**Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB)**

**Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, February 3, 2023, 7:30pm**

**Meeting held electronically due to the COVID-19 pandemic**

**By ZOOM video/audio platform**

The virtual meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Michelle Jefferson, who proceeded with doing the member roll call.

**Members in attendance with locations**: Nermin AbdelWahab, Fairfax, VA; Matthew Bell, Alexandria, VA; Jim Edwards-Hewitt, Fairfax, VA; April Hall, Reston, VA; Hawa Hassan, Fairfax, VA; Kevin Hickerson, Centreville, VA; Caroline Hockenberry, Vienna, VA; Michele “Cookie” Hymer Blitz, Winter Park, FL; Michelle Jefferson, Fairfax County, VA; Maria Leiva, Falls Church, VA; Michael Mahrer, Falls Church, VA; Marcia McDevitt, Reston, VA; Ken McMillon, Dranesville, VA; Phil Rosenthal, Fairfax Station, VA; Heather Thomas, Centreville, VA; Alice Yam, Herndon, VA; Benjamin Zuhl, Dranesville, VA

**Absent**: Alicia Doe; Mary Ann Floto; Morgan Jameson; Hari Kurup; Ann Macpherson; Michele Menapace; Whitney Richardson; Alex Rodriguez; Shari Zamarra

**Guest(s):** Michael Becketts, Director, Department of Family Services; Lloyd Tucker, Director, Neighborhood and Community Services; Pallas Washington, Deputy Director, Neighborhood and Community Services; Norma Lopez, Division Director, Neighborhood and Community Services

The motion that all members present were able to be heard was made by Michelle Jefferson, seconded by Phil Rosenthal, and passed with no objections. The motion to allow CAAB business be done via an electronic meeting due to the COVID-19 emergency was made by Michelle Jefferson, seconded by Phil Rosenthal, and was carried without objection.

**Minutes – January 7, 2023**

The motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Phil Rosenthal, seconded by Ken McMillon and was carried without objection.

**CAAB Elections**

CAAB members voted on the slate of officers announced at the January 7, 2023 meeting. The motion to approve the slate of officers was made by Phil Rosenthal, seconded it by Michael Mahrer, and was carried without objection.

**Changes to Medicaid and SNAPS Benefits**

Director Becketts shared that in December 2022, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 which institutes changes that will impact Medicaid and SNAP benefits.

**Medicaid:** The federal government notified the Virginia Department of Social Services in January 2023 that starting in May 2023 the Medicaid policies that were in place prior to the pandemic will go back into effect. This means that individuals who require Medicaid renewals will need to ensure that their contact information is correct. The Department of Family Services (DFS) is working with community and system partners to remind and encourage Medicaid recipients to review and update their contact information as needed to avoid a gap in benefits. Ms. Nermin AbdelWahab asked if there is a contact person at DFS who will be able to answer questions about Medicaid applications. Ms. Thomas inquired whether the federal poverty limits would also be going back to pre-pandemic levels. Mr. Becketts will follow up with information for both inquiries.

**SNAP:** DFS has developed a communications tool kit that can be used to inform SNAP recipients that the emergency SNAP allotment put in place during the pandemic will end in February 2023. Households that received additional SNAP benefits above their eligibility levels, will see those additional benefits end at the end of February. SNAP recipients have received messaging about the changes in benefits from the state, but DFS will also be reaching out to people to ensure they are aware of the changes. DFS is also pushing out the messaging to SNAP retailers in the County. Director Becketts shared with CAAB members the flyer that was developed that includes the Virginia Department of Social Services information line (855-635-4370) and ways to access services locally. DFS is working with the school system that will put the information into their newsletter that reaches 300,000 people in the County. The communications tool kit will be available on the County website ([Changes to SNAP Benefits | Family Services (fairfaxcounty.gov)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/public-assistance-employment-services/changes-to-snap-benefits))

DFS is asking that partners disseminate the above information among their networks to ensure that people do not have gaps in their receipt of services.

Ramona Carroll shared that the Community Provider Strategy Team, as well as the Emergency Food Strategy Team, will be discussing ways in which the County can assist individuals who may be impacted by the changes to SNAP benefits. County staff have been meeting with non-profit partners and houses of worship who provide food in the community to assess ways in which the partnerships can be leveraged, their purchasing power, strategizing the ways in which food can be accessed by the community (e.g. times, locations). The County also has a Food Access Plan that funds food resources in the community. The Emergency Food Strategy Team meets every month and individuals are welcome to join. The information will be sent in a follow up email to CAAB members.

**Neighborhood and Community Services Agency Realignment**

Director Lloyd Tucker, Deputy Director Pallas Washington and Division Director Norma Lopez provided an overview of the restructuring efforts that have occurred within the agency. The Department of Neighborhood and Community Services has seen changes in recent years (see attached slides for realignment stages). In 2021 NCS worked with a consulting firm to complete an organization assessment analysis to better align with the County’s strategic plan, how to be more efficient and effective given the growth caused in the recent mergers. In the winter of 2021/2022, NCS created a new organizational structure that resulted in the creation of a new division and movement of positions. Director Tucker discussed the similarities in the missions and visions of NCS and CAAB and how work of each entity is aligned in the mutual pursuits of equity in the services and programs available for the community. The organizational chart for the agency; the Inclusive Engagement and Targeted Interventions Division, which houses the work of the CAAB, are overseen by Deputy Director Pallas Washington and led by Division Director Norma Lopez.

As a result of tremendous feedback gathered during the 2018 countywide strategic plan community engagement, it became clear that there is a desire for county efforts around community engagement needs to be very intentional. From that, the Inclusive Engagement Framework was developed and will be operationalized by the Inclusive Engagement and Targeted Interventions Division. The division will also be working on strategies to help community residents attain economic mobility. The division will also be working with CAAB to explore ways in which the CAAB can influence funding decisions and supports programs and services available to residents in vulnerable communities.

Deputy Director Washington spoke about the need to always be thinking about the broader community, ensuring that the agency/division is connected to those served but also system and community partners. The four units within the Inclusive Engagement and Targeted Interventions have distinct buckets of work but they are all intended to work in concert with each other, in a matrix model. While CAAB is situated in the Community Resource Development Unit, it may tap into the resources of the Social Impact unit, the work of Opportunity Neighborhoods, and community engagement efforts as a whole. Division Director Norma Lopez shared that the work of the division will be guided by and operationalize Engage Fairfax ([Framework for Inclusive Community Engagement (fairfaxcounty.gov)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planningcommission/sites/planningcommission/files/assets/documents/pdf/schools/inclusive%20community%20engagement%20framework-final.pdf)). The division will design and provide technical assistance to other agencies to help them better engage with the community.

**CAAB Member Information Sharing**

* Michelle Jefferson shared that the Annandale Resource Center will a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Saturday, March 4 at 12:00 pm. Ms. Jefferson and Ms. Leiva provided public comments to the Fairfax County Delegation to the Virginia General Assembly. A video recording of the hearing is available at [Channel 16 Video on Demand - Fairfax County, Virginia (ebmcdn.net)](https://www.ebmcdn.net/fairfax/fairfax-cable-viewer-vtt2-embed.php?viewnode=0123_GenAssembly)
* Michele “Cookie” Hymer Biltz shared that the Rent Stabilization bill has not moved forward in the House. In the Senate, the bill was referred for study.
* Michael Mahrer shared that the English Empowerment Center’s registration has closed. This was one of the largest registrations since pre-Covid in all sectors.
* Ben Zuhl shared that he is working on putting together a show focused on the Low Income Housing Coalition. He recommended that the organization be invited to speak with the CAAB.
* Nermin AbdelWahab shared that her work is now focused around education and public benefits. She is still in contact with colleagues who work housing issues; she requested that anyone who has contacts at the Adult and Aging division who could help 2 clients with public housing concerns. She also shared that the Virginia Poverty Law Center is closely following the work on Rent Stabilization.
* Caroline Hockenberry shared that there are currently 10 farmers markets in the county who accept SNAP; with expansions to Herndon and Wakefield coming soon. Will share flyers with CAAB as soon as they are available.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 pm.