

**Montgomery County – Department of Health & Human Services (MCDHHS)**  
**Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Tuesday, January 12, 2021**

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

**Welcome (Nguyen Nguyen)**

- Nguyen Nguyen called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.
- Nguyen asked for permission to audio record the meeting. There were no objections.

ACTION: Audio recording of meeting was approved with no objections.
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**Approval of Meeting Minutes (Nguyen Nguyen)**

- The SC meeting minutes from Tuesday, November 10, 2020 were shared with members prior to today’s meeting. A motion to approve the November meeting minutes was presented.
- Wilbur Friedman suggested to replace all references of “Raymond” with the formal “Dr. Crowel.” With proposed changes to be made on November’s minutes, Wilbur moved to approve the minutes and Yuchi Huang seconded the motion.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine Vinh will make the suggested change in November's minutes.

ACTION: The November meeting minutes were approved, contingent on the proposed changes.

### **Approval of Agenda (Nguyen Nguyen)**

- Today's meeting agenda was shared with members prior to the meeting. Nguyen asked if there were any thoughts or objections to the agenda.
- Wilbur moved to approve the agenda. Yuchi seconded the motion. The meeting agenda was approved.

ACTION: The meeting agenda was approved with no objections.

### **Program Updates (Jasmine Vinh)**

- Montgomery County has updated its COVID-19 information portal to provide information regarding COVID-19 vaccine questions and "Frequently Asked Questions". It is updated daily as new information is coming in from the federal and state level: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/faqs.html>
- AAHI is with partners from the Office of Community Partnerships and Public Information Office. A survey is being developed to gather attitudes towards and potential barriers in accessing the COVID-19 vaccine. The results of the survey will help with the county's messaging and outreach. The survey will be translated into different languages: Amharic, Chinese, Spanish, Korean, French, and Vietnamese and posted online on the County's COVID-19 website later this week. The County will conduct a preliminary round of analysis around the first week of February.
  - Michael Lin asked about the survey for COVID-19 and whether it was on the county website and how was it publicized.
  - Jasmine replied that the community survey is currently being translated in the top seven languages spoken in the County. It will be available on the County's vaccine website shortly.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine will share the translated and finalized survey with the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will share with their constituents and ensure that Asian American perspectives are reflected in the results of that survey.

- To supplement the surveys, Montgomery County is planning to host community forums and focus groups in the upcoming weeks.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine will share the information regarding community forums and focus groups with the Steering Committee when it becomes available.

- AAHI is planning a virtual Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training sometime in February and March. Steering Committee members are encouraged to register for the session or share the link with others who are interested in learning the building blocks on how to recognize mental health crisis in the community and equipping them the ability to handle those conversations.
  - Ji-Young Cho inquired if the MHFA training is for adults or youth.
  - Jasmine replied that while MHFA does have a specific curriculum for youth, the upcoming training by AAHI will be for adults.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine has both the MHFA training registration link and the recruitment flyer. She will share both items with the Steering Committee after the current meeting.

- Currently, mental health education videos are being created, which focus on COVID-19 and include the topics: reducing stigma and mindfulness. These videos will be available on AAHI's YouTube page in the next coming weeks.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine will share the YouTube links to AAHI's educational series when these videos are completed.

- AAHI staff and Nguyen met with Dr. Christopher Rogers and Karen Thompkins of Healthy Montgomery to discuss the involvement of the Steering Committee for the community health needs assessment. Nguyen will provide further updates later in the meeting regarding the conversation.
- Jasmine introduced Tammy Wan, AAHI's new Health Education and Communications Coordinator. Tammy is responsible for AAHI's internal and external communication channels, including updates and resources shared on AAHI's Facebook and Twitter. Of notes, Tammy has been an AAHI health promoter for many years in AAHI.

### **Strategic Discussion**

- Nguyen begins by sharing recent updates/activities by the Steering Committee:
  - Update #1: Activities related to COVID-19 vaccine

- The Minority Health Initiatives and Programs' Steering/Executive Committees' Chairs/Co-chairs met with Dr. Raymond Crowel to voice the concerns about the vaccine distribution in the minority communities.
    - It is critical to have these conversations because it is necessary for the community to have equitable access to the vaccine, address vaccine hesitancy, and encourage the community to get vaccinated.
  - Update #2: Community Health Needs Assessment
    - As shared in the previous conversation, Healthy Montgomery is a group that is leading the effort of the community health needs assessment, which is done every five years. The purpose of the assessment is to gather their opinions on health, well-being and access to resources. Based on the outcome of this survey, resources can be allocated appropriately.
    - It is crucial to have this assessment done well to accurately represent the needs, especially among the minority communities.
    - Through initial conversations, the concern is that some of the approach was not equitable to the Asian American community. For example, it was suggested that in the past those conversations were always held with major Asian communities—Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese—gaining input from those groups to form the needs assessment from the community. A recommendation was made to also include smaller Asian subgroups, like the Cambodian community, Filipino community, and others, to get a more comprehensive picture of the Asian American community.
    - However, it was decided that the Asian American community is limited to only two focus groups.
    - Nguyen stressed that the needs assessment requires strong advocacy to leaders of the County and focus to ensure that it's conducted correctly and thoroughly so that the County has the right data that represents the needs of the Asian American community.
    - The Steering Committee needs to work together in 2021 to engage and support the community to get the data for the survey because it will impact the resources in the next four or five years.
- Cynthia Macri reflected upon the vaccine distribution process. In addition to helping our community understand the need for the vaccine, the bigger questions are:
  - How are they (the community) going to find out about it (the vaccine)?
  - Does the County have a way to identify all the 75-year-olds?
  - Non-English-speaking individuals in the Priority Group 1A/B Tiers may be left behind in the effort to push the vaccine out to as many people as

possible. As a multilingual group, the Steering Committee can ensure people in the community will have access to the vaccination information.

- Nguyen stated that these questions will be brought up to Dr. Crowel and the Council to ensure access as well as have a clear plan to implement it.
- Wilbur inquired if the focus on the COVID vaccination included focus on mental health and family violence as well. If so, he had no objections to that proposal.
  - Nguyen thanked Wilbur for bringing up a good point. Nguyen noted that although he brought up the two points of focus, this will not exclude the current priorities at AAHI for mental health and senior health. He also stated that these were ongoing strategic activities and that for this year, especially, we are focusing on the urgent issue that the community is facing and that we need to respond to the timely need.
- Nerita Estampador inquired how the public will be informed when vaccination is available (i.e. online, through their primary care physician).
  - Nguyen shared that the Montgomery County website has a COVID-19 Information Portal that describes the different tiers within the priority groups. There is a link for individuals to sign up for vaccination updates. He also learned that the hospitals received the vaccine from the federal mechanism, and the County gets the vaccine from the state. The local pharmacies also have different pre-registration systems. The COVID-19 Vaccine Information page can be found here:  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/vaccine/>
  - Meng K. Lee (MK) shared there is an option through the website to sign up for text and/or email updates. As a group, he suggested that the Steering Committee should have more discussions on how to improve the support for the Asian American community. To receive the County COVID-19 updates, it is assumed you have an email address, texting capabilities, and a computer, which may pose a problem for some seniors.
  - Nguyen agreed with MK's concern and asked the Steering Committee about their interactions with the community regarding the vaccination.
    - Tho Tran stated that her organization has received many calls from seniors asking when/where the vaccine is available for them. Her team has assisted folks in signing up for the vaccine pre-registration list.
    - Sovan Tun reported that his community asked him regarding vaccine information. Sovan often checked the County website about local COVID-19 information, but feels that the County has been slow in rolling out the vaccines and getting the information out to the minority communities.
    - Ji-Young Cho shared that information from the County is shared by the Korean news media outlets. Community members had concerns about the safety and side effects of the vaccine. Once media coverage of healthcare providers getting the vaccine

themselves were highlighted, the want for the vaccine skyrocketed. She asked how will the County be able to coordinate the vaccination effort?

- Yuchi felt that his own community members are no different than other community members. It is good to get the information from the County COVID-19 website, translate it to the community's spoken language, and then convey the message to the community. If we inundate the County with individual questions and ask about our own respective groups and vaccinations, it will be less effective for all of us.
- Nguyen emphasized that a coordinated effort is needed among the community leaders and organizations as it would grant a stronger voice to be heard by County leadership. The Steering Committee must be attentive and reasonable in the requests. As leaders of the community, we need to be effective in our communication and manage the expectations from our community.
- MK believed that a lot of people still have a lot of questions, even with all the information provided online.
  - Yuchi followed up with needing to inform our communities to make the community members less anxious and calmer.
- Cynthia agreed that it's not about one ethnic group or another but rather a team. She has been promoting a program that offers a depression and social isolation screening and treatment. She noted that there is a lot of anxiety among community members not only because of the fear of getting the virus but also understanding the new vaccine and where they can get access to it.
  - Hina mentioned that the common concern regarding the vaccine is knowing when will they know it is their turn to get vaccinated.
  - Michael said that the County on the local level is responsible for planning. For who do not belong to a certain group and speak a language other than English, they will lack getting important information. Lack of information/transparency/communication creates uncertainty and may impact the completion of the vaccination. Community leaders will need to continue to be a bridge builder to reach out to small groups to help those who do not know how to navigate information. Michael said that even as an educated person with knowledge of where to acquire information, it can be a challenge to find information.
  - Yuchi asked how our community differed than other communities and why our specific communities needed to have specific information than what the County can provide at this moment. From his point of view, he believed that as leaders of the community, we need to stay calm and keep the people calm with the facts we have.

- Nguyen replied that he understood Yuchi's point of view and agreed that as leaders we should inform and educate the community. The right stakeholders need to be present at the vaccine planning process. If there is no plan in place or the right people at the table, the risk is that the issue will not be looked through an equity lens. The Steering Committee should be involved in the planning process.
- Yuchi responded that although some community members think that everyone wants the vaccine, there are those, including healthcare workers, who refuse to get the vaccine. He stressed the need, as community leaders, to educate the community about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine so that when the vaccine distribution does begin, there won't be a high rate of vaccine refusal.
- Nguyen agreed with Yuchi and stated that the Steering Committee should focus on vaccine activities for the remainder of this year. It doesn't mean that we are only advocating to get the resources but preparing and engaging with the county and community when the time comes.

**ACTION:** The focus of the two discussed topics: vaccine activities and engaging the community in need, were approved with no objections.

- Nguyen repeated that there is a need to engage the community and voice the need for the vaccine.
- Nguyen asked the possibility of having community members on a virtual meeting platform such as Zoom. He asked if it was the right platform or even the right technology for the Asian American community.
  - Tho shared that she and her team can gather Vietnamese seniors together. She shared that many seniors do not use Zoom, however she can assist seniors to connect via a virtual platform and will figure out the logistics. There are many solutions to the virtual platform hurdle and Tho has agreed to help overcome those communication challenges.
  - Betty stated that during the last attempt to collect community input, a variety of methods were used: online group discussion with targeted outreach to approximately a dozen-fifteen participants to get input, supplemented with telephone interviews, in which they identified those who they wanted to conduct one-on-one phone interviews with. By using multiple methods, it allows for more inclusion by asking the same questions on either platform.
  - Ji-Young said that a couple of weeks ago she was involved with a community safety survey and focus group. She was requested to hold a focus group in the Korean community, she initiated a team, held the focus group, and sent the report to the County.

- Jasmine clarified that there are several focus groups in the pipeline. There is one to gather attitudes and perceptions about the vaccine from the Asian American community led by the Office of Community Partnerships. On a separate note, Healthy Montgomery is leading community conversations for the Community Health Needs Assessment in which bilingual facilitators are needed for the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese groups. In addition, there is a need for recruit twelve participants in each focus group.
- Nguyen noted that the prime method of reaching out to communities at the moment is primarily through Zoom or Teams. Some groups are reluctant to use a virtual platform versus some community members being more open. If it is an issue, he will bring up the concerns and work on finding a more effective way to hear from the community.
- Ji-Young commented that the Korean community is familiar with using Zoom because some organizations or senior programs are using Zoom currently, with support from a community member.
- Sovan noted that it's hard to get his community together. If Zoom is the main method, a lot of them do not want to be on Zoom.
- Nguyen reiterated that it is important to hear from your community on what their preference is and its limitations. He noted the importance in being unified in our approach. He restated that he never wants to take on an effort that divides the Asian American community. An important idea that was shared was that unifying the support must take an equity lens approach and that we, as a team, should coordinate efforts so that we can do the best for our community through support.

ACTION ITEM: Nguyen will continue to update the Steering Committee on information from the county regarding the processed and activities related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

- Nguyen stated that interpreters will be needed to facilitate different community conversations and asked for recommendations on whom in their community can serve as a facilitator. He wanted to take a proactive approach in creating a list of people who can serve in this capacity.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine will follow up with the Steering Committee members after the meeting to build a bilingual facilitator database.

### **Steering Committee Membership and Engagement**

- As Chair, Nguyen revisited how he can provide a more stable platform or structure to help Steering Committee members be more involved.

- He opened the floor for discussion regarding how best he can support and engage each member in their role as part of the Steering Committee.
- Nguyen recapped the role of the Steering Committee and the important role they play guiding AAHI's work. As community leaders and advocates for AAHI, the Steering Committee is only as effective as each of the members. It is important to fulfill responsibilities to be functional as a group. The end goal would be more engagement, create more room and opportunity to support AAHI.
  - Wilbur responded that we need new members with varying skills. If the group sought organizational members, it should be from the three largest countries unrepresented (i.e. Indonesia, the Philippines, and Pakistan).
  - Hina reasoned that many of these unrepresented countries may not have an organized non-profit and are getting help from a faith-based organization. Perhaps we can contact faith-based organizations and invite a representative to the meeting.
  - Nguyen agreed to Hina's point and questioned if now is a good time to bring in new members. He wanted to support current members by creating the right environment for everyone to effectively engage and function.
  - Tho added she knows of an Indonesian group that is very active through food distribution. She said that she will connect them to the group.

**ACTION ITEM:** Jasmine will connect with the Indonesian community contact and send the contact information to both Nguyen and Hina.

- In response to Nguyen's original question about membership, MK added that one of the main goals is to improve the efficiency of the Steering Committee. There are currently three categories of membership: organizational member, individual member, and associate member. He noted that there are many experts in the Asian American community and the formality of the Steering Committee may not be the proper way to attract them. He suggested that they create something like an advisory subcommittee to rope in those experts for specific discussions.
- Nguyen responded that he was open for different ideas and considerations, however as much as he wants to enforce the rules, his biggest focus is inclusion. It's a challenge because we ask for a different level of effort from the community and will eventually ask for more commitment and accountability. To be an effective member, one must join a certain number of meetings because you can't just go to one meeting a year and be a good member.
- Yuchi followed up with needing to have guidelines about attendance. He stated that if you wanted to be a member of the committee, you should be respectful to the committee's mission. On the other hand, if the person is not attending the meetings, are they effective as a member.
- Hina believed that organizational membership is needed because there are people in the group that represent organizations, who are doing grassroots work and are connected to the community through those

organizations. She agreed with MK on making a separate subcommittee for advisory purposes. This ad-hoc group would have professional expertise, a breath of expertise that can be called as needed. Everyone added into this group should all have purpose and should make a specific contribution.

- As a follow up question, Nguyen asked the group what they thought about an advisory subcommittee.
  - Michael stated that they can be an ad-hoc committee. For example, if the committee was to explore a new area of service, then just the ad-hoc subcommittee member can join in for that meeting.
  - Following Michael, Nerita added that in the Filipino community, there are a lot of faith-based and community-based organizations—organizations with members from DC, MD, and VA. The president/leader changes every two years. It seems that if you're not a resident of Montgomery County, that you would be out of the loop attending Steering Committee meetings. They do a lot for the underserved community and are a mixed metro DC group. An ad-hoc advisory subcommittee would be good depending on the needs of the group.
- Nguyen summarized the expectations of the Steering Committee and the concept of having an advisory subcommittee. He hopes that after we explore the concept of such a board that we can share to the team what that will look like.

ACTION ITEM: Hina will work with Wilbur on identifying groups that are not represented. She and he will work on restructuring membership structure and explore the idea of an advisory committee.

- A short discussion around alternative times for the next Steering Committee meeting took place.

ACTION ITEM: Jasmine will follow-up with Steering Committee members on an alternative time for the next meeting.

### **Adjourn**

- Nguyen adjourned the meeting at 8:05 PM.

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, March 9, 2021.