaisons are to take the materials to their individual library or just give them to the Rockville library to send out. He also asked whether there is a way to centralize a place where the liaisons can pick up the documents. This is especially important now because staffer Peter Flandrau is retiring. Staffer Jennifer Long responded that we need to figure out how quickly each library goes through the different documents. Jean noted that each library goes through the documents at a different rate and maybe the liaisons should just pick them up themselves at the A&D offices and deliver them.

Marsha Weber asked whether Jennifer has access to all of the CoA documents. Jennifer responded that she does have access to the A&D material. Beverly Rollins reported that when she visited the Germantown library she was told that they keep track of the documents and then just prints out the PDFs when they run low. Beverly asked what the other liaisons think of that idea. Jennifer stated that the libraries are not supposed to print out the documents. Marie Sloan asked how much notice Jennifer needs to get documents ready for pick up. Jennifer responded that she does not need a lot of time.

Jean reported that Head Librarian Anita Vassalo is retiring. David noted that he does not know when that will happen.

Beverly and Jean discussed the action items from the February Committee meeting. As noted in the items, Jean will contact the libraries to see who we should contact to get information in the libraries' newsletter.

Stephanie Edelstein said that the older adult materials are now displayed in the Longbranch library. However, communication with the librarians there is not very open. Linda asked whether we are engaging with the folks in the organization, Friends of the Libraries, to figure out what information they think we should put in the libraries. Jean said that commissioner, Janice Zalen, is going to the quarterly Library Board meetings but we have not dealt directly with the Friends of the Libraries. She stated that we need to do that.

Ambassador Program

Jean reported that the number of requests for Ambassador presentations is growing. She announced the upcoming ones and noted that the Committee is still working on the administrative support it needs to work with this program.

Jean reported that the March issue of the *Beacon* featured an ad that was all about the CoA. She asked whether anyone would like to have a copy for their presentation.

Jean stated that we need more Ambassador presenters and suggested that we bring this up at the next general CoA meeting. Beverly said that is kind of scary because not everyone is skilled at

making presentations. However, it would be difficult to have a screening process. Marsha and Marie suggested that we call the screening process “an orientation.”

The comment was made that the Ambassador Program coordinator would be a great project for a senior fellow. David asked the Communications Committee to weave it into the talking points for the budget request before the County Council.

Linda suggested that possibly a student seeking a master’s degree in social work could be the coordinator for the program as part of their training. Jean said that a big problem may be finding someone to supervise that position. She noted that she and Beverly are meeting with staffers Dr. Kimberly Johnson and Peter Flandrau this week to discuss it. There currently are five presentations scheduled for April.

Stephanie said that she will be participating in a panel discussion at Chevy Chase library in April and asked whether the panel discussion scenario is a new thing. She asked how many attendees usually attend and are the numbers growing? Marcia Pruzan responded that a presentation is also scheduled in Leisure World and 100 people are expected to attend.

Jean acknowledged Austin Heyman’s input in the Ambassador Program.

50+ in Montgomery County Update

Jean reported the following schedule for the upcoming 50+ programs:

March – Life Transitions

April – Dancing

May – Longevity Ready Maryland

She noted that Maryland State Secretary of Aging, Carmel Roques, and Montgomery County’s AAA Director, Kimberly Johnson, will be participating in the May show. They have both inquired about what questions they will be asked. Linda said that Secretary Roques can answer such question as “What does she expect to change? What has to happen to make the change from the current situation to Longevity Ready Maryland? Who has to play a part in making this change?” Marcia stated that the questions should start by asking what Longevity Ready means. Also ask how State officials are working with Montgomery County and how it works with Age-Friendly Montgomery. Also: “What is it going to mean to the average older resident once it’s in place?” Marcia suggested for Dr. Johnson: “How will Montgomery County work with the State? Is it more than a catchy slogan? How does it fit with Age Friendly?”

Katie Smith asked whether we should look at what Secretary Roques said at the Summit and develop questions based on her talking points. She also noted that Steve Gurney said something about what it is like to live in a senior community and possibly the CoA could look at that, too.

Jean reminded everyone that the 50+ Planning Committee meets 1st Friday of each month.

Website Update and Brainstorm for Committee Projects for 2024

Virginia Cain asked whether the CoA's website has been updated to show the Ambassador programs. Jean responded that we will look into that.

Marcia reported that through the Washington Metro Oasis program she has been connected to Wise Cities. One thing they are looking at is making things easier for older adults to find on the internet. Marcia will be beta testing a few things for them tomorrow. Waltz is another program offering tech support for seniors that is in the beta testing phase. AARP is looking at that. Marcia said that she will send Beverly and Jean the link to it. Beverly said that she will ask an AARP representative about it this week.

Development/Advocacy for a Montgomery County "Senior" Application for Computers and Phones

Jean noted that David suggested that the County develop an older adult internet application with convenient links to things that older adults need. He stated that maybe it could be an interface for a cell phone. Linda asked whether the County keeps track of clicks and web searches on its website. She said that if it does, then the app that David is suggesting should follow that. David noted that Jennifer Long keeps track of what information is requested on calls to the County's 311 and 3000 numbers. That information, too, should be on the app. He stated that EveryMind and Santa? are two contractors that we could discuss the possibility of an older adult phone application with.

Nordea Lewis said that speaking with Mitzi Ferrara could be a first step toward developing a cell phone application for older adults, and possibly Derrick Kennedy in the PIO. David said that we could also talk again to the people who are working on the current redesign of the senior sites.

David reported that he could not find an older adult cell phone app anywhere in the country. Marcia said that she hopes that we could discuss this at our senior centers. David suggested that we all look online for something. Beverly said that she will look at the Social Security Administration's website. Marie said that she will also look at AARP's website as well as emergency services like FEMA offers.

David said that maybe Wise Cities could help with this project. Marcia said that she will ask tomorrow when she does beta testing. David said that he will talk to a contact at Wise Cities.

Other

David said that at the upcoming CoA Summit, we are going to have short interviews of what it is like as an older adult to live in different communities. He will send them to Nordea. We will use that information to move forward with ideas for the County.

Adjourn

Action Items

1. Jean will contact the libraries to see who we should contact to get information in the libraries' newsletter.
2. Linda asked whether we are engaging with the folks in the organization, Friends of the Libraries, to figure out what information they think we should put in the libraries. Beverly will contact FoL.
3. Jean stated that we need more Ambassador presenters and suggested that we bring this up at the next general CoA meeting.
4. The comment was made that the Ambassador Program coordinator would be a great project for a senior fellow. David asked the Communications Committee to weave it into the talking points for the budget request.
5. Virginia Cain asked whether the CoA's website has been updated to show the Ambassador programs. Marie is providing the information to Tremayne, who will update the website. .
6. Waltz is a program that is in the beta testing phase. AARP also provides one-on-one training. Marcia said that she will send Beverly and Jean the link to it. Beverly said that she will ask an AARP representative about it this week.
7. Nordea Lewis said that speaking with Mitzi Herrera could be a first step toward developing a cell phone application for older adults, and possibly Derrick Kenny in the PIO. David said that we could also talk again to the people who are working on the current redesign of the senior sites. Jean will contact Mitzi to invite her to the April meeting.
8. David reported that he could not find an older adult cell phone app anywhere in the country. David suggested that we all look online for something. Beverly said that she will look at SSA's website. Marie said that she will examine AARP's website as well as emergency services like FEMA.