

Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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August 15, 2025 – 2:00–3:30pm
Grace United Methodist Church, 722 30th Ave

Members: Benjamin Abe, Pamela Williams, Hiwot Zewdie, Claudette Thomas, Calvin Lassiter, Paul Mitchel

Members Absent: Nathan Yemane, Crystal Dawkins, Tiffany Toms, Charlotte Antoine, Deborah O'Neal

ADS Staff: Michael Adusah, Stevie Elliott, Eldad Mekuria, Dinah Stephens

Guests: Danielle Friedman, Cindy Herndon

Summary: The meeting began with approval of the July minutes as presented, followed by a presentation from Danielle Friedman from the Department of Neighborhoods. The meeting focused on continuing the MCAAE Advocacy discussions on strategies for local political advocacy and addressing challenges faced by African American older adults.

Key Discussion Points:

Presentation Summary: DON/ADS Strategic Plan for Community Outreach

Danielle from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) presented an overview of a new five-year strategic plan, a collaboration with Aging and Disability Services (ADS). The plan's primary goals are to:

- Increase awareness of ADS services.
- Strengthen relationships with network providers.
- Increase diversity among clients, vendors, and contractors.

The project is currently in a data-gathering phase, which includes surveys, research reviews, and extensive community outreach. Four priority communities have been identified for focus: Black elders, Latinx community members, urban natives, and people with disabilities.

To gather feedback, DON and ADS have launched an outreach campaign that includes online and print surveys (open until September 1st) and focus groups with a \$75 incentive for participants. Danielle emphasized the importance of these efforts, as the information will inform both this strategic plan and the ADS Area Plan on Aging. The discussion also highlighted that reaching the elderly often means engaging with their caregivers and family members.

MCAAE Discussion: From Problems to Solutions

This portion of the meeting served as a continuation of a prior discussion, focusing on brainstorming specific solutions and strategies for the issues prioritized by the MCAAE.

MCAAE Action Items

- **Enhance the MCAAE Website:** Make the website a more effective community tool by adding and organizing existing resources and creating helpful visuals and guides.

Housing Solutions

- **SHA (Seattle Housing Authority) Applications:**
 - Propose a digital version to guide people through the application process.
 - Review the current application to identify issues and formally request changes via a letter.
 - Arrange for an HHS representative to attend a future council meeting. (Action Item: Dinah is researching the contact).
 - Create visuals and a general resource guide.
- **Property Taxes:**
 - Propose a freeze on tax increases for specific qualifying groups, such as elders.
 - Send a letter to the Mayor or DOT requesting an exemption for seniors in incoming ballot measures.
- **Aging in Place:**
 - Support existing efforts in accessible design.
 - Increase knowledge and share information on the MCAAE website and social networks.
 - Identify funding programs for retrofitting existing buildings and create a resource guide.
 - Identify information on building plans for senior housing.
- **Rent Control:**
 - Keep a close eye on relevant legislation, like House Bill 1217, and weigh in on its discussion.
- **Behavioral Health Issues:**
 - Learn about supportive housing options.

- List resources for behavioral health on the MCAAE website.

Caregiving

- **Educating Family Caregivers:**
 - Provide information on supportive programs, such as WA Cares.
 - List these resources on the MCAAE website.
- **Creating a Village Model:**
 - Brainstorm a village model specifically for Seattle's Black elders, exploring ways to support middle-income individuals.

Staff Updates

- **New APS Deputy Director:** Jacqueline Cobbs has been hired as the new Deputy Director for APS. She comes from DSHS with 17 years of experience and will start next Wednesday, the 20th.
- **AARP Town Halls:** AARP hosted town halls last Tuesday, celebrating the 90th anniversary of Social Security.
- **WA Cares:** Work is underway to implement this statewide long-term care benefit, which goes live next July. A supervisor and contract specialists have been hired.
- **Tubman Center for Health and Freedom:** Held an open house for its administrative office. The groundbreaking for their large facility is on track for October 2026.
- **Grandparents Day:** MCAAE is collaborating with Northwest African American Museum to host the annual Grandparents Day on Sunday, September 7, 2025, from 2–4 p.m. MCAAE member will support the day of
- **Summer Youth Employment:** A group of interns had a successful interview session with the department's senior leadership team. The program, which serves minority students aged 16 to 24 (up to 26), is income-based and recruits from specific school districts.
- **Advisory Council:** The Advisory Council is scheduled to meet with legislators on August 27th. A meeting with DelBene's office is confirmed for 10:30 a.m., and efforts are being made to reschedule or make the meeting with Adam Smith's office virtual to accommodate both. Final details will be sent out once confirmed.

Actions:

Next Meeting; September 17, 2025