



AGE-FRIENDLY MONTGOMERY ADVISORY WORKGROUP

"BUILDING A COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME" VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

January 20, 2022, | 3-5PM

Co-Chairs

Robin Riley, Director, Director, Department of Recreation
Dr. Raymond L. Crowel, Director, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Guest Speakers

Shawn Ellis, Manager
Community Outreach & Communications
Office of Community Partnership

Patrick Campbell, Senior Planning Manager
Food Security Plan, Department of Health and Human Services

MEETING SUMMARY

Attending: Odile Brunetto, Patrick Campbell, Joyce Dubrow, David Engel, Cynthia Grissom, Sara Hemming, Vivien Hseuh, Chuck Kauffman, Mara Mayor, Patrice McGhee, Marcia Pruzan, Eddie Rivas, Dina Rivera, Shane Rock, Stuart Rosenthal, Monica Schaeffer, Sara Swarr, Marsha Weber.

Office of Community Partnership Update – Shawn Ellis

- The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) works to strengthen relationships between the Montgomery County government and the residents it serves, with special focus on underserved and emerging communities and our neighbors in need. The OCP serves as a bridge builder between the County government and community organizations serving the residents of Montgomery County.
- In recent years, OCP's focus has been on community outreach in conjunction with the 2020 Census, with the goal of encouraging as many residents as possible to participate—especially vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities.
- OCP did this by developing clear, easily understandable, and culturally appropriate information in multiple languages and enlisting trusted leaders of local organizations as partners to serve as messengers within their communities.
- The strategies OCP used to successfully engage the population to participate in the 2020 Census were applied more recently to the COVID-19 pandemic, where it has been essential to provide important, timely, trusted information and encourage vaccination among diverse and hard-to-reach populations of all ages.

- Challenges have been many, including the need to:
 - Get information directly to the residents in accessible formats, languages, and settings, which included convenient locations within their communities.
 - For those without access to technology or internet access, conduct outreach in multiple languages and multiple formats including print, presentations by trusted leaders, phone, email, and text messaging.
 - Build trust for the information being transmitted among sometimes skeptical populations
- OCP has focused on developing translations of our work for six major languages Amharic, French, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Since April/May 2020, information has been made available in those six 6 languages. OCP also has hired an additional six full time and a part time staff member to meet these language needs.
- OCP’s overall effort aims to not only meet the needs of residents throughout the County, but also to create a structure that supports the government-wide need for information dissemination and outreach.

Community Crisis/HUBS Presentation– Patrick Campbell

- The onset of the pandemic brought a 6-to-8 percent increase in the demand for food-related services, much of which came from the older population. As a result, to keep up with the demand, we developed a partnership of government and community organizations to create eight service consolidation HUBS in designated parts of the County focusing on localized needs.
- HUBS funding was increased to support increasing needs for food support and staffing.
- HUBS focused on areas hardest hit by both the pandemic and unemployment to provide access to culturally appropriate food and other necessities such as diapers and clothes, and items related to COVID, including test kits, testing, and vaccines. Adult and children’s diaper services is now the fast-growing segment of the HUBS.
- Food service has ongoing diversified support from various non-profits, each of which operates its services based on the dynamic of its community.
- Patrice McGhee noted that the Aging and Disability Resource Unit has met with Patrick’s team to introduce the teams to HUB managers and to set up opportunities for the ADRU staff to educate them about County services and resources available for older adults.
- Additional funding is expected for HUBS in the FY23 budget.

Health and Human Services (HHS) Update
Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services

COVID-19

- The number of residents who tested positive for COVID-19 declined to 14% compared to 30% in the previous two weeks.
- Public libraries across the county are distributing test kits; beginning January 21, 2022, residents also will be able to pick up N95 masks as well.
- In addition, other home care agencies are providing masks and test kits for residents who are unable to reach the library.

Budget Update

- The County Executive will release his proposed budget on March 15th.
- A&D was not been asked to reduce its budget for FY23; on January 10, A&D submitted an FY 23 budget proposal focused on social isolation, access to technology, and additional COVID-19 services.
- In the Governor’s proposed budget for FY23, numerous enhancements are expected, including Increased funding for local health departments, health care, expenditures of SNAP benefits, food banks, area agency on aging programs, senior and home care services. The details of the budget have not yet been released.
- Funding anticipated from the American Rescue Act by March 11th, 2021 may include \$1.4 billion towards the Older Americans Act for programs including vaccine outreach, education, transportation, nutrition, health promotion, caregiver program, long term care ombudsman program. Montgomery County could receive up to \$3.5 million for these areas.

Work Group Reports

Civic and Social Engagement – Vivien Hsueh

- Due to COVID, most ethnic groups have reduced the overall frequency of meetings.
 - The Vietnamese group (which used to meet at Long Branch), now meets only rarely at the Wheaton community center.
 - The Indian groups have been meeting virtually.
 - Currently, four clubs are active, while two are on hold until late February.
 - All programs such as dancing and singing have resumed as normal.
 - Although numbers are reduced from pre-COVID times, there are still about recreation activities with about 100 regular program attendees.
- Larger events such as the Chinese New Year celebration was postponed due to COVID-19/Omicron. Plans are underway for an international festival at White Oak, which may be postponed to May.

Communications and Outreach – Stuart Rosenthal/ Jean Dinwiddie

- The Beacon is currently updating its annual senior guide.
- The group's main focus is ensuring that information on the senior site is updated and accurate.
- The Commission on Aging Communications Committee is working to start a partnership with Montgomery County Libraries and to (re)establish an area in each library specifically for older residents.

Elder Abuse Prevention – Dina Rivera

- This year's kickoff for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is June 13. There will be an event for older County residents on topics related to safety. There is no yet-confirmed theme.

Employment – Mara Mayor / Cynthia Grissom

- The group's top focus is to educate employers about the benefits of hiring workers 55+.
- We are working to obtain statistics about workers age 55+.
- We also are aiming to promote positive publicity about the 55+ worker. The group hopes to work with the to the Office of Public Information and to reach out to selected employers such as those who participated in the JCA employment 55+ Expo for feedback on their experiences in working with older employees.
- We are exploring new ways to encourage employers sign the AARP employer pledge.
- The workgroup is planning to attend CE candidate gatherings to inquire their strategies on promoting 55+ workers.

Health and Wellness – Patrice McGhee / Sarah Swarr

- The group has prioritized social isolation as its top priority and is developing recommendations related to this topic for FY 23 efforts.
- The group continues to work on the topic of medication management.
- Due to COVID-19, space for recreation activities is capped based on room size and the need to adjust equipment placement for safety.
- Recreation has had to postpone many activities due to the outbreak of Omicron, but expects to resume and expand activities as numbers decline.
- Long Branch, which currently is closed for recreational activities, is partnering with local churches and libraries to expand its program.

Home and Community Based Service – Marcia Pruzan for Lylie Fisher

- Working with Odile and Patrice, the group built on recommendations from its recent round tables to establish a Workforce Task Force. After Task Force members met with Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Jake Weissman, and the County Executive, the County Executive endorsed the proposal. The Home and Community-Based Services is currently in the finalization process of the project.

Senior Public Safety

Jim Resnick, Fire and Rescue

Office of Consumer Protection

- We are wishing best of luck to Tracy Rezvani, who has left Montgomery County government to take a new job with Howard County Office of Consumer Protection; At this time there is no information about her replacement.

Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

- OEHMS has a significant workload related to ongoing distribution of COVID at-home test kits and PPEs.

Fire and Rescue

- There have been several serious fires over the past year that have resulted in deaths of five people over the age of 66.
- Fires took place in Darnestown, Kensington, and Cabin John.
- All were in single family homes with no working smoke detectors.
- Human behavior played a significant role in all five fires.
- See attached presentation for more details.

Age-Friendly Montgomery – Marcia Pruzan

- Domain work groups will soon receive with instructions for updating their domain reports to include progress during the period of 2019-2021.
- Montgomery County is preparing to engage once again this year with the other area Age-Friendly programs to develop another Ecosummit in October 2022, eliciting new ideas for regional efforts.

Housing

No Presentation/Update

Planning, Open Spaces, Parks, and Community Buildings

No Presentation/Update

Closing: The meeting was adjourned at 05:02 PM

Upcoming Meetings:

- April 21, 2022, AFMAG Meeting
- June 23, 2022, Work Group Co-Leader Meeting
- July 21, 2022, AFMAG Meeting
- September 22, 2022 Work Group Co-Leader Meeting
- October 2, 2022, AFMAG Meeting
- December 15, 2022 Work Group Co-Leader Me