
COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING

Minutes
September 21, 2020

PRESIDING: Sharonlee Vogel, Chair

Members Attending

Angie Boyter
Peter Brunner
Wei Guo
Susan Hailman
Julia Mattis
Eletta Morse
Sue Song
Mark Stinson
Michael Willis

Absent

Jennifer Asher
Reginald Avery
Michael McPherson

Office on Aging and Independence

Jenna Crawley
Donna Tugwell

Guests

Dr. Calvin Ball, County Executive
Jennifer Jones
Carl Delorenzo
Jacqueline Scott, Director DCRS

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm

Approve Agenda

Tax comments added to agenda. Motioned to approve the agenda after change added and the motion was second. Motion was approved. *All in favor. Agenda accepted.*

Approve Minutes

After a change was noted for the February minutes, the February minutes were approved. *All in favor. Minutes accepted.*

Special Guest

- Dr. Calvin Ball, County Executive, acknowledged the work and dedication of OAI staff in working toward an Age-Friendly Howard County, especially Jacqueline Scott, Jenna Crawley and Terri Hansen.
- Dr. Ball discussed how the aging population is growing, and Howard County needs to prepare for the changing demographics and must be intentional in the preparation. Over the last ten years the 65+ population has grown at a rate nearly five times that of the overall population. Nearly twenty one percent of Howard County's population is over 60. Therefore, it is important that Howard County receive designation from the World Health Organization and AARP as Age-Friendly and plan for the changing demographics.
- Dr. Ball also discussed issues impacting the County to include: a possibility of a 30-million-dollar shortfall in revenue in the next fiscal year; the County is working on increasing racial equity; and the pandemic has disproportionately impacted many older adults.
- Services provided to older adults include: Over 20,000 Grab and Go Meals have been distributed since March 2020. MAP has had continuous contact with the community regarding food access, caregiver respite and support, virtual programs and other service availability.
- Building an Age-Friendly Howard County is a long-term effort and will require more collaboration between residents of all ages, with a great deal of input from older adults. All organizations need to work together, businesses, non-profit organizations, government organizations, civic organizations, faith-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations.
- Areas where help is needed are outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation, and for those who want to work employment, communication, information, community support and health information. Health Care is an issue that needs to be addressed and is the top concern mentioned in many polls.
- The Commission discussed senior tax issues and identified a key consideration is that older adults are an asset to the County. Slides from a presentation at last year's legislative breakfast were shown on the topic. Dr. Ball gave some feedback and stated he will give the subject due consideration.
- Dr. Ball reported to date in Howard County, the response to the 2020 Census has exceeded the 2010 response rate for the same time period. The response rate is currently at 80.2%. The final response rate will more than likely exceed the 2010 final response rate.
- Dr. Ball spoke about The CARES ACT and having to use the guidelines given by the federal government. The County put out an Innovation Grant for 1 million dollars. However, 7 million dollars of applications were received from non-profits of all sizes. Many people have been working over the past six months to see what they do innovatively to help. What they needed is the funding.
- Dr. Ball thanked the Commission for their efforts and work and stated he plans to continue to work together with the Commission to serve the older adult population.

Comments & Discussion – Around the Group

Civic Engagement

- Various commission members are connecting with members of the community: Wei Guo – Chinese; Sue Song – Korean; Eletta Morse, a retired geriatric nurse knows the issues people are dealing with and helps seniors at risk; Angie Boyter – tries to mollify and encourage people who think they will be useless when they retire and help them recognize what seniors do for the community and where they can help out; The Village in Howard is very active in helping older adults.

- Sue Song thanked OAI for their partnership, outreach and commitment, and for being a champion for the Korean community, helping with language barriers and cultural differences.
- MAP has been especially helpful during this time period.
- Susan Hailman – Reaching out to help people use County agencies productively.

Diversity

- Sharonlee spoke of the fact that more diversity is needed in the COA, a Latino member and another African American member.
- Calvin Ball spoke of how it is important that the Boards and Commissions have people who represent all areas and thanked everyone for their work in the community.

The Village in Howard

- While things right now are in relatively good shape, the normal sources of fund raising have dried up considerably. In the future, there could be significant problems with funding for non-profit agencies in the State and the County.
- The Village in Howard is investing in various technology to help with outreach during the pandemic.
- There is a new program called “Good Morning Howard”, which The Village in Howard is using to help people with social isolation due to the pandemic.
- Calls to homebound individuals and those impacted by COVID-19 are being made. Virtual events and zoom are helping.
- There is a networking of people who are talking to one another, that two years ago did not know one another. This is also helping address social isolation.
- The Village in Howard is letting people know of services available and familiarizing them with the services.
- The Village has subsidized members who meet certain income criteria and are having trouble paying for dues and services.
- A Social Media manager has been hired to help with planning for the next several months.
- Looking to reach out to other entities in the county, such as OAI, to work together to increase the outreach to people. Also, reaching out to Montgomery County for collaboration and help with connections.
- Dr. Calvin Ball mentioned that collaboration with non-profits begins to grow and is helping meet the needs of older adults.

Chair’s Report

- Everyone should send Sharonlee an email if they are interested in having a retreat. And give their feedback updating what committees are needed, and the goals and directives of the committees.
- Jenna would like to work together with the Commission on how to establish priorities and get input on things we can do to increase the collaboration between the Office on Aging and Independence and the Commission.
- Consider using Zoom rather than WebEx for meetings because of the audio problems when using WebEx.

Office on Aging and Independence Report

- In March of 2020, OAI quickly mobilized to work remotely and maintain operations. Staff was given access to new technology and needed to learn it. Teams demonstrated adaptability, flexibility, perseverance and dedication. There was ongoing innovation to continue to deliver services and stay connected to the community.
- The congregate meal program was transformed to a Grab and Go program. OAI partnered with Roving Radish and Neighbor Ride, to include pickup and delivery. Since March 26th, 23,914 meals have been

served. Korean meals were added to the program on August 6th, with 2,585 being served since August. There have been 372 unduplicated recipients.

- Weekly wellness checks are being done via the phone.
- In July, a Virtual 50+ Center was implemented to include several different programs. A fee-based monthly exercise pass for \$50.00 was created with 20 different classes to choose from. **The Virtual 50+ Center is continuing to be expanded, enhanced and promoted.**
- Friendly Connections program rebranded to “Phone a Senior” with volunteer opportunities and making calls to homebound older adults.
- OAI has partnered with LHIC to deliver educational webinars, self-monitoring blood pressure and delivering BP cuffs, nutrition, wellness and falls prevention.
- Delivering Evidence Based programs virtually, such as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and the Chronic Pain Self-Management Program.
- Conducting daily telehealth checks with the most at-risk populations served by OAI such as Medicaid Supports Planning clients.
- Joint virtual visits with DFRS for the Mobile Integrated Community Health program to help decrease frequent 911 calls.
- The Guardianship program has maintained services ensuring the needs of wards are met.
- Virtual home safety and modification assessments have been performed.
- MAP has had 14,329 contacts for referral and assistance. Primary needs are food access, health, and caregiving.
- The Ombudsman program continues to provide essential interventions to nursing facility residents and assisted living residents, advocacy for residents’ rights and their health, safety and welfare. Outdoor in-person visits following safety protocols, are in the process of being started.
- 50+ Centers have remained closed due to the Governor’s executive order. The County is preparing for when they can reopen. Sneeze guards are being installed and room capacity is in process of being updated to ensure safety and appropriate social distancing. A Middle School Scholars program will be offered at four 50+ Center sites to provide support and assistance for web virtual learning.
- Bain 50+ Center renovations will be complete by the end of September.
- Age-Friendly has 8 working groups with over 100 volunteers meeting monthly. There were over 3,300 responses to the Age-Friendly survey. Work groups will use this data along with historical data to formulate community-wide recommendations and actions steps for the Age-Friendly action plan. The timeline for the Action Plan is extended due to Covid-19 and planned to be published Spring 2021. Thank you to the Commission for their advocacy, active participation, and support for the Age-Friendly Community.
- Looking ahead, here are some upcoming events and happenings:
 - 1) 9/22/20 – Cycle2Health resumes
 - 2) 10/07/2020 – Walk Maryland Day. OAI will offer a “Walktober: Step Up Your Health” program which is a month-long fitness program providing registrants with weekly challenges.
 - 3) 10/15-12/07/20 – SHIP Open Enrollment for Medicare Beneficiaries, which will be virtual this year.
 - 4) 10/23/20 – 9am-2pm OAI Showcase, A Master Aging Experience, a virtual event that highlights the programs and services offered by OAI and debuting the 2021 Resource Guide. There will be a mixture of live and pre-recorded sessions.
 - 5) 11/01/20-1/31/21- OAI and The Beacon Virtual EXPO
- Questions were asked on how registration is being handled for exercise classes and seminars. Jenna will check and get back with the Commission with specific details on this.
- Commission members mentioned that there has been feedback from seniors, that day care for children has been offered at 50+ Centers, but senior have still not been allowed to return to the 50+ Centers. It was suggested that the day care should be at the schools and not the 50+ Centers. The question was asked could we safely open 50+ Centers with proper social distancing. Many seniors are still very concerned about going into public spaces.

New Business

- The question was asked what the status of the East Columbia 50+ Center renovation is. It has been a very difficult budget year and the Council has unfunded the renovation. The renovation may be back in the budget cycle for FY2022. Money was put into the new Cultural Arts Center instead.

Sharing from Commissioners

- Complete Streets workshop is at 1:00pm this Wednesday, September 23th. You can register through Community Engagement.
- It was mentioned that in some places where bike lanes have been added, it narrows the street and reduces car lanes making it unsafe for both drivers and cyclists.
- The real estate market is good. COVID-19 caused a 40% decrease in the overall inventory for the spring market. However, this area has a relatively stable job market anchored by NSA and the Federal government. Buyers are out there, due a lot to low-cost mortgage money available, and sales are happening rather quickly. However, many seniors are not selling right now because they are afraid to have people in their homes. This has reduced the number of houses on the market. Realtors were deemed essential and have been following safety measures and protocol.
- The Age-Friendly work groups are going well, and members of the workgroups are dedicated and doing meaningful research.
- The Adult Review Guardianship Board has been meeting every 3 months on WebEx. Eletta will stay on this board until new members are elected.
- COVID-19 has made nursing facility care for the elderly challenging. Trying to have residents with dementia follow proper safety protocol is hard. Staff and residents are being tested weekly for COVID-19. PPE supplies have been very hard for assisted living facilities and nursing homes to get. Guidelines and recommendations are changing weekly.
- One of the members had a bad experience at the emergency room at HCGH. When they went for a dental checkup, their blood oxygen level was low, which could be a symptom of COVID-19. The dentist contacted their doctor, who said for them to go to the emergency room. They were put in a waiting room with other people for 3 hours. They were waiting for discharge papers to be done, as the doctor had already done a screening test. Finally, they left. The next day the test came back negative. HCGH's ER sent a survey to ask how they did, which the member filled out and sent back. HCGH talked with staff and conveyed that is not how things should have been handled. As a follow-up, the commission member sent a letter on 9/10/20 to HCGH's President, Steven Snelgrove, but has never received a response.
- In the Korean community, loneliness is a concern. In addition to face to face, social connection can be done virtually. They have partnered with OAI and started virtual classes. The classes are going well.
- Some seniors are wanting to know how to get masks and 50+ Centers are helping.
- Some seniors are interested in becoming a member of The Village in Howard and request information on how to join.
- One member had neighbors in their 80's who children took their car away for safety reasons. The member told them about Neighbor Ride. They have since used Neighbor Ride and said the service was great.
- Right now, the highest portion of the population at risk for COVID-19 has become the 36 year-olds and younger. Possibly because older adults are following safety measures where some of the younger population may not be.

Adjournment

Motioned to adjourn, and the motion was second. The meeting adjourned at 8:51pm.

Recording Secretary: Donna Tugwell

Future Meetings: October 26, Legislative Breakfast November 17, and November 23 or 30, no December meeting