

**Howard County Office of Consumer Protection  
Consumer Protection Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, March 9, 2021  
Virtual Meeting via WebEx**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Sandra Price, Board Chairperson.

**Present:**

Sandra Price – Board Chairperson  
Richard Weisenhoff – Board Vice Chairperson  
Patricia Branch- Board Member  
Judy McCormick – Board Member  
Jerome Rollerson – Board Member  
Young Smith – Board Member  
Jennifer Jones – Deputy Chief of Staff, Howard County Administration  
Cheryl Mattis – Deputy Director, Department of Community Resources and Services  
Lila Boor – Investigator, Howard County Office of Consumer Protection

**Absent:**

Ellen Kuhn – Board Member

**Business Discussed:**

- The minutes were approved with corrections. Jerome Rollerson made motion to approve, and Sandra Price seconded the motion.
- Lila Boor reviewed office statistics and discussed that the office hasn't received many complaints and inquires on auto sales and repairs. Yet, this is an area where there should be problems occurring. The office gets the most inquiries and complaints from tenants against landlords.
- Sandra Price inquired if there are any scams pertaining to Women's History Month. Cheryl Mattis suggested that the Board look at Department of Community Resources and Services webpage for information on what is going on in the Offices within the department. Jennifer Jones stated that the Board can also check the County's government webpage because the Public Information Office has a calendar under the news and events section. Lila Boor suggested that information can also be posted by seasonal issues, and gave an example that home improvement and tree services scams most often occur in the Spring. Cheryl Mattis suggested that outreach information could be put out by topic, ie; auto industry, moving, etc. Lila Boor stated that the office has many facts sheets on various topics posted on the Office of Consumer Protection webpage.
- Jerome Rollerson gave a report on reviewing the Office's webpage and suggested that there should be a link to the "Federal Trade Commission's" website. Sandra Price suggested a link to "Maryland State Government" website

to report COVID scams. Lila Boor suggested a link to the “FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center” website.

- Patricia Branch gave a report on her research on auto warranty scams and found that scam callers contact consumers by telephone, and often know what type of vehicle the person owns. She suggested the Office have a tip sheet on how consumers can purchase an extended warranty. She also reported on interstate moving scams. Lila Boor stated that Board members should give her their research notes to be placed in categories.
- Sandra Price obtained prices for purchasing mask lanyards; \$1.69 for 500. She stated that they could be given out at meal distribution sites through the Office on Aging and Independence. Sandra Price also found a pen/flashlight at 4prints.com. Sandra Price mentioned that the Office has bag clips that could be used as giveaways.
- Cheryl Mattis suggested that the Board needs to discuss their target audience for giveaways. Cheryl Mattis told Lila Boor to contact Courtney Barkley in the Office on Aging and Independence to inquire if the bag clips can be given out at “Grab and Go meals.” Lila Boor suggested that the Board reach a decision by the next meeting on what giveaways they want the Office to purchase from their annual \$1,000.00 budget expiring in June.
- Richard Weisenhoff gave a report on his research on possible training opportunities for board members and did not find much except that the Federal Trade Commission had one training on fraudulent websites. Training sessions are virtual and free of charge. They can be found under the News and Events section of the website.
- Sandra Price made a motion to table the Board’s outreach efforts until they can check the County government calendar. Patricia Branch seconded the motion.
- Cheryl gave an update on upcoming department events: the Office of Veterans and Military Families is planning an event for April, and the Office of Children and Families will have a virtual event in June,
- Lila Boor discussed possible outreach to the Hispanic, Indian, and Chinese communities; her contact at FIRN provided some organizations, but they don’t seem appropriate for the Office to contact. Lila Boor suggested that the Board could research organizations in these communities so the Office can then contact them to discuss how we can be of help. Lila Boor also mentioned that the Board could use some of their budget for translation services to translate documents.

### **Office of Consumer Protection Updates:**

Lila Boor gave the following updates:

- The Office is instituting a new online form to collect more information from callers, and to determine if residents are receiving other departmental services. The Office is also working on a satisfaction survey.
- Lila Boor gave a presentation to Sandra Price's "Getting Ahead" group on February 17, 2021 on Tenant Rights and Responsibilities. Lila Boor also did a presentation on how the Office of Consumer Protection can help County residents for the Office on Human Rights and Equity's "Black History Month" event on February 25, 2021. Lila Boor and Beth Silverman will do presentations for "Money Matters" month in April. The office will be participating in "Elder Abuse Month" in June.

**Announcements:**

- None.
- Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 6, 2021.
- Sandra Price adjourned the meeting at 7:58 PM.