

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Ms. Cornman welcomed the Commission and guests. Members and guests introduced themselves.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Tanner moved for approval of the minutes of the April Commission meeting, seconded by Ms. Francis, and the minutes were approved as presented.

III. Maryland General Assembly Wrap-up Dpaul Nibber

Mr. Nibber reported on the results of the Maryland General Assembly. The City Health Department had some successes in a difficult year for the General Assembly. The COVID 19 pandemic resulted in a shortened session. The financial downturn that accompanied the Pandemic resulted in the Governor vetoing several bills that had passed the Assembly but had potential fiscal impact. These included a bill establishing a Prescription Drug Affordability Board, and the *Aging in Place* Grant program.

Two other bills supported by the Department did not pass but gave rise to language being placed in the Joint Chairman's Report (JCR), which serves as a legislative supplement to the State budget, imposing restrictions on State agency funding unless certain conditions are satisfied. The first of these bills was designed to establish a ratio of guardianship clients per case manager that would act as a ceiling on guardianship appointments. The JCR requires the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) to provide a report on the administration of the Public Guardianship program by October 1, 2020.

The second bill would have required the Maryland Department of Aging to give prior public notification before it changes funding formulas for allocations to local Area Agencies on Aging (BCHD Division of Aging experienced an abrupt reduction in nutrition program allocations in the spring of 2019, with minimal time to prepare/phase in the cuts). The Budget language requires MDOA to submit a report by October 2, 2020, on certification of grant allocations to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and a report by January 1, 2021 on potential FY 2022 changes to funding levels for each AAA. It also required that \$470,000 of the Department's new funding for FY 2021 be restricted to being used to restore the FY 2020 nutrition cuts.

Several other bills addressing the needs of vulnerable adults and gaps in insurance coverage also passed.

IV. COVID 19 Response

BCHD staff provided updates on the Department's COVID 19 Response (see slide presentation).

Commission members made several comments on the presentation. Councilwoman Sharon Middleton noted that homeless older adults are being housed in hotels, and their status and need for food should be part of the response. She also provided information about Taxpayers' Night on May 27 at 5:00 PM, when citizens can make statements about the City budget; this is a good opportunity for advocates to support services for older adults. The City Council budget hearings will follow on June 8.

Ms. Betsy Simon expressed concern about the large gap between older adults who are food insecure and the City's goal for reaching that population. Ms. Alice Huang provided more information on the new Grocery Box program, and said that people who are referred to the program will begin getting service within three days.

Staff provided further updates on the Response. Ms. Mary Anne Brennan, Long Term Care Ombudsman said that the Ombudsman program has responded to a high volume of complaints during the pandemic, many of them COVID 19 related. Ms. Molly Martin, Assistant Commissioner noted that the Department is working with assisted living facilities, and is arranging for them to receive personal protective equipment (PPE). Ms. Matthews asked if testing was taking place in nursing homes, and cited a situation where a resident who had tested positive for the virus was in the same room as someone who has tested negative. Ms. Brennan responded that State policy was that all residents will be tested, and that some facilities are having difficulty separating residents who test positive and negative.

V. **Maryland Access Point/Lean On Campaign**

Dr. Amber Summers, representing the Johns Hopkins Communications Strategy Center for Communication Programs (CCP) presented information on the *Lean On* Campaign. The goal of the Campaign is to reach food insecure older adults and their caregivers in Baltimore and to encourage them to call the Maryland Access Point (MAP) phone number. Dissemination channels will include, radio advertising (sponsored by AARP), print materials such as posters, social media and digital advertising. A key part of the strategy will be to leverage the power of social/professional networks through the new MAP Ambassador program. CCP will ask MAP Ambassadors to help the campaign by giving access to their networks, through which MAP information will be disseminated.

Ms. Matthews emphasized the importance of the campaign reaching senior housing buildings, and suggested that building Activity Coordinators would be a good group to disseminate messaging. Ms. Erika McClammy noted that the Department is reaching out to senior buildings as a part of the COVID 19 response. Ms. Simon invited Ms. Summers to address Z-HAP. She said that older adults outside senior housing buildings must also be reached, and that it was essential that MAP be clearly identified. Dr. Tanner noted that church ministers broadcast on-line, and could be a valuable conduit for sharing information.

Dr. Roth said that social isolation among older adults is a growing problem, and has been greatly exacerbated during the pandemic. He said that it was important to have strategies to address it, informed by research, and that participation in anti-isolation efforts was a good role for active

older adults. He noted that models like Partners in Care, in Anne Arundel County, offered a more empowering reciprocal approach for both those giving and receiving service.

VI. Updates

Mr. James Macgill introduced two new senior management staff: Erika McClammy, Director of Client Services, and Molly Martin, Assistant Commissioner for Operations.

Ms. McClammy reported that the Division of Aging has pulled together a small collaborative to respond to an invitation by COVID-19 Life Preservation Initiative. Salvation Army will be the lead partner and has requested 100,000 disposable masks that will be distributed in communities in Baltimore City. The partnership will be targeting senior buildings but will also make masks available for homeless shelters. The proposal includes a placeholder to add additional partners like the Commission to assist with distribution in vulnerable, high-risk communities in the City.

Ms. Sarah Matthews said that the June 2 primary ballots that had been mailed out still had the old primary date of April 28 on them; that voters should be aware that the correct date was June 2.

Ms. Simon said that ZHAP conference calls are continuing on Wednesdays, and that this week's speaker would be Commission Member, Dr. Hale.

Ms. Leslie Yancey reported that Recreation and Parks will be distributing food boxes every Friday at local recreation centers. The boxes are available for all residents. Older adults can call their local recreation center for distribution times. Also, Recreation and Parks Senior Division will be offering free virtual classes for eight weeks starting May 19 thru July 7. Older Adults can log on or call in every Tuesday at 11:30. Lyric Opera House, Art with a Heart, Zumba and meditation are just a few of the performances/classes offered.

Ms. Susan Francis reported that

- Maryland Volunteer Lawyer's Service (MVLS) has a Tax Hotline to help individuals who need to file taxes in order to receive their stimulus payments. And if anyone has their stimulus garnished, MVLS can help with the recovery.
- Courts will be reopening on June 8 and housing moratoriums will start being lifted, including the tax sale list, which will be put together by Finance by June 30.

Ms. Cornman expressed concern about the low response rate on 2020 Census form completion. Currently, the response rate is 48% for Baltimore City, compared to 62% Statewide.

Ms. Tasha Cornish said that St. Mary's Outreach Center is distributing medical supplies.

Ms. Lauren Averella said Civic Works continues to distribute produce, prepared meals, sanitizer and toilet paper.

Ms. Corman thanked everyone for attending, and for their continued commitment responding to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.