

APPROVED JUNE 25, 2024

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Zoom Meeting
April 30, 2024

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Rachel Bonas, Elaine Carballo, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Denise Fredericks, Jeffery Johnson, Will Kenlaw, Pamela Luckett, Evelyn Okutu, Timothy Robinson, DaVida Rowley-Blackman, Claudia Simmons, Mike Subin, and Helen Winder

CAA Staff: Shantá Johnson, Charlene Muhammad, Aizat Oladapo, and Leah Goldfine

Guests: Valerie Ashton, Jessica Blasic, and Myriam Paul

Head Start Discussion

A pre-meeting discussion with MCPS staff focused on a proposal to reduce Head Start enrollment by 80 spots in order to hire bus monitors for all school buses transporting Head Start children. It was explained that \$775,000 is needed to fund the bus monitors, which is the equivalent of four four-year-old classes. This proposal stems from an incident this year when a child was left unattended at a bus stop. Jessica Blasic explained that MCPS Head Start administrators have been training bus operators and conducting ride-alongs but many operators have not been following the guidelines, which require that Head Start children be released to a parent. It was explained that Head Start started as a part-day program. At that time, Head Start students were riding separate buses home with paraeducators serving as bus monitors, ensuring that children were released to parents everyday. When many Head Start classes moved to full-day, students began riding buses with children from the rest of the school and bus monitors were no longer available because paraeducators needed to be in the class all day.

To address the current deficiency, avoid future incidents, and remain in compliance with federal Head Start requirements, the program proposes a reduction in enrollment to cover the cost of hiring bus monitors. Board members expressed serious concerns about reducing Head Start enrollment. There were also questions about what will happen if this plan is not approved. While it is unknown if the plan will be approved, staff explained that in order to remain in compliance, there were only three options: hire bus monitors, remove transportation completely, or purchase separate buses for Head Start. The second and third options are not feasible, which is why this last-resort proposal was made.

Board members discussed various issues and concerns, including which sites will lose Head Start classes, communications between parents and teachers, and exploring alternative sources of funding.

The board took a break from this discussion to formally start the meeting.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:21 pm. Dr. Johnson took a moment to welcome new board members who were just appointed in early April.

Consent Agenda

Claudia moved to approve the consent agenda and Denise seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes from the March 2024 CAB meeting; Meeting Evaluations Summary from the March meeting; Executive Director's Report; Head Start Report and HS Transportation Waiver Request – approved by the EC April 9; Contracts Report; Staff Liaison's Report; Budget report and P Card update; TESS and Navigation reports; VITA report; Ethics statement for members of advisory groups; WFIS Sign-On Letter; CAB Testimony: FY25 Operating Budget; CAB Testimony: Council Bill 7 – 24; CAB Testimony: SB482 – House Hearing; and CAB Testimony: HB1304 – Senate Hearing.

CAB Updates

Board members received a detailed written report from the staff liaison with updates on the board's activities since the last meeting in their meeting packets. Staff led a training about ethics requirements for members of County Boards, Committees, and Commission. Board members are required to receive ethics training per our federal CSBG Organizational Standards.

Staff primarily deferred to the written staff liaison's report for updates but did call on the Nominating Committee to provide an update. The EC slate for FY25 had not been finalized but would be shared with the full board via email soon.

Executive Director's Report

Prior to the meeting, board members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency's programs, along with program reports from TESS, Navigation, and VITA, and a budget and P Card report. Shantá deferred to her written report but also shared an update on staffing. The agency will likely need to eliminate one Navigator position, will lose one broker at TESS, and will reduce a second TESS broker position to part-time. We are also working to convert two longtime brokers to full-time merit staff positions – one with the VITA program and the other at TESS.

Contracts

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency's contract partners ahead of the meeting. Aizat deferred to her written report. She noted that Manna Food Center's additional funding for contract #1075938 has been approved but we are still waiting for the additions to the Farm to food (contract #1123957). Aizat also reported that current bridge funds had been extended by two months.

Head Start

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the Head Start program, along with the Head Start transportation waiver request that the Executive Committee had approved. The board members continued their discussion of the corrective action plan proposal that would reduce Head Start spots to cover the cost of hiring bus monitors. It was noted that this is a one-time change because it is the last year of a five-year grant cycle. The new grant can be designed differently. The board members decided that they should have a two-pronged approach. They would approve the corrective

action plan because it had to be submitted immediately but would also look into finding alternative sources of funding. The board discussed getting this funding request on the County Council's reconciliation budget and exploring alternative MCPS funding. Mike also offered to lead a committee to explore other options besides a reduction in enrollment. Denise moved to move forward with the corrective action plan proposed by MCPS, which would reduce Head Start enrollment by 80 spots in order to hire 90 bus monitors. Tim seconded the motion. The motion was then amended to have the corrective action plan state that the agency is seeking internal sources of funding for the bus monitors to avoid reductions in enrollment. Mike voted no on the motion. DaVida abstained. All other board members present voted in favor of the motion: Timothy, Dr. Johnson, Claudia, Denise, Rachel, Lisa, Will, Elaine, Evelyn, Pam, Erika, Helen, and Summer.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 7:30 pm.