

Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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November 21 2025 – 2:00–3:30pm
Grace United Methodist Church, 722 30th Ave

Members: Pamela Williams, Claudette Thomas, Tiffany Toms, Charlotte Antoine, Benjamin Abe

Members Absent: Brady Rainey, Deborah O'Neal, Deborah Hughes, Hiwot Zewdie, Calvin, Paul Mitchel Lassiter

ADS Staff: Michael Adusah, Eldad Mekuria, Stevie Elliott, Mary Pearson, Dinah Stevens, Sonali Agarwal

Guests: Cindy Herndon, Sharon Hargraves Adam Aba-Husain, Sue Siegenthaler,

Summary: The meeting began with the approval of the October minutes as presented, followed by a presentation from the Age Friendly Seattle team. Finally, the meeting adjourned after discussing transition plans for the new Mayor Elect Katie Wilson.

Key Discussion Points:

I. Strategic Program Transition: African American Elders Program (AAEP)

The primary discussion focused on the necessary transition of the AAEP from Catholic Community Services (CCS) to a new, culturally competent agency to address rising health disparities and complex elder needs.

- CCS has struggled with staffing, creating service gaps. Both the MCAAE and CCS agree a new agency with greater capacity for culturally tailored care is required.
- The Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) was highlighted as the ideal model for holistic, integrated care, featuring a community center that combines social activities with critical health services.
- The Tubman Center for Health and Freedom is the leading candidate. The vetting process is underway, focusing on their financial health and ability to meet complex Medicaid compliance standards.
- **Timeline & Advocacy:**
 - Full program transfer by June 30, 2026.
 - Current CCS staff are guaranteed employment until April 30, 2026.
 - The council drafted a letter to Mayor Bruce Harrell formally recommending the move and requesting public support for this commitment to African American elder health equity.

II. Advocacy & System Improvement

The council reviewed progress on addressing barriers to essential services and resources.

- Age Friendly led to the inclusion of the King County Property Tax Exemption (KCPTEx) on the Affordable Seattle portal. The goal is to achieve technical system integration between City and County programs so that elders only need to upload financial documents once for all eligible discounts.
- The council stressed the need for funding to hire Digital Navigators to provide crucial one-on-one assistance to elders for navigating the online portal, recognizing the barriers posed by digital literacy.

III. Council Leadership and Community

- Ms. Charlotte announced she will be stepping down as Vice Chair and member after 3 terms of service. We will honor her at our December Holiday Potluck.
- A brief discussion highlighted the critical need to address elder isolation and the rise in senior suicide rates, reinforcing the urgency of the council's work.
- An informational update on the recent election results was provided, focusing on the platforms of Mayor-elect Katie Wilson and other new officials. Staff confirmed the council's status is secure, and members plan to invite the new Mayor to a future meeting to present their priorities.

IV. Action Items & Next Steps

- Finalize and send the AAEP letter to Mayor Harrell.
- Members complete AARP Age-Friendly Survey and participate DAC questionnaire
- Discuss and define the long-term structure of MCAAE oversight for the AAEP.
- Finalize advocacy priorities for 2026=2027

Next Meeting; December 16, 2025 Holiday Potluck