

**Montgomery County – Department of Health & Human Services (MCDHHS)
Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 12, 2020**

<u>Steering Committee</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>AAHI Staff</u>	<u>Present</u>
<i>Organizational Members</i>		Perry Chan	x
Ji-Young Cho	X	Betty Lam	
Wilbur Friedman	X	Elsa Lau	
Michael Lin	X	Sanjana Quasem	x
Hina Mehta		Jasmine Vinh	x
Mayur Mody	X		
Sam Mukherjee (Vice-Chair)	X		
Nguyen Nguyen (Chair)	X		
Tho Tran	X		
Thao Bui	X		
Sovan Tun	X		
Yuchi Huang	X		
<i>Individual Members</i>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Guests</u>	<u>Present</u>
Shruti Bhatnagar			
Nerita Estampador	X		
Meng K. Lee	X		
Sunmin Lee	X		
Cynthia Macri			
Judy Wang	X		
<i>Affiliate Members</i>	<u>Present</u>		
Anis Ahmed			

Welcome and Introduction (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Nguyen Nguyen called the meeting to order at 6:09 PM.
- Jasmine Vinh provided a quick orientation of Zoom teleconferencing features.
- Jasmine asked for permission to audio record the meeting. There were no objections.

ACTION: Audio recording of meeting was approved with no objections.

Approval of Agenda (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Today’s meeting agenda was shared with members prior to the meeting. Nguyen asked if there were any objections to the agenda.

- Wilbur Friedman moved to approve the meeting minutes. Michael Lin seconded the motion. The meeting agenda was approved.

ACTION: Meeting agenda was approved with no objections.

Approval of Meeting Minutes (Nguyen Nguyen)

- The SC meeting minutes from Tuesday, January 14, 2020 were shared with members prior to today's meeting.
- A motion to approve the January meeting minutes was presented. Wilbur moved to adopt the minutes and Yuchi Huang seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

ACTION: Meeting minutes approved with no objections.

Program Updates (Perry Chan)

- Perry Chan shared that AAHI's work over the past two months focused heavily on addressing community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attachments discussed in this section were shared with members in an email sent before today's meeting.
 - In mid-March when the first cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Montgomery County, many organizations serving Asian Americans reached out wanting to help residents. Recognizing the need to help coordinate these efforts, AAHI surveyed over 15 organizations and SC members to better understand the needs and challenges experienced by community-based organizations (CBOs) and residents during this pandemic. This was also an opportunity for AAHI to gather information on the relief services these organizations are providing in response to COVID-19.
 - As a result of this needs assessment, AAHI created the *COVID Needs Assessments Themes (PDF attachment)* which is a compilation of the themes and highlights of the community efforts.
 - AAHI also created a *Catalog of COVID-19 Community Efforts (PDF attachment)*, which is updated on an ongoing basis by community organizations with details of their relief services and is shared with the community at least once per week. Community organizations can add their relief efforts to the catalog via GoogleForm: <https://forms.gle/MogdfcnqmT3NZVDF7>
- Perry also shared that many Asian American small businesses were impacted by the closures and shelter-in-place orders mandated by the state. To address this concern, AAHI coordinated a small business outreach project to raise awareness about relief funding opportunities, such as the County's Public Health Emergency Grant (PHEG) along with relief programs from the state and federal level.

- Approximately 260 small businesses were called and over 900 communication attempts were made by phone and email to small businesses. Due to the shelter-in-place order and the closure of non-essential businesses, AAHI was only able to reach 96 small businesses that were still opened, mainly grocery stores and restaurants.
- Non-essential businesses such as nail and hair salons and dry cleaners, and some smaller restaurants were already closed at the time of project implementation. AAHI attempted to reach these businesses through other means such as Facebook or business websites to ensure that the information about the small business relief funds from the local, state, and federal reached them.
- AAHI optimized use of bilingual staff to reach small business owners who preferred to receive the information in Chinese and Korean.
- The outreach effort was well-received by the small business owners who appreciated the County for providing them information on the various relief funds. AAHI was able to complete this outreach project before the PHEG application closed on April 25, 2020.
- AAHI created the *COVID-19 Relief Program Updates* (PDF attachment), which is an updated list of local, state, and federal programs providing financial assistance to small business and nonprofit organizations impacted by COVID-19.
- Perry added that AAHI has been extremely active on social media to share timely and accurate COVID-19 information with the community. Since March, AAHI has posted over 150 messages on Facebook and Twitter related to COVID-19 updates and community resources.
- In addition, AAHI has been creating multiple multilingual health educational videos.
 - The “Make your own mask” video was published when the County’s health order mandated residents to wear face coverings in grocery stores, pharmacies, and other chain retail establishments: This video is available in Mandarin and Korean.
 - Mandarin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgJBWNmVALw>
 - Korean: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWzs43jH4Ds>
 - With mental health concerns on the rise during this pandemic, AAHI is currently developing approximately ten videos related to COVID-19 and various mental health topics. Each video will be translated into Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Hindi. So far, two videos have been made and published.
 - Video Playlist for “Managing Your Stress During the COVID-19 Pandemic”:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_3fUO78mfW9T8SZmnfsl3gD9w4Lpj5kc
 - Video Playlist for “COVID 19 Guide to Self-Care”:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_3fUO78mfW_8MnkWyWwEaxEcxZq7SE6Z

ACTION ITEM: Perry to share links to AAHI's multilingual COVID-19 YouTube videos via email with the SC.

- AAHI was also contacted by the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) about concerns for increased Asian American discrimination due to COVID-19. Although MCPD did not receive any formal report of discrimination against Asian Americans, Perry inferred that discrimination may still be taking place in the County. Perry is working with the MCPD Office of Community Engagement and the Office of Community Affairs Equity Team to create video about available local resources for Asian Americans who may face discrimination, hate, bias, or intimidation.
 - Perry added that Asian-American Inter Community Service, Inc. (AICS) created a video about Asian American discrimination. Sam Mukherjee may share this resource with the SC after the meeting:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ki5iqRf0YnM>.

ACTION ITEM: Sam to share link to AICS's video on Asian American discrimination via email with the SC.

- Perry thanked the SC for their support at the Blueprint launch on March 12.
 - With the concerns about COVID-19 expressed by the community, there was a last-minute change to a virtual Facebook Live format. AAHI deeply appreciated everyone's flexibility on that day and the event was well received by online participants.
 - The publication Blueprint for AAHI, 2020 - 2030 will serve as a roadmap for AAHI's work for the next decade. It is now officially on the AAHI website: https://aahiinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Blueprint_Final_Web_v3_ADA-compliant.pdf
 - Nguyen also thanked the AAHI team and the speakers for their support for the Blueprint.
- In collaboration with the Office of Community Partnerships and the COVID-19 Multicultural Outreach Team, Perry is setting up for an Asian American Townhall or a Leadership Roundtable. Perry requested that the SC reach out to him if there is a topic or ideas he can bring up at the planning meeting.

Discussion on COVID-19 Response (Nguyen Nguyen)

- **Concerns from Communities**
 - Nguyen prompted the SC to share the concerns and challenges they have learned through their experience in providing COVID-19 relief services to their community.
 - Nguyen referenced the *Themes of Needs Assessment* (PDF attachment) that was shared with the SC prior to the meeting start.

- **Relief Efforts by CBOs and FBOs**

- Sam shared that AICS has focused on acquiring and donating personal protective equipment (PPE), including medical grade N95 masks.
 - Due to furloughs and reduced income as a result of COVID-19 business closures, many residents no longer have employer-sponsored healthcare coverage. Sam shares that about nine to ten percent of Montgomery County is now unemployed.
 - In addition to loss of employment and health insurance, Sam highlighted that incidences of mental health concerns are on the rise. According to recent updates from Councilmember Gabe Albornoz and physicians from local hospitals, they have seen increased number of calls from residents related to depression. AICS has depression-certified counselors that are prepared to provide services via telehealth to the community.
 - For those with chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, Sam mentioned that these residents are experiencing flareup of symptoms during the stay-at-home order. One-on-one and group services will be transitioning to a telehealth platform.
- Similar to other CBOs, Ji Young Cho shared that the Korean Community Services Center of Greater Washington (KCSC) has focused on providing social services and helping Korean community members apply for unemployment benefits, small business loans, health insurance coverage through Medicaid, and food assistance.
 - To meet the demand for the needs in the community, KCSC successfully fundraised approximately \$280,000 through their Sharing Love Campaign for COVID-19 for the DC/MD/VA (DMV) area.
 - KCSC had more than 700 families register to receive food support. After an eligibility screening process, KCSC sent food grocery coupons by certified mail to eligible families.
 - With regards to COVID-19 testing, Ji Young shared that it may be difficult for residents to get a prescription for the test because they do not have a primary care physician.
 - Ji Young added that although reports of domestic violence cases have not increased in the Korean community, it may be due stress and stay-at-home order that families may not reporting their situation to agencies.
 - Nguyen inquired if Ji Young has worked with a food bank.
 - Before COVID-19, Ji Young worked with Manna Food Center. KCSC had applied for the Food Assistance Grant

from the County and received half of the requested amount for lunch delivery service for seniors twice a week.

- Mayur Mody shared that American Diversity Group (ADG) is currently planning a food pantry in Silver Spring and recruiting volunteers to help support implementation. Mayur mentioned that ADG is also providing tele-dentistry at no-cost. For community members with emergent dental issues, ADG has volunteer dentists to assist with emergency dental procedures.
 - Nguyen asked for the SC to continue sharing updates through Perry and the Google Form to the AAHI's COVID-19 Catalog of Community Efforts: <https://forms.gle/MogdfcnqmT3NZVDF7>

<p>ACTION ITEM: The SC will continue to share updates of community efforts in the AAHI's COVID-19 Catalog of Community Efforts.</p>
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- Yuchi Huang stated that the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center (CCACC) raised funds and was able to acquire masks from overseas through their network, which they donated to local clinics, nursing homes, and hospitals. CCACC has helped local small businesses apply for the relief loans, while also keeping their own staff employed.
 - Yuchi also shared that CCACC provides meal delivery services to the Asian community and is supporting the Jewish community with their meal delivery services as well.
 - CCACC also established a COVID-19 hotline, in addition to maintaining the Pan Asian Volunteer Health Clinic's operations.
- Tho Tran from the Vietnamese American Services (VAS) established a free, bilingual hotline service to provide information on social services such as applying for health insurance, filing for unemployment benefits, and food stamps. This hotline also includes nursing advice for COVID-19. More than 200 clients were successfully linked to benefits.
 - VAS volunteers also helped produce home-sewn masks. Tho reported that approximately 12,000 masks were donated to various entities, including MCPD, non-profit organizations, local hospitals, nursing homes, and Montgomery County staff.
 - VAS also implemented a contactless food delivery service for Vietnamese seniors to allow them to stay safe at home. About 120 seniors were served through this program. In addition, VAS was one of the recipients of the County's food assistance grant. These funds will be used to set up a food hub for community members.
- **Organizational and Community Needs**
 - Thao Bui of the Association of Vietnamese Americans (AVA) shared that there has been a rise of violence in the Vietnamese community, not only

between spouses, but also between landlords and renters. Many renters do not have formal paperwork of their rental lease/agreement with their landlord. Thao asked for guidance and resources to help with these disputes and evictions.

- Perry informed Thao that Montgomery County passed a law, effective April 24, which prohibits landlords from evicting renters temporarily during this COVID-19 crisis. Perry also shared that there is a non-emergency line that residents can call for domestic disputes at 301-279-8000. Perry will give Thao a call tomorrow to provide some County information and guidance around renters' rights.
- Thao noted that AVA has been overwhelmed with assisting nail salon businesses with filing unemployment claims online, which is challenging because of the large time commitment, long wait times, and the fact that many nail salon employees are self-employed.

ACTION ITEM: Perry to follow-up with Thao via phone call to provide County information to landlords and guidance to renters' rights.

- Tho asked if the County has resources to help low-income families with children.
 - Perry mentioned that the Emergency Assistance Relief Payment Program (EARP) may be a resource that Tho can look into for families with incomes equal to or less than 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level who may not be eligible for other federal or state assistance programs:
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS/RightNav/Coronavirus_EARP.html. Perry will share information with Tho about the EARP program via email.

ACTION ITEM: Perry to forward information via email to Tho about the EARP program.

- **AAHI and Post-COVID 19 Preparation**

- Nguyen mentioned that due to the shortened meeting, there was not enough time to cover post-COVID 19 preparation activities. This topic will be addressed at a later time.
- He thanked the SC for their continued efforts to assist the community during the pandemic and asked that everyone keep in communication and share updates their activities.
- Ji Young asked if there was an update to the PHEG program for small businesses.
 - Jasmine shared a brief update per the information shared via Nonprofit Montgomery's virtual meetups, in which a representative

from the County Executive's Office spoke on the program's progress. Approximately 6,700 applications were received a small team of 50 people from the Finance Department is currently reviewing applications in batches. They are working as quickly as possible to get the grants out to eligible small businesses who show a 50% loss in revenue for March, while also following up with small businesses for supporting documentation as needed before sending denial letters. Daily progress for this program is tracked online via the live dashboard on the PHEG website:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/biz-resources/pheg/>

- Jasmine will share the link with the SC to the new PHEG program live dashboard.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine to email link to the new PHEG program live dashboard with the SC.

Other Business (Wilbur Friedman)

- Due to the emergent needs in the community due to COVID-19 pandemic, Wilbur shared that the Nominating Committee has asked the existing Chair and Vice-Chair to extend their term for 3 months until September 30, 2020.
 - There were no objections to the Nominating Committee's decision at this time.
 - Nguyen is willing to serve an extended term until a proper election for the board can be held after the pandemic.

ACTION: There were no objections to the SC Chair and Vice-Chair term extensions for an additional three months until September 30, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Nguyen noted that the SC may have more questions regarding COVID-19 resources. Nguyen inquired it is possible to facilitate share and disseminate this information
 - Perry assured that AAHI will continue to organize and share COVID-19 related resources to the SC as updates arise. He also encouraged the SC to be proactive and ask questions as needed so that AAHI can be of more support.

Adjourn

- Nguyen adjourned the meeting at 7:05 PM.

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 14, 2020