

Montgomery County – Department of Health & Human Services (MCDHHS)
Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, July 14, 2020

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

Moment of Silence in Honor of Dr. Sam Mukherjee (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Nguyen Nguyen called the meeting to order at 6:12 PM.
- Nguyen began by acknowledging the passing of Dr. Sam Mukherjee and invited the Steering Committee (SC) members to say a few words in remembrance and to join in for the moment of silence.

Welcome (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Nguyen asked for permission to audio record the meeting. There were no objections.

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| ACTION: Audio recording of meeting was approved with no objections. |
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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. Yuchi Huang 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, May 12, 2020 were shared with members prior to today's meeting.
- A motion to approve the May meeting minutes was presented. Wilbur moved to give the SC until the end of the week to allow ample time for review and provide feedback before adopting the minutes. Moving forward, Nguyen asked if the meeting minutes can be shared earlier if possible. The minutes will be approved pending feedback from SC no later than Friday, July 17 by Close of Business (COB).

ACTION: Meeting minutes approved pending feedback from the SC no later than Friday, July 17 by COB.

Program Updates (Perry Chan)

- Perry Chan shared that AAHI is in the process of wrapping up FY20 by compiling last year's accomplishments into the annual report and planning for FY21.
- Perry worked with Yuchi to organize an interpreter training for CCACC staff in May.
 - Yuchi appreciated AAHI's support for the pilot medical interpreter training. Originally, the training was designed to be an all-day, in-person training, but switched to an online platform with five sections. About 20 participants successfully completed all 5 sections of the training.
 - AAHI is interested to doing more leadership and advocacy trainings with community-based organizations (CBOs) to enhance capacity to deliver services.
- Perry shared that AAHI is building a toolkit for CBOs and local hospitals on how to conduct a community health needs assessment inclusive of Asian Americans.
 - The lack of quality data on Asian Americans has been a continuous issue. This is an opportunity for AAHI to improve local CBOs' understanding of what a needs assessment is, how to conduct one, and clarify some terminology. AAHI is still in the preplanning stages of this project.
- The County is expanding testing availability for COVID-19 in three specific areas: community-based testing, clinical and congregate testing, and local government employees testing.

- Perry suggested that the SC visit the County testing website for the most updated information on COVID-19 testing registration, times, and locations: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing.html>.
 - The County is interested in working with community partners to organize community pop-up testing events. The County is open to having a discussion with whoever is interested and able to commit. To request to be a testing site in support of the testing plan, the SC can contact the testing helpline at 240-777-1755 or contact Perry for more information.
 - Testing at these community pop-up events is free of charge and does not require a doctor's referral.
- Perry shared that food security is also a priority for the County.
 - The County has set up a Food Access Call Center for County residents in need of food assistance. Perry stated that call volume from Asian American residents is low, which may not accurately reflect the real needs of the community.
 - Perry asked the SC to spread the word and encourage in-need Asian American families to call 311 and ask for the Food Access Call Center.
 - AAHI is providing staff support to the Call Center for community members who prefer assistance in either Chinese or Korean.
- Perry continued by sharing that AAHI completed its COVID-19 and Mental Health multilingual educational video series. Ten videos were created on various mental health topics with each video available in English, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese.
 - A PDF flyer with embedded hyperlinks to the YouTube videos was shared with the SC prior to the meeting.
- AAHI also launched Mental Health Photonovel #6 on caregiver burden and stress titled *The Stress of Caring – The Journey to Self-Care*. It is now published on our website and is available in English, Korean, Vietnamese, and Hindi: <https://aahiinfo.org/aahi-resources/>
 - Due to COVID-19 and the social distancing public health order, there was a delay in the development of the Chinese version.
 - Perry thanked M.K. Lee, Tho Tran, Mayur Mody, and Hina Mehta for their contributions to the making of this photonovel.
- Perry shared that he is a member of the Montgomery County COVID-19 Recovery Workgroup, which focuses on providing equity and access to community members when using County services.
 - The workgroup is planning to collect some information from the community to inform the County as it makes decisions for reopening.
 - Perry will forward the link for the 6-question SurveyMonkey to SC members to complete. Input gathered from this survey will go directly to senior leadership and the recovery workgroup, which is good opportunity to communicate needs directly to decision makers.
- As reported in local news outlets, Perry informed that the County is facing a 6% budget cut, which includes all programs in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and AAHI.

- Cynthia Macri shared that there is currently a large database of publications related to COVID-19, which is free to the public. Montgomery County residents need to exercise caution to avoid being prey of technology companies and mobile applications that have very limited utility in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
 - Cynthia stated that there needs to be effort to look at newer data and technology and more sophisticated means, rather than the outdated methods that the CDC uses, to make contact tracing and reopening safe.
 - Nguyen stated that we in an unprecedented time and mentioned that the County Health Officer is taking very proactive steps on this issue.

ACTION ITEM: Perry to forward link of a survey to SC for community input to inform the County's COVID-19 Recovery Workgroup reopening plan later this week.

Continuation of Discussion on COVID-19 Response (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Nguyen emphasized the need to be informed and prepared as the County is starting to reopen. To build upon the conversation from the last SC meeting, Nguyen prompted the SC with the following questions:
 - Despite all the efforts from the County and non-government organizations (NGOs), where are you still seeing unmet needs in the community you serve?
 - What are some of the trends you have observed that are part of the new challenges we anticipate?
- Tho shared that even though people are not able to meet in-person due to COVID-19, the needs of the community are still there. It has been a challenge to assist community members over the phone in renewing their Medicaid benefits and applying for other programs because her staff cannot meet them in-person.
 - Tho mentioned one case of an older gentleman who lost his Medicaid card and is not able to go in for a doctor's visit to renew his prescription. Tho shared another case of a family who needed to renew their housing benefit but lost their proof of social security income letter in a fire, which has caused the family a lot of stress. The family called the Social Security Administration office, but there was no response. Obtaining replacement of these documents required for renewing benefits has been difficult since many physical offices are closed and some government offices are strict with their deadlines.
 - Tho also shared for some community members, technology has made it more difficult to deliver services. Tho observed that younger people can adapt well to using technology and can help, but older adults still prefer to

come in and see the staff. However, when they are told that the physical office is closed and cannot come in-person, they become frustrated.

- Yesle Soh shared that the Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC) is still able to see patients through telehealth visits at the Mobile Medical Korean Community Service Center (KAMMSA) clinic.
 - Yesle recalled that one of their patients struggled due to the heart clinic being shut down and had to go to the emergency room. She noticed mainly apprehension from Korean patients of not having a Korean doctor to speak with, but it is well-managed using interpretation services.
- Sovan Tun mentioned a family that was in the process of opening a nail salon prior to COVID-19. The family made calls for an inspection request from the County to obtain a permit to open for business; however, they were not able to reach anyone from the inspection services.
 - Sovan sympathized with the family who is trying to open their business and earn a living but is not able to work due to not having the County permit.
 - Nguyen summarized that the challenge the family is experiencing is related to coordination of County services to business owners in a timely fashion.
 - Perry asked Sovan to reach out to him via email so that he can help connect the family to the appropriate contact for follow-up.

ACTION ITEM: Perry to touch base with Sovan about family in need of connecting to County business inspection services to obtain permit for new business.

- Yuchi inquired why Montgomery County has the highest case rate and mortality rate in MD and much higher compared to VA. He said that knowing the data of what led us into our current situation and having a feedback mechanism on what worked well to reduce the COVID-19 cases can help us adjust our behavior.
 - Nguyen attended the Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee meeting at which he had a conversation with County Health Officer. Although there is much room for improvement, he credited the County Health Officer for the actions and policies the County has put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including social distancing and face covering mandate.
 - Nguyen also shared that the County Health Officer mentioned that a report will be released on the County website with detailed demographic data analysis of COVID-19 cases.
 - Nguyen asked Perry and Sanjana Quasem to share with the SC when the COVID-19 data analysis report is available.

ACTION ITEM: Perry and Sanjana to share information with SC when the County data report of COVID-19 cases is available.

- Nguyen added that another topic of concern related to COVID-19 is the situation with reopening of schools. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has not made a final decision yet for the fall, which will affect how families operate and seek services.
 - Perry recently learned that Tho is a member of the COVID-19 Recovery Workgroup and asked her to relay information from and on behalf of the SC.
- Cynthia mentioned that telehealth services will become the norm and that they will need to use HIPAA-compliant technology platforms. She continued by stating that dental services are very high risk as there are no clear protocols or guidance on what does safe means. We should expect more services will be performed remotely.
- Hina shared that since it is taking longer than expected for businesses to reopen, she inquired what the County is doing to address the issue of unemployment and bringing employees back into the workforce. She asked if there is any centralized efforts or recovery plan around resources or job fairs for community members, such as skilled laborers who cannot work remotely.
 - Nguyen responded that the County had provided some of these resources at the beginning of the pandemic. Some federal and state level assistance was also provided to those who became unemployed due to COVID-19. He hopes to see more, but the County has limited resources.
 - Nguyen asked Perry to continue updating the SC on upcoming County resources and support.
 - Perry agreed and, in the meantime, encouraged the SC to reach out to AAHI for any additional support for in-need community members.
 - Nguyen noted that the SC may need to do some advocacy efforts and articulate the needs of the community well to the County Executive's office in the near future. Nguyen will reference the notes from this discussion in preparation for future advocacy efforts to prepare the community to this new normal.

Vision Zero Survey Discussion: Recommendations for Improving Roadway Safety

- Nguyen referenced a letter he received from Wade Holland, the Vision Zero Coordinator, whose program focuses on reducing the number of traffic accidents in the County. This issue is pertinent as Perry previously shared data showing Asian Americans being victim of traffic accidents.
- In the letter, Wade invited the SC to complete a community input survey asking community leaders what the County can do to address the concerns of traffic safety.
- Nguyen prompted the SC for collective input on this topic with the following questions from Wade's letter:

- In your organization's view, what are the top five priorities for improving roadway safety?
- Considering the County's current roadway safety efforts, are there particular actions or investments that you would recommend the County do more or less of?
- What is currently lacking in our communities to make it safe to walk, use a wheelchair/scooter, bike, get to and from a bus stop or train station, and drive?
- What would need to change to get more Montgomery County residents to walk and bike?
- Yuchi shared that the most important thing to understand is that traffic safety is a shared responsibility. Pedestrians, especially students near high schools, are crossing the street while looking at their phone, while at the same time, drivers are distracted with texting behind the wheel. Some bikers are also insistent on occupying the whole road. If people who drive, walk, bike, or use a scooter do not take responsibility, Vision Zero's efforts will not be helpful.
 - Nguyen inquired if there is a need for improved education.
 - Yuchi agreed that there needs to be increased efforts in education and law enforcement but emphasized the need for shared responsibility for all who use the road.
- Perry suggested that another challenge could be the lack of adequate lighting. According to the press releases from the County, the traffic accidents involving Asian American pedestrians occurred in the early morning and in the evenings in the wintertime when there are less daylight hours.
- Sovan added that the County should reach out to different communities who do not speak English.
 - Nguyen asked if there is a need to translate some of the basic information to help new immigrants understand basic rules of safety.
 - Sovan responded that usually people know the general laws for passing the written driving test but practicing safety on the road is another issue. He has seen some posters on pedestrian safety on public transportation, but there is a need to get the message out to the community, especially those who first come to this country and primarily walk to their destinations.
 - Cynthia added that those immigrating to the US may be from countries where people drive on the other side of the road, which from her experience has been known to cause traffic accidents at the borders of certain countries.
 - Nguyen agreed that there is an opportunity to provide culturally competent education to new immigrants about pedestrian and road safety with the understanding that roadway infrastructure and pedestrian etiquette may differ from country to country.
- Nguyen inquired if the County needs more sidewalks.
 - Cynthia responded that there needs to be more sidewalks that are wider and continuous on one side of the road, instead of having pedestrians

cross over to the other side of the street each time a sidewalk ends on one side and continues on the other. She mentioned that these neighborhoods also have extremely poor lighting.

- Hina agreed with having more sidewalks. She shared that near her neighborhood, there are no continuous sidewalks, which is dangerous for children who walk along the curb to and from school. She reached out to Montgomery County's Department of Transportation to voice her concern and the need for stop signs near a local school that located off a busy road. She noted that certain areas within the County may have less resources which reflect the safety of their roads; for instance, the poor maintenance of safety cameras may increase the likelihood of speeding drivers in that area.
- Nguyen summarized by stating that the need for more continuous sidewalks, more stop signs in areas where there are more pedestrians, additional bike lanes, and a feedback mechanism that will allow residents to inform the County of safety concerns.
 - In addition to more bike lanes, Sunmin added the need for better signage and labeling to community to drivers when roads are shared by pedestrian and bikers.
 - M.K. suggested that more median fences should be strategically placed to prevent jaywalking and encourage residents to use designated crosswalks when crossing the street.
- Nguyen thanked the SC for their collective input. He invited the SC to access the link in Wade's letter and complete the survey. In addition to survey, Nguyen will also draft a joint response letter based on today's conversation for the SC to review before sending to Wade.

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| ACTION ITEM: The SC to individually complete the community input survey in Wade's letter by the requested deadline of August 7, 2020. |
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| ACTION ITEM: Nguyen to draft joint response to Wade summarizing SC's collective input on traffic safety. |
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Election of Steering Committee Officers (Wilbur Friedman)

- The Membership and Nominating Subcommittee consists of Wilbur (Subcommittee Chair), Nerita Estampador, Sovan, Mayur, and M.K.
- The terms of Chair and Vice Chair expired on June 30th, 2020. In May, the SC had an election to keep them aboard for an additional three months. As those three months are nearing completion, it is time to elect the next Chair and Vice-Chair.
- The Nominating Subcommittee nominated Nguyen Nguyen as Chair for a two-year term that will expire on June 30, 2022. The Subcommittee opened the floor for other nominations; anyone has the right to be nominated.

- Michael moved to elect Nguyen for SC Chair. Yuchi seconded. Nguyen is elected to Chair by acclamation.
- The Nominating Subcommittee nominated Hina Mehta as Vice Chair for a two-year term that will expire on June 30, 2022. The Subcommittee opened the floor for other nominations; anyone has the right to be nominated.
 - Michael moved to elect Nguyen for Chair. Yuchi seconded. Hina is elected to Vice Chair by acclamation.
- On behalf of AAHI, Perry expressed his gratitude for the SC's leadership during the last two years. He looks forward to continue working with Nguyen and also with Hina.
 - Hina and Nguyen thanked Perry and the SC for their trust in continuing this important work. The SC unite under the same goal of helping the community, focusing on partnership, equity, and community engagement.

ACTION: Nguyen is elected as SC Chair and Hina is elected as Vice-Chair for a two-year term effective today until June 30, 2022.

Updates from Liaisons and Members

- **Healthy Montgomery (Nguyen)**
 - At the last meeting, the County Health Officer to provided update on testing efforts and managing COVID-19 cases in the County. As mentioned earlier in this meeting, a report will be published on the County website with more data analysis of the COVID-19 cases.
 - Nguyen continued by mentioning that HM also oversees the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process which takes place every 5 years to better understand the needs of the County residents. The 15- to 18-month process will start at the beginning of September 2020 with the anticipated completion sometime in fourth quarter of 2021.
 - HM wants to engage with many communities when conducting the CHNA.
 - For the first time, HM intends to conduct primary data collection to inform the CHNA, instead of only using secondary data sources such as the CDC and US Census, as they have done in the past.
 - Nguyen shared that the SC should maximize their engagement with this group because data and outcomes are critical. The CHNA influences how hospitals design their services and will inform health needs of community and overall needs that the County invests in. Nguyen will continue to be vocal and ensure that they are culturally and linguistically competent for the Asian American community.
 - HM has also been conducting some COVID-19 outreach and is interested in engaging the minority communities in conversation. Nguyen emphasized to HM that for the Asian American communities, communication and conversation in the form of a town hall or webinar will be needed with the County Health Officer. Nguyen shared that any

suggestions from the SC on how to facilitate this conversation are welcome.

- Sanjana added an update from the HM Steering Committee meeting regarding Amy Lindsay and Thrive Montgomery. They are in the final stages of completing the General Plan and are happy to meet with any community group for input.
- Moving forward, Nguyen suggested the SC resume inviting speakers to the meeting to keep the SC informed on different topics. SC members are encouraged to reach out and share potential suggestions for topics and speakers with Hina and Nguyen.
- **County Executive's Asian American Advisory Committee (Sovan)**
 - Sovan participated in the June 16th, 2020 meeting.
 - Topics of discussion included the US Census, the pandemic outreach and response, and complaints about the Maryland Department of Labor's (DLLR) website and the application portal for unemployment and payment.
 - The deadline for the online submission for the US Census was postponed until October 31, 2020. Census takers will begin door-to-door follow-up visits to households that do not respond to the survey.
 - Update as of August 3, 2020: The US Census Bureau updated their website confirming that all counting efforts for the 2020 Census will end on September 30, 2020, a month sooner than previously announced.
- **The Governor's Commission on Asian American Affairs (Sovan)**
 - Sovan shared that there has not been a meeting since April.
 - The Asian Pacific Heritage Month celebration was cancelled. The Governor's Commission had a Zoom call to listen to the presentation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on their civil rights program. With COVID-19 and the assumption of its association with Asian Americans, it is important to be aware of what is a criminal act and how to report hate crimes or acts of discrimination against Asian Americans to the FBI
 - Nguyen asked if there is any record of Asian American discrimination from the FBI and/or County police within in the County.
 - Sovan responded that there are no cases yet of Asian American discrimination that are under FBI investigation.
- **The Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs (Mayur)**
 - Mayur shared that there have been no meetings since February due to COVID-19, so there is no update.
- **Commission on Aging (Tho)**
 - Tho had to leave the meeting early, so no updates were provided.
- **The Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention (Cynthia)**

- Cynthia shared with the SC that she is part of the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention representing the Asian American community.
- There will be a meeting for this group tomorrow, July 15th, 2020. Cynthia asked if there are resources in the community for suicide prevention and mental health.
 - Cynthia listed AAHI as a resource and informed Perry that he may receive some inquiries from the Commission about mental health resources. She also included the Pan Asian Volunteer Health Clinic (PAVHC) and the Asian American Inter Community Service (AICS), which has its evidence-based depression and social isolation screening PEARLS program.
- **Montgomery County and Governors Veterans Affairs (Cynthia)**
 - Cynthia shared that July 15th is the Inaugural Day of Affirmation, which honors Japanese Americans who served in World War II. This recognition highlights the importance of military service of Asian Americans.
 - Mayur is interested to conduct a Food Drive for veterans sometime in the month of August and asked Cynthia to connect with him.

Adjourn

- Nguyen adjourned the meeting at 7:59 PM.

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| ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM. |
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Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 8, 2020.