



AGE-FRIENDLY MONTGOMERY ADVISORY WORKGROUP

**“BUILDING A COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME”
VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING**

THURSDAY, JULY 21 2021 | 3-5PM

Co-Chairs

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

Guest Speaker

Howard Gleckman, Senior Fellow
Consultant and Editor, Urban-Brooking Tax Policy Center, Urban Institute

Attending

Members	Domain Co-Chairs	Guests	DHHS Staff
Berke Atilla	Shawn Brennan	Nicole Charles	Pazit Aviv
Raymond Crowel	Lorraine Driscoll	Howard Gleckman	Marcia Pruzan
Vivien Hsueh	Lylie Fisher	Mitsuko Herrera	Zhao Zhang
James McClelland	Patrick Fleming	Shivali Haribhakti	
Patrice McGhee	Cynthia Grissom	Austin Heyman	
Sam Oji	Mara Mayor	Chuck Kauffman	
Robin Riley	Jim McClellan	Kara Pierce	
Stuart Rosenthal	Jim Resnick	Eddie Rivas	
Shane Rock	Tracy Rezvani	Dina Rivera	
Tracy Rezvani	Sarah Swarr	Betty Ring	
Mario Wawrzusin	Kathleen Stobie	Betty Romero	
		Stacie Siegler	
		Monica Schaeffer	

MEETING SUMMARY

Recreations Update – Robin Riley

- The Montgomery County Recreation Department’s outdoor and indoor pools are opened and operational.
- Summer senior camps are under way, with three sessions the first week, and more scheduled in upcoming weeks. This is a great opportunity for seniors to enjoy different activities each day in a safe and protected environment.
- Although the Recreation Department is down to 20 merit positions and is working with limited staff, most buildings are open and operational. The Department is currently facing difficulties related to hiring seasonal staff but hopes to expand its staff overall.
- Senior Centers should be fully operational by August 15th. After August 2, more senior centers will expand to 5 days each week from the current 2-3 days. During July, Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center is only operational on Saturdays. Other Recreation buildings will slowly phase in opening, but Long Branch and Caulfield will continue to be used as homeless shelters through the beginning of next year.
- The Recreation Department has been hosting programs in libraries twice weekly and is hoping to expand that service.
- Senior Olympics will begin in August; sports will include swimming, hiking, adult soccer, and adult softball.

Presentation: Long-Term in the Post-Covid Era -- Howard Gleckman, Senior Fellow,
Consultant and Editor
Urban-Brooking Tax Policy Center, Urban Institute

Howard Gleckman presented an overview of the [John A. Hartford Convergence Report: Rethinking Care for Older Adults](https://www.johnahartford.org/dissemination-center/view/report-rethinking-care-for-older-adults), and its implications for broad national policy issues related to aging. Link: <https://www.johnahartford.org/dissemination-center/view/report-rethinking-care-for-older-adults>

We can’t think of aging and disability services without discussing the impact of COVID. At this time, approximately 500,000 older individuals have lost their lives due to COVID--80% of all those killed by the disease. The majority of older adults living in their own homes and in nursing homes have suffered loneliness and social isolation. COVID has changed everything and now generates debate about how we care for our older adults.

Some statistics:

- Twelve million people of all ages currently are in need of long-term care services in the U.S. We expect this number to double in the next few decades.
- Two-thirds of those 65 and older will need high level care for a variety of conditions related to older age, including Alzheimer's disease and dementia. One in seven will need this type of long-term care for 5 years or more.

- Nursing home death rates are extremely high, with 170,000 excess deaths throughout 2020—a 30% increase compared with 2019.
- Nursing homes are under enormous financial and staffing issue strains, with costs for labor and PPEs increasing and the need for internal redesign to prevent infection spread in the facility.

Medicare Advantage plans, which have lower rates than traditional Medicare, have become more available. This means that more people are getting post-acute/hospitalization care at home rather than in nursing facilities. Unfortunately, this is leading more nursing homes failures and consolidations, with many businesses now getting into home and hospice care.

In addition, the health care system has not adjusted to the shift from acute care to chronic disease management. There is a growing interest in home care as demand for both institution and in-home care increases. But labor shortage will drive up the cost of hiring direct care workers for both facilities and in-home care.

How will we pay for needed home care? How will we pay for the many older adults who wish to move to an institutional setting but can't afford it?

The Convergence Report has been widely distributed, including to the White House and Congress. The overriding question is what they will do with it and how to pay for needed services. We do not know how President Biden's budget proposals and the reconciliation Act will turn out in terms of covering costs for these needs. The good news is that we know that life expectancy, at least prior to COVID, has been expanding. But we have not adjusted to the expanding life expectancy where more people will live longer but also will develop mor chronic disease. We need to think creatively to find a better way to coordinate the different revenue streams to provide for the needs of our older population.

DISCUSSION:

Q: (Eddie Rivas) What role can villages take in this effort?

A. In general, villages can help step in for families. However, there are many different models depending on the needs of each community, and at present villages tend to work well for highly educated, upper income areas. More and better technical support for villages—especially for communities of color or specific faith communities—would be a good first step.

Q. (Austin Heyman, Chuck Kauffman) Could adding a few dollars a day to social security or insurance premiums at age 21 help pay for future long term care needs?

A. Adding a small increase to taxes would definitely help pay for long-term care, but politicians prefer not to raise taxes and it's difficult to require people to pay extra for this on their insurance policies. If Medicare increases worker pay, private markets will be even harder to afford. A few states are looking at public long-term care as one option for addressing this issue.

Q: (Lylie Fisher) What innovations might help reach family caregivers?

A. Surveys show that family caregivers do not recognize that they're family caregivers. We have to improve on ways to help people learn about existing resources and information, how to access it, and to help them understand that care services are not free. We also need to find a way to create and improve training for family caregivers, who often provide great loving care, but lack needed skill for providing that care.

Q. (Eddie Rivas) Outreach and marketing capability need improvement. The Commission on Aging is working with the Public Information Office to improve information dissemination.

A. It will be important to improve the County website to make it more comprehensive, less confusing, and easier to navigate; inability to find what you're looking for leads to under-utilized support.

Director's Update -- Dr. Raymond Crowel

- **COVID-19:**
There has been gradual upturn in COVID cases, largely among the unvaccinated or people who only have received one dose. Most new cases involve the Delta variant. We know that vaccinations are effective against the new Delta variant but do not offer complete immunity from COVID. DHHS and the County Council are discussing the potential for ramping up restrictions if the trend continues upward. As of now, DHHS will remain cautious, and Dr. Gayles is working with the Board of health to determine if there is a need to increase mask restrictions. **Recommendation:** Do not presume that your vaccinations protect you completely; wear your mask and remain cautious around larger gathering events.
- **Reopening:** Most of DHHS is open to some degree. The Department never completely shut down during COVID, but most DHHS services and workload have been moved to a virtual environment. Many DHHS employees now are back in the office at least a few days a week.
- **Navigating County services:** Difficulties of navigating service in this County can be challenging. DHHS is working to create a more navigable system for residents' needs. At this time, the top priority is to help residents affected by COVID who are in need of rental assistance.

Aging and Disability Updates - Dr. Patrice McGhee

- **A&D FY22 Budget Update**
 - The FY22 budget:
 - Adds one new social worker position.
 - Converts 10 broker contracts position to merit position.

- Provides a 3% increase to county contracts.
 - Increases funding for the eight service hubs.
 - Increases shelter capacity.
 - Adds 13 new interpreter positions.
 - Continues to provide free Ride On for seniors and persons with disabilities.
 - Provides an increase of \$250,000 for the Recreation Department
- The Commission on Aging will discuss their FY23 County Budget priorities on 7/22/21.
- Reopening effort
 - Aging and Disability Resource Unit (ADRU) is undergoing a shift in referrals for Adult Protective Service (APS); the state initiated a script for all ADRU staff to redirect calls to a state interactive voice hotline for Child Protective Service (CPS) and APS calls. This service went live on July 14; the Crisis Center will take CPS and APS calls after 5PM.
 - Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCO) returned to in-person facility visits in May. About half of the program's volunteer base was lost due to the pandemic. The first LTCO training program was held in early July, and LTCO is now ready to return to operational capacity.
 - Adult Evaluation Referral Services (AERS) program, now renamed Community Evaluation Referral Services (CERS), will resume home face-to-face service when the state emergency is lifted.
 - Community First Choice program is a federally funded program that allows states to provide home and community based attendant services and supports to Medicaid recipients with disabilities. It will resume in-person face-to-face visit as soon as the state lifts the emergency.
 - All A&D programs now have representation in the HHS building.
 - A small group in the AAA known as the Telehealth Focus Group has been conducting a survey and focus groups with the County's older adults about their experience using telehealth. Because the first survey had very little diversity representation, additional efforts with health initiatives and programs will be more inclusive. We translated the survey into various languages and will hold the first in-person focus group at Holiday Park tomorrow.

Work Group Reports

Civic and Social Involvement – Kathleen Meaney Stobie, Vivien Hsueh

- All are invited to the [Montgomery County Serves Award](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/awards/) event on July 22 at 6 PM.
- The Montgomery County Volunteer Center recently produced an [impact report for FY21](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/Resources/Files/AnnualReport_FY21_digi.pdf).

- To combat social isolation while Senior Centers remain closed for senior programming over the summer, some programs have brought older residents to the park for participation in outdoor activities.

Austin Heyman praised the County's efforts at getting broadband to those in need, as well as Senior Planet's technical training and programming.

Communications and Outreach – Stuart Rosenthal

- The Bacon's cover story for August will feature the Maryland Senior Olympics.
- Monthly Age-Friendly ads in the Beacon continue. Upcoming ads will cover the following:
 - August: Home Community-Based Care.
 - September: Health and Wellness/Fall Prevention
 - October: Employment
 - November: Public Safety
- The JCA Employment Expo is scheduled for Fall.
- The Beacon will hold its virtual expo as well with in-person activities at Montgomery Mall, including NPR's Diane Rehm as keynote speaker.

Employment – Mara Mayor

- Changes are underway at WorkSource Montgomery (WSM), which is now running the Job Centers internally. With the end of the contract of the current grantee, WSM is hiring 20 new staff members in support of the program. The Wheaton Office is open for job seekers.
- The Germantown Office is under renovation and should be complete by September 30.
- On June 23rd, Jim Stowe, Director, Office of Human Rights, had a 4-hour online workshop for employers about how to capitalize on the new hybrid workplace that is intergenerational, flexible, and responsive. One goal was to encourage employers to be open to open to the 55+ job seekers. Among the speakers were leaders from Holy Cross and Marriott. Feedback showed the event to be informative and useful.

Health and Wellness – Patrice McGhee

- At its recent June 15th, meeting, Clotilde Puertolas provided an overview of plans for reopening the public libraries. Fall prevention and social isolation will be the focus of upcoming meetings.

Home and Community Based Services – Lylie Fisher

- This year, the work group is focusing on workforce development. On July 16, we hosted a second invitation-only round table that brought together public/private partners to look at issues such as training, workplace recruitments, and work force retention.

- We will be partnering with the Maryland regional direct services collaborative on action items related to coordinating, expanding, and improving training for the home care workforce; partners will include Montgomery County Public Schools, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, and WorkSource Montgomery.
- We are currently exploring hosting two pilot projects with the goal of increasing utilization of older adults who want to be employed.
- We are working on a pipeline with young people through MCPS on how we can both increase awareness of older adults' needs and interest in the field of providing in-home care. This strengthens our work to engage younger people about making home care a career. The next round table will be held in October.

Housing - Lorraine Driscoll

The Housing Work Group would like to acknowledge the work of former senior fellow, Leslie Marks, who has retired from her position in June. In addition, the group is:

- Upgrading and reorganizing our website to prioritize accessibility and language needs for residents.
- Working continuously to make sure our new Housing Market Place site is of high quality and accessible with a data-driven information and resources.
- Continuing to support DHHS in disseminating information on rental relief and eviction prevention.

Senior Public Safety – Jim Resnick, Tracy Rezvani, Jim McClelland

Tracy Rezvani (Office of Consumer Protection -OCP)

- OCP conducted a series of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day events in conjunction with the Public Safety staff and Adult Protective Services.
- In August, *Seniors Today* will feature Marcia Pruzan speaking about Age-Friendly Montgomery, and Jim Resnick and Tracy Rezvani speaking about Public Safety and consumer fraud.
- OCP has a 3-year goal to update public safety web pages and to unify the format so that all public safety pages have similar format with adequate subheads to facilitate public navigation of the site.

Jim Resnick (Fire and Rescue)

- Investigators continue to examine a serious fire in a Bethesda rental property that lacked a fire alarm/smoke detector.
- The Department remains busy conducting outreach via virtual programming. We continued to hold ZOOM briefings and are struggling to reach the parts of the community without this capability.
- We are not yet allowed to conduct individual safety checks in homes.

Transportation and Mobility – Sam Oji and Shawn Brennan

- All safety measures remain in place. Masks are still required for bus riders and are provided for those who do not have them. Buses are offering free water bottles for riders during periods of extreme heat.
- On July 2, the Department of Transportation ended the vaccination shuttle to mass vaccination sites.
- On July 18, service changes were implemented, which include:
 - Adjustment on ridership consistent with COVID guidance changes, such as route changes for better efficiency and increased frequency of buses.
 - FLEX, which serves the Rockville Glenmont and Wheaton zones, resumes operation after July 19. Riders can now contact the call center and use an OnDemand app to schedule the FLEX trip within the defined zones.
- Services are still free on Ride On during COVID. Seniors will be riding free even when fare are being collected, effective July 1st.
- We utilized available funding from community centers to pay for free taxi rides for people needing to get to their vaccination sites.

Closing: The meeting was adjourned at 05:06 PM

Upcoming Meetings:

- October 20, 2021, AFMAG meeting
- December 16, 2021, AF work group meeting
- January 20, 2022, AFMAG meeting