

**HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 10, 2020  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
Rockville City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Deborah Moore, Consumer Member (via phone)	Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member
Jen Lafferty, At-large Member	Laura Kaplan-Weisman, At-large Member
Leon Suskin, At-large Member and Co-Chair	Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member

**Members Absent:**

Mark Pascu, At-large Member and Chair	Stacey Erd, Caregiver Member
Emily Pearce, At-large Member	

**Mayor and Council Liaison Present:** Councilmember Mark Pierzchala

**Staff Present:** Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager  
Allison (Ali) Hoy, Community Services Program Analyst

**RE: Call Meeting to Order**

Leon Suskin, At-large Member and Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm.

**RE: Community Forum**

No discussion.

**RE: Approval of Minutes from February 11, 2020**

Deborah Moore, Consumer Member, requested an adjustment be made to the minutes from the February meeting discussion of Human Services Advisory Commission consumer member recusal policies. The minutes were updated by Ali Hoy, Community Services Program Analyst.

Leon Suskin, At-large Member and Co-Chair, asked for a motion for the minutes to be accepted as amended. Deborah moved to accept these amendments and Jen Lafferty, At-large Member, seconded. The motion was unanimous.

**RE: Community Services Division Report (Carlos Aparicio)**

Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager, provided the following updates regarding the Community Services Division:

- Illness, due to COVID-19, is a concern for the mentoring program because many of the mentors are seniors with increased health risks. In response, parents of the mentees have been notified that their children should not attend mentoring sessions if they are sick.

- Niambi Powell, the Community Services Program Coordinator, is working on strategies and the documentation required for establishing partnerships with local banks for the Bank On program.

- **City of Rockville Budget Process**

Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager, shared that one Caregiver agency chose not to reapply for the City of Rockville's Caregiver Grant the 2021 fiscal year. The Rockville Emergency Assistance Program is being moved from a Caregiver grant to a line-item under the Community Services Division to improve operations and ease administrative burdens for Community Reach of Montgomery staff.

During the March 2<sup>nd</sup> budget hearing, Leon Suskin of the Human Services Advisory Commission testified in favor of increased Human Services funding and a needs assessment. Peter Lowet, the Executive Director of Mobile Med, also testified on behalf of increased Caregiver funding as a whole. Carlos said that an additional public hearing was added for March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

- **Linkages to Learning Program**

Carlos Aparicio attended a strategic planning meeting with Linkages to Learning partners that included staff from stakeholders that included members from Montgomery County Public Schools, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, and other local agencies. During the meeting, they used feedback from parents and staff to guide the strategic plan. There have also been discussions about what metrics should be used to determine whether a school should add a Linkages to Learning site. Typically, the schools use the "EverFARMS" (free and reduced meals) rate to determine the level of need for each school population, but additional factors could be considered in the future. Carlos and the Linkages to Learning staff also took a tour of the newly constructed Maryvale Elementary School to see their new offices. The space has an open layout that will be useful for group workshops and programming. The anticipated move in date for staff is in late June.

- **School and Community Youth Services/Youth Service Bureaus**

Carlos Aparicio spoke about his advocacy efforts in support of a funding bill for the Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus (MAYSB) during the State of Maryland legislative session in Annapolis. The bill has successfully passed through the House and if passed by the Senate, funding will be allocated to the City of Rockville, as an official Youth Service Bureau. Rockville is one of three Youth Service Bureaus (YSB) in Montgomery County and is one of 14 YSB partners. Previously, about \$2 million in funding was allocated to 24 YSBs, but these numbers have been declining and show the crucial need for advocacy. Deborah Moore commented that she hopes this advocacy results in additional funding because there are many news articles she has read that demonstrate the need, like one about a recent suicide by a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grader in Washington, DC.

Carlos also shared that School and Community Youth Services program was recently audited by the County. As part of the audit process, City and County staff discussed the changes in the

scope of services as this program is transitioned from the former Regional Youth Services scope of services. He commented that caseloads originally dropped because of a confusion with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff about the scope of services. Ama Kyere, the Youth and Family Counselor, now has a full caseload, due to her outreach efforts and a recent presentation to Richard Montgomery High School health classes. She has commented that this program transition has resulted in additional case management hours due to the increased needs under the current scope. She has also noted how students have identified many barriers to treatment through their health care plan including transportation and parental buy-in.

Based on his conversations with other agencies, Carlos identified the need for bilingual therapists among nonprofit providers of mental health services. Additionally, low salaries and a small a pool of bilingual therapists has left these providers with several position opening; sometimes taking months to fill. There is a gap in bilingual students of local social work programs, so this issue is likely to be a continued struggle. This amplifies the need for additional funding for behavioral health programs. Leon Suskin commented that billing protocols and other administrative duties add to the cost burden for these therapists. “Fee for service” models can be difficult because therapists must keep a large caseload because of expected no-show rates.

#### **RE: Discussion on Recusal Policies (Carlos Aparicio)**

This issue has been pushed to the April 14, 2020 meeting.

#### **RE: Mayor and Council Advocacy – Budget Public Hearing Results**

Leon Suskin, At-large Member, shared with the Human Services Advisory Commission (HSAC) members that he testified during the City of Rockville budget public hearing in March, using the official HSAC statement voted on during the February meeting.

Councilmember Mark Pierzchala thanked the HSAC members for their advocacy and shared that it has been tough to provide feedback and engage with those who have testified. This challenge is partly due to time constraints during the budget hearing meetings, which typically continue until after midnight. Councilmember Pierzchala added that the City Manager provided Mayor and Council with a balanced recommended budget and it includes a budget line item that would increase funding for part-time City employees. He included that his long-term hope is to increase the housing stock in Rockville since housing and transportation are a major issues for low-income people. Deborah Moore expressed her agreement and noted that housing it is a contentious issue, particularly among the public and during elections. She believes that education and advocacy on housing issues need to continue. The HSAC discussed that often harmful language is used by a subset of people when discussing affordable housing.

Leon Suskin added that in future meetings, the Commission should develop a work plan with themes of community assessment and process improvements in order to make recommendations on how to best utilize City funds for human services.

#### **RE: Caregiver Site Visits**

- Manna Food Center (Laurie Gira)

Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member, attended a site visit at the new headquarters of Manna Food Center in Silver Spring, along with City of Rockville staff members, Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager, and Ali Hoy, Community Services Program Analyst. Manna staff were previously co-located at their warehouse, located in Gaithersburg. Laurie shared that this new location includes a marketplace where Manna clients can come choose food items using a color coded system that is based on the number of family members of the client. She found the environment to be both impressive and inviting. During the site visit, Manna staff members were asked about how recent changes in distribution sites are affecting food pickups by Rockville residents. They responded that many Rockville residents are picking up at other locations, including, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Silver Spring. They plan to increase outreach to Rockville residents who may not have continued working with Manna due to the move.

Carlos Aparicio added that there are concerns about access of this program to Rockville residents, but City staff will keep an eye on Manna's Rockville residency numbers and may suggest alternative services (like a mobile pantry) to increase services in the City. He also highlighted that Manna is currently reworking their strategic plan, which will also emphasize racial and economic equity.

- Comprehensive Community Empowerment Project – Korean Community Service Center (Leon Suskin)

Leon Suskin, At-large Member, attended a site visit at the Korean Community Service Center (KCSC), along with City of Rockville staff members, Carlos Aparicio and Ali Hoy. He expressed that he was impressed with their record keeping and believes that they are using the funding well and demonstrate responsiveness to their clients. Carlos added that the program primarily operates out of Virginia and Silver Spring, but they provide a wide range of culturally competent case management services to Rockville residents in the Asian community. One challenge that KCSC staff mentioned was the lack of mental health providers fluent in Korean. They have a program that is similar to Rockville's Emergency Assistance Program, but they provide three months of rent to those struggling with rental payments and this program is entirely funded through donations. Both Leon and Carlos made recommendations to the staff about how to quantify their workload because they may be underestimating the work they have spent on client referrals and reporting.

- Healthy Families Montgomery – Family Services, Inc. (Emily Pearce)

This topic has been pushed to the April 14, 2020 meeting.

### **RE: Other Items**

Deborah Moore would like to conference in for the April meeting, given the recent health care concerns related to Corona virus (COVID-19). The other Human Services Advisory Commission members asked City staff to plan for a virtual meeting (via computer or teleconferencing), in case of City Hall closures.

Laura Kaplan-Weisman, At-large Member, asked about the City of Rockville's response to COVID-19. Carlos responded that senior staff are meeting daily and passing along information to staff, as needed, and that the IT department is setting up protocols for working from home. He also said that many of the Community Services Division programs are dependent on the

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) response because programs run at the schools. Jen Lafferty, At-large Member, asked about operations at the Senior Center, specifically if classes for kids will be cancelled to protect vulnerable populations. Carlos added that the Senior Center staff are working to create protocols to help their participants during this time. He was recently informed that attendance numbers have dropped significantly due to social distancing. The Senior Center is also a top City priority for distributing additional cleaning supplies, and Senior Center Staff are developing alternative processes for providing services. Jen also asked about how MCPS plan to handle food distribution in the event of school closures. Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member, thinks food distribution programs that are typically in place during the summer could be a good model for this situation.

Carlos mentioned that additional funding may be needed for Rockville's Emergency Assistance Program, in anticipation of financial stress for Rockville residents that do not have access to paid sick leave or are facing other issues relating to COVID-19. He is working with finance to make funds from the REAP Special Activities Fund available.

**RE: Plan Agenda for April 14, 2020 Meeting**

- Caregiver Site Visit Reports
  - Healthy Families Montgomery – Family Services, Inc.
- Recusal materials from other City of Rockville Boards and Commissions
- Creation of a Human Services Advisory Commission Work Plan

Staff will plan for a virtual meeting (via computer or teleconferencing) due to the State of Maryland advisement against group gatherings in response to COVID-19.

**RE: Adjourn**

Deborah Moore motioned to adjourn, Jen Lafferty seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.