

**HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 14, 2020
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Rockville City Hall**

Members Present:

Stacey Erd, Caregiver Member	Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member
Laura Kaplan-Weisman, At-large Member	Deborah Moore, Consumer Member
Mark Pascu, At-large Member and Chair	Emily Pearce, At-large Member
Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member	Leon Suskin, At-large Member
Jen Lafferty, At-large Member	

Members Absent: N/A

Mayor and Council Liaison Present: Councilmember Beryl Feinberg

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

RE: Call Meeting to Order

Mark Pascu, At-large Member and Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

RE: Community Forum

No discussion.

RE: Approval of Minutes from December 10, 2019

Deborah (Debbie) Moore, Consumer Member, moved that the minutes be approved as drafted, and, Leon Suskin, At-large Member, seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

RE: Presentation: Kristi Simon and Beth Stein, Howard County Community Action Agency

Niambi Powell, Rockville’s Community Services Referral Coordinator, introduced the Human Services Advisory Commission members to Kristi Simon and Beth Stein from Howard County Community Action Agency. Before the presentation, Niambi shared some information about the City of Rockville programs, including the Rockville Emergency Assistance Program (REAP), the Home Energy Assistance Program and the Bridge Rental Assistance Program. These programs are designed to help Rockville residents with rental or utility assistance, home energy savings and provide referrals to needed services. Niambi also shared that she offers financial empowerment courses, one-on-one budget counseling, and partners with several community partners in the Rockville area.

Debbie Moore, Consumer Member, asked for further information about the Bridge program qualifications. Niambi responded that residents may enter the program prior to receiving an eviction notice. Upon screening for eligibility, program participants receive an initial rental assistance in the amount of \$500 if they agree to sign a service plan where they must meet certain criteria based on moving towards greater self-sufficiency. They receive further assistance after meeting specific goals within a service plan.

Niambi said that her work focuses on capacity building and moving toward a future reduction in the need for community-based assistance. To continue this goal, she hopes to bring a BankOn program to Rockville. BankOn is a program supported by local governments to promote safe banking and saving behaviors among residents. This program can be useful for low-income residents without traditional bank accounts that currently utilize predatory systems with high interest rates.

Kristi Simon and Beth Stein from the Howard County Community Action Agency spoke about the programs that they offer in their community, including an eviction prevention program, home energy savings program, and the DreamSavers program. The DreamSavers program allows residents to save toward a goal of one of three asset purchases (a home, business, or post-secondary education) and receive a matching fund from the program. The program participants receive case management throughout the process of achieving this asset goal. The presenters indicated that the biggest challenge with the program has been an inconsistency in funding. The program was briefly halted due to defunding but resumed in 2019 and currently supports 13 families. Councilmember Beryl Feinberg asked about the budget cap and if there is currently a wait list. The presenters responded that “yes” the grant limitation caused them to serve 13 families and many are part of the Head Start program within the low-income schools as a part of the wrap around services.

Emily Pearce, At-large Member, shared some information about a Financial Empowerment Center (BankOn) presentation she attended that was hosted by the City of Gaithersburg. City of Gaithersburg recently entered the program which promotes safe banking and saving behaviors among residents. Gaithersburg staff are looking to engage additional community partners in this process, including the City of Rockville. Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member, expressed interest in the potential collaboration between the City of Gaithersburg and City of Rockville because there is a benefit for transient populations with regional programs not limited by city residency. Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager, said that this program is not funding or space intensive, and believes it may be a good opportunity for Rockville.

RE: Community Services Division Report (Carlos Aparicio)

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

- The *Rockville Holiday Drive* has concluded, and the City served 582 households in December. Over 1,600 toys and books were provided to young children. Carlos highlighted that the Rockville Public Information Office emphasized Holiday Drive

advertising through social media, and it resulted in a large increase in donations during the last week before the December Toy Shop distribution. Major donors will be acknowledged at the Mayor and Council meeting on January 27.

- The Human Services Advisory Commission members had a brief conversation about the late surge in donations for December after reported low food donations in November. Stacey Erd, Caregiver Member and Executive Director of Stepping Stones Shelter offered goods donation support for the City of Rockville, if needed in the future.
- The *Caregiver Grant Review Panel* will convene on Wednesday, January 22. Carlos mentioned that he would be setting up one-on-one meetings with new Mayor and Council members about the grant process recommendations made by the Caregiver Funding Task Force.
- The Community Services Division programs are going well. Kate Bouwkamp, the Community Services Program Coordinator, has been providing the ACT Parenting program at Maryvale though the City operated Linkages to Learning program.
- Linkages to Learning staff have been continuing to operate in two locations as Maryvale Elementary School nears the end of its construction.

RE: Mayor and Council Advocacy Discussion – Budget Hearings

Prior to the discussion on Mayor and Council advocacy, Debbie Moore, Consumer Member, moved to amend a line in the minutes. Emily Pearce, At-large Member, seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mark Pascu, At-large Member and Chair began the discussion by speaking about last month's meeting where the Human Services Advisory Commission (HSAC) members discussed specific topics for testimony for the Mayor and Council. Some of these topics included advocating for higher funding for Human Services Grants, funds for a Rockville Needs Assessment tied to the 2020 Census data and speaking about various barriers for nonprofits who are providing human services. He noted minimum wage increases, declining donations, and increased operational costs as possible justifications. In terms of the Census, it was noted that a timeframe for the Needs Assessment could be for the beginning of FY 2022, when analysis of the data by other sources would be used as references for the City oriented analysis.

Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member, asked Councilmember Feinberg for her thoughts on strategies the HSAC could utilize when speaking with Mayor and Council. Councilmember Feinberg made it clear that specific strategies would need to be determined by the HSAC. Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager, discussed the formal process for testifying on behalf of the HSAC. The process involves the HSAC drafting a 5-minute testimony and voting on it, but that members can also speak independently on behalf of themselves.

Leon Suskin, At-large Member, asked about the educational component for new councilmembers regarding the City's Human Services programs. Carlos said that the City Clerk/Office of Council Operations has informed him that they are working through the new councilmembers schedules so they can attend board and commission meetings.

After a discussion on specific talking points, Stacey Erd, Caregiver Member, volunteered to draft up testimony that can be presented on behalf of the HSAC. The intention is to discuss the draft during the February HSAC meeting and vote on it as public testimony. Mark Pascu, At-large Member and Chair, made a motion to vote on this strategy. Leon Suskin moved to approve this course of action and Emily Pearce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Several of the HSAC members also indicated that they would testify on behalf of themselves during the January 27th Mayor and Council community forum to show strong support for the human services issues discussed during the meeting.

RE: Caregiver Site Visits

This issue has been pushed to the February 11, 2020 meeting due to time constraints.

RE: Open Meetings Act

This issue has been pushed to the February 11, 2020 meeting due to time constraints.

RE: Old Business

- Human Services Advisory Commission Service Area Experts (Leon Suskin)

This issue has been pushed to the February 11, 2020 meeting due to time constraints.

RE: Other Items

No discussion.

RE: Plan Agenda for February 11, 2020 Meeting

- Caregiver Site Visit Reports
 - Stepping Stones Shelter
 - Rainbow Place Shelter
 - Nourish Now
- Open Meetings Act
- Mayor and Council Advocacy Discussion (Review of Mayor and Council Testimony Written by Stacey Erd)

RE: Adjourn

Debbie Moore motions to adjourn, Leon Suskin seconds. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.