

**HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 12, 2019
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Rockville City Hall**

Members Present:

Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member
Deborah Moore, Consumer Member
Jen Lafferty, At-large Member
Stacey Erd, Caregiver Member

Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member
Mark Pascu, At-large Member
Emily Pearce, At-large Member
Leon Suskin, At-large Member

Members Absent:

Andrew Buchholz, At-large Member
Ciriaco Gonzales, At-large Member, Chair

Akena Allen, At-large Member

Mayor and Council Liaison Present:

Councilmember Beryl Feinberg

Staff Present:

Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager
Sarah Dickinson, Community Services Program Analyst
Mark Charles, Chief of Environmental Management

Re: Call Meeting to Order

Mark Pascu, called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm

Re: Community Forum

No discussion.

Re: Approve February 12, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Debie Moore, Consumer Representative, moved that the minutes be approved as drafted, and Laurie Gira, Caregiver Representative, seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Re: Polystyrene Legislation

Mr. Mark Charles, Chief of Environmental Management, informed the group that the Environmental Management Division is in the Rockville Public Works Department, and one the roles of the division is to oversee the refuse and recycling program. Included in this charge is being responsible for the City's ordinance banning the use of polystyrene products by food service establishments located in the incorporated limits of Rockville. Mark informed the group how the City's ordinance followed the language of the Montgomery County ban to help limit confusion. As a result of a request from Councilmember Feinberg, Mark was asked to attend the

Human Services Advisory Commission's meeting to seek feedback on the language used in reference to plastic straws. Specifically, Councilmember Feinberg sought feedback language in reference to its effect on individuals with a disability.

Mark provided a handout to the commission that included the current language in the ordinance as related to plastic straws. Mark went on to explain the Montgomery County Ordinance and how they had dealt with the issue of plastic straws, the issue as it was addressed at the state level, and the challenges of recycling straws in the City's recycling process. Included in this discussion is how the straws are not currently recycled, even if they are placed in recycling, due to their size and the lack of straw remanufacturers in the country. Mark added how the recycling industry is looking for alternatives.

Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member, asked Mark why the state ban had failed. Mark explained the state bill process and how this bill had not received enough support to pass the subcommittee process and be considered by both chambers. Mark added how it will likely be considered in next year's cycle. Councilmember Feinberg added that she spoke with Cheryl Kegan, Maryland Senator representing District 17, and they believe it will in fact be reintroduced. Debbie Moore, Consumer Representative, asked if paper straws could be a solution. Mark stated that they straws are made but they have some drawbacks. Emily Pearce, At-large Member, added how based on her research, paper straws are not effective for individuals with certain disabilities. She also provided the group with an alternative compostable product that has been used in other parts of the country. Mark informed the group how there are a limited number of vendors who process compostable plastic, and none in a close enough proximity to Rockville to be cost effective.

Councilmember Feinberg added how, based on her own research, one of the challenges for individuals with certain disabilities is the ingestion of hot beverages, including soups. She added that even heavy-duty paper straws may not standup to individuals who must use a significant amount of force to ingest certain foods.

A few additional points discussed related to the topic and language were as follows:

- The language should not put undue burden on the customer to demonstrate their need based on a disability. This includes making the customer provide "proof" of a disability to secure a straw from the establishment.
- The restaurants could be asked to provide signage that informs people that straws are available upon request. There was some discussion about the language that could be used, but, ultimately, they referenced the need to keep the language vague enough to mitigate the customer's burden of demonstrating a disability to secure a straw. Carlos informed the group how certain restaurants in Rockville are not providing straws unless they are requested. From his discussions with the restaurants, it appears this has significantly cut down the number of straws being requested. In this discussion, Leon opined how the very act of asking for a straw would deter their use; in line with the spirit of the law.

After the discussion, Mark stated he would utilize the commission's feedback, combine it with the feedback from the City's Environment Commission, and update the language.

Re: Community Services Division Report

Carlos Aparicio, Community Service Manager, provided the following updates about the Community Services Division's work, including the youth development programs, Linkages to Learning, the Caregiver grants, and the *Rockville Goes Purple* events.

Re: Caregiver Task Force Report

Mark Pascu, at-large member and chairperson of the Caregiver Funding Task Force (CFTF), informed the commission of the task force's progress. Mark explained how the CFTF has completed the necessary research and have put together an outline of the report. Further, they are working to complete the report by early June as the presentation to Mayor and Council is scheduled for July 15th.

Re: Caregiver Site Visits

Carlos informed the group that Stepping Stones Shelter visit was being postponed at the request of the shelter staff. The visit will be rescheduled for June.

- **Interfaith Works Women's Center**

Jen Lafferty, At-large Member, discussed the site visit and how it consisted of a discussion of general operations, staffing, and a tour. She was impressed by the facility and the organization. She noted how the staff discussed a need for additional funding to be able to provide more work in diversion; a homeless prevention program model that hopes to mitigate people from entering the homeless system. Jen added how the program staff discussed diversion as a best-practice in preventing people from experiencing prolonged bouts of homelessness. She was also appreciative of the partnerships the shelter established with artists to help improve the aesthetics of the shelter. Adding to this are the numerous volunteers who help with classes, food, and personal development.

- **Home Builders Care Assessment Center, Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless**

Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member, discussed how the program operates in two seasons; a hyperthermia season where capacity is 200 beds and a "summer" season where capacity decreases to 65. In the winter, the individuals who utilize the shelter receive limited case management services due to the volume. In the summer, they can provide more targeted services. Nancy added how the shelter also has an overflow location that provides additional beds in the event the shelter gets to capacity. Laurie continued and added how the program is also utilizing a diversion model to try and help with the goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Laurie mentioned the program's employment of a housing locator, who has helped increase the number of people who have been served through diversion. The program also operates on a 30-60-90 model, in which clients are evaluated monthly to help tailor services to limit the amount of time they experience homelessness. Emily Pearce, At-large Member, added how she liked the variety of services. She added how the kitchen and donors allow the shelter to provide multiple

meals a day. There are also computers available, allowing for employment and housing locator services.

Re: Old Business

- **FY 2020 City of Rockville Budget Process:** Carlos Aparicio, Community Services Manager, informed the commission that the City Manager’s recommended budget will be released on February 27, and public budget hearings are scheduled for March 4 and April 15.
- **Montgomery Cares Advocacy Update:** Laurie Gira, Caregiver Member, summarized the HSAC stance regarding the Health Center Leadership Council’s (HCLC) letter regarding the requested changes to the Montgomery Cares program. Laurie added how the primary problem appears to be a communication issue and why there wasn’t more consultation before implementation. Carlos added how the Mayor and Council received a presentation from the HCLC and the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. As a result of that presentation, the Mayor and Council will be monitoring the issue through the City’s Legislative Analyst, Linda Moran.
- **Human Services Advocacy Strategy:** Carlos asked that commission consider the type of topics they would like to discuss in the future. Emily Pearce, At-large Member, discussed a top-down approach to advocacy, which begins with asking what the Mayor and Council are seeking as related to human services monitoring and information. Carlos stated that the CFTF is reviewing needs assessments and how Mark Pascu, at-large member, has done some research that could be shared. Carlos also recommended reviewing the Youth Needs Assessments, Montgomery County Assessments and County Stat, and other publicly available reports.

Re: Other Items

No discussion.

Re: Plan Agenda for March 12, 2019 Meeting

- Polystyrene legislation presentation
- FY 2020 City of Rockville budget
- Caregiver site visits
- Montgomery Cares advocacy update
- Caregiver task force update

Re: Adjourn

Leon Suskin, at-large member, moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Nancy Sushinsky, Caregiver Member, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.