



Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB)
Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, August 1, 2023, 7:30pm
Meeting held electronically via 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: Michelle Jefferson, Fairfax County; Heather Thomas, Centreville, VA; Caroline Hockenberry, Vienna, VA; Marcia McDevitt, Reston, VA; Michael Mahrer, Falls Church, VA; Michele Menapace, Southeast Fairfax, VA; Ben Zuhl, Dranesville, VA; Maria Leiva Alfonso, Falls Church, VA; Phil Rosenthal, Michele “Cookie” Hymer Blitz, Ken McMillon, Shari Zamarra, Fairfax, VA; April Hall; Alice Yam, Herndon, VA

Absent: Morgan Jameson, Jim Edwards-Hewitt, Alex Rodriguez, Nermin AbdelWahab, Sandra Barksdale, Kevin Hickerson, Hari Kurup, Matthew Bell, Alicia Doe, Mary Ann Floto, Hawa Hassan, Ann Macpherson, Whitney Richardson

Guest(s)/Staff: Karla Bruce and Carla Brown, One Fairfax; Molly Cullen and Florencia Khomasi, Tahirih Justice Center

Minutes – June 6, 2023

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

One Fairfax Overview

Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer, presented on the One Fairfax policy, a racial and social equity resolution and policy committing to the county and FCPS to intentionally consider equity when making policies, planning, and delivering programs and services.

Tahirih Justice Center Program Presentation

Molly Cullen and Florencia Khomasi presented on the Tahirih Justice Center program and its mission to protect immigrant survivors fleeing gender-based violence using a three-pronged approach: Training and Education, Policy Advocacy, and Direct Services (e.g., social services and legal services). The Tahirih program offers a variety of in-house services: safety planning, comprehensive case management, needs assessments, service planning, system navigation and advocacy. The program provides community referrals to their clients as needed (e.g., emergency shelter and housing, employment services, crisis intervention).

CAAB Member Information Sharing

- Chair Michelle Jefferson indicated that Shari Zamarra will be the new Affordable Housing Advisory Council (AHAC) representative, with Heather Thomas serving as an alternate.

- Michael Mahrer shared that the English Empowerment Center’s next semester starts in September with registration beginning the week of August 7th. Last year the Center served 1,977 adults. If anyone needs help with learning English, please visit Englishempowercenter.org to register.
- Michele “Cookie” Hymer Blitz shared that the county had its first heat emergency of the summer. A new program was introduced to provide relief and county residents can sign up to receive alerts on their phones. Fairfax County uses heat index of 105 degrees to declare a heat emergency. Cooling centers include libraries, recreation centers, and shelters around the county.
- Ben Zuhl shared that Valerie L’Herrou from the Virginia Poverty Law Center and Senator Favola are introducing a bill to help families with foster care custody cases. . children have better outcomes when they are with their family. In custody cases a court-appointed lawyer is paid \$120 per case. .
- Shari Zamarra shared that CAAB members should get involved in their local land use committee. She mentioned that in Braddock district there is opposition for a shelter for six women with Bethany house. She also shared that Virginians Organize for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) had a session on July 9th with the governor on youth behavioral violence; the group is hopeful for better access to therapy.
- Heather Thomas shared that the City of Fairfax has formed a homeless taskforce which includes community members and three non-profits; there may be potential for future collaboration with CAAB.

Introduction of New CAAB Support Staff

Susan Al-Suqi was introduced as the new Community Action Program Manager. She will provide the day-to-day support to the CAAB and will work ensure that the Community Action Program is compliant with all state and federal requirements.

Membership and Elections

Shari Zamarra shared that there are three vacant slots in the representative sector (including the HeadStart slot). There is a possibility of 2 individuals sharing the HeadStart slot. Ms. AbdelWahab has been named as the representative for the Fairfax Bar Association. The Membership and Elections Committee will reach to CAAB members who have missed more than 3 consecutive meetings to determine continued level of interest in participating in the CAAB.

Adjournment

Ken McMillion motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ben Zuhl. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.