

FAIRFAX AREA COMMISSION ON AGING (COA)

APPROVED MINUTES OF VIRTUAL VIDEO/AUDIO MEETING

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85340213287>

Password: COA-m1234!

Or

Telephone: 888-270-9936 (US Toll Free) or 602-333-0032

Conference code: 231525

Wednesday, November 17, 2021, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

COA Commissioners Present: Cathy Cole (Chair/At Large), Cathy Muha (Vice Chair/Sully), Carolyn Sutterfield (Secretary, City of Fairfax), Tom Bash (Springfield), Martha Cooper (City of Falls Church), Sharron Dreyer (Lee), Joe Heastie (Providence), Kathy Hoyt (Mason), Kay Larmer (Dranesville), Phyllis Miller Palombi (Hunter Mill), Mike Perel (Braddock), Diane Watson (Mount Vernon)

Fairfax County Staff Present: Tara Turner, Jacquie Woodruff, Hilda Naranjo, Area Agency on Aging; Kathleen Thomas, Communications Specialist, Division of Adult & Aging Services, Dept of Family Services; Jay Doshi, Director, and Justin Nejad, Manager, Tax Relief Program, Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration; Theresa Brown, Supervisor, Volunteer Solutions

Call to Order: Chair Cathy Cole called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Roll Call and Motions to Proceed with Electronic Meeting: The Chair called the roll and passed the virtual gavel to Vice Chair Muha so the following motions could be made to establish VFOIA compliance:

- Cathy Cole motioned that the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging had a quorum present via remote connection and that each member's voice could be adequately heard by all participating members. The motion was seconded by Diane and unanimously approved.
- Cathy Cole motioned that the State of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made it unsafe for the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging and the public to physically assemble and that the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging was conducting the meeting electronically through the dedicated telephone line listed above. The motion was seconded by Mike and unanimously approved.
- Cathy Cole motioned that all agenda matters would address the Emergency itself, were necessary for continuity in Fairfax County government, and/or were statutorily required or necessary to continue operations and the discharge of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. The motion was seconded by Mike and unanimously approved.

Approval of the agenda Cathy Cole motioned that the agenda be approved. The motion was seconded by Sharron and unanimously approved.

Approval of the minutes Mike motioned that the minutes from October 13 be approved. The motion was seconded by Diane and unanimously approved.

Public Comment: Dave Roycraft, former Meals on Wheels volunteer, offered reasons why Fairfax County should resume delivering meals to homebound older adults three times a week. Cathy Cole thanked him for his remarks and expressed COA support for the MOW program.

AAA Director's Report: Tara Turner

- On behalf of the AAA, Tara thanked Sharron Dreyer for her testimony at the November 9 Board of Supervisors meeting where a proclamation of National Family Caregivers' Month was read and adopted.
- SHAPE the Future of Aging: Informational videos will be developed to get the word out about the CASOA survey. COA members are invited to participate in the process.
- VICAP volunteer Jack Hoadley was cited in an October 30 *New York Times* article, "The New Old Age—Why Aren't More People Comparison Shopping for Health Plans?"
- Through a partnership with several community-based organizations, Meals on Wheels (MOW) clients will receive a special Thanksgiving meal that includes a variety of prepared items and shelf-stable pantry items.
- In initial review, a survey of Meals on Wheels clients conducted at the three-month mark after the vendor-delivered meals model was implemented shows high satisfaction with the flexibility offered by the weekly delivery model and with the check-in provided by delivery drivers. Volunteers can still connect with clients through the Mealtime Visitor program, social visiting, and check-in phone calls. The COA will receive a full survey report when data is finalized.

OLD BUSINESS

1. 2022 SHAPE the Future of Aging Communitywide Survey

Kathleen Thomas, Communications Specialist, Adult & Aging Services, Dept. of Family Services, outlined plans for informing the public about the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA) planned for late February 2022.

- The new CASOA is essentially the same instrument administered by the National Research Center (NRC) in 2019. It will again go out to a randomized sample of 22,000 older adults in Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. Results of the 2019 survey were used to inform the County's new Strategic Plan; results of this one will highlight the needs of the Fairfax area aging population in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Arabic will join Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese as alternates to the English version. The COA will see an advance copy of the survey.

- Pre-survey promotion in December and January will include an updated webpage, an article in the *Golden Gazette* (shared with local newsletters), social media posts, videos, information on NewsWire and other media outlets, and flyers sent to senior centers, adult day care, libraries, faith communities, and others that serve older adults. The Outreach Team is working with Communications to ensure that information gets to the different outreach communities in the Fairfax area.
- Reminders in early February will include postcards sent by NRC to recipients and notices in local media. The survey will go out in mid to late February.
- Subsequent discussion by the COA focused on ways individual commissioners can share information with groups like Faith Communities in Action, the Fairfax area “villages,” the 50+ Ambassadors, and the Fairfax County Federation of Civic Associations.

2. Human Services concerns about staffing in long-term-care facilities

- Jacquie provided an update on the Long Term Care Staffing Standards Position submitted by the Health Care Advisory Board, with support from the COA and the Long Term Care Coordinating Council, as part of the draft Human Services Issue Paper. It will now be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors on November 23.

3. Commissioner Updates – COA

- Carolyn attended the November 15 virtual Human Services Council meeting. Tom Goodwin reported on the \$1.5 million pilot UpTogether Economic Mobility Project, which will be partially funded with \$600,000 from the Human Services Innovation Fund money. Goodwin invited members to submit ideas on how to spend the remaining \$200,000. Chair Menapace introduced the county’s new online Partner Portal system.
- Kay Larmer reported that Dorothy Keenan of GrandInvolve received the Fairfax County Federation of Civic Associations’ Citizen of the Year award on November 14.
- Mike and Phyllis reported that the film club may hold its first event on January 5, with facilitated discussion by Phyllis and Dr. Richard Hilburn to follow. Mike proposed calling the group the “Reel to Real Club.” A possible first film choice is “Still Alice.”

4. Eligibility for the County’s Senior Real Estate Tax Relief Program for Age and Income Qualified Individuals

Jay Doshi, Director, Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration, and his assistant, Justin Nejad, presented on the proposed expansion of the Fairfax County Real Estate Tax Relief program. The tax relief schedule has not been updated since 2006. It currently covers about 7,000 homeowners at a total cost to the county of \$28 million to \$29 million.

- Proposals include raising the income and net worth limits, adding a new 75% relief bracket, capping the total taxes relieved, and offering an option to defer tax payments. These changes would potentially expand the eligible pool to 9,000 homeowners, with an approximate cost of an additional \$12 million. The BOS will consider the proposal at a public hearing on December 7.
- After discussion by the COA, Carolyn moved that either Cathy Cole or Cathy Muha should testify in the public comment period on December 7 about COA support of the

adjustment in property tax relief, with a draft sent to commissioners in advance for approval. Tom seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness among Older Adults: Fairfax AAA Initiatives through Volunteer Solutions

Theresa Brown, supervisor of Adult & Aging's Volunteer Solutions (VS) department, spoke about their efforts to relieve the isolation of older adults during the pandemic. VS planning coordinator Linda Hernandez-Giblin was unable to attend and will give her report at a future COA meeting. VS was fully aware that social isolation was an issue for older adults before COVID, but this time has certainly brought it to the forefront.

- Pre-COVID, VS focused on in-person social visiting a couple of times a month in clients' homes. Volunteers would chat or play card or board games. They might take clients grocery shopping or shop themselves and stay for a visit after delivering the groceries. Those practices came to a halt with Covid.
- During the pandemic, VS switched to offering virtual social visiting through Zoom or phone calls. Staff were surprised at how many clients were able to use Zoom. The program was expanded to Senior Center participants and those in nursing homes, as well as existing clients, through activities like writing Caring Cards. One successful [Zoom?] project paired a 17-year-old student with an older client; they bonded quickly and continue to talk regularly.

The current challenge at VS is how to continue with both in-person and virtual services.

- Social Visiting is operating again for those comfortable with in-person contact. A new program is Mealtime Visitors, a way to continue the personal contact that Meals on Wheels volunteers used to provide, offering not only mealtime companionship but also a personal well-check at least once a week. It is also available by phone. These pilots will go fulltime in January.
- A pilot of Animatronic Pets, robotic animals in the home for people who can't afford or care for a real animal, is under development. Similar programs have been popular in other states. Clients will be referred by care managers, and a VS volunteer will help them learn how to control the pet (current options are a golden retriever or a tabby cat). VS is awaiting delivery of approximately 12 pets before trainings and referrals can begin.

Announcements: The Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax's annual meeting will be held virtually on December 2, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. The topic is "Social Isolation and Loneliness." Tara Turner will be a panelist.

Adjournment: Kay motioned that the meeting be adjourned. Diane seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 pm.

Minutes prepared by Carolyn Sutterfield, COA Secretary.
Approved: December 15, 2021

DocuSigned by: Carolyn Sutterfield 01/06/2022 | 4:02 PM EST
Carolyn Sutterfield, COA Secretary Date

DocuSigned by: Catherine Cole 01/11/2022 | 4:08 PM EST
Cathy Cole, COA Chair Date