

Mayor's Council on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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March 17, 2023

Attending – Dr. Abe, Charlotte Antoine, Paula Williams, Claudette Thomas
Members Absent – Sheila Mary, Paul Mitchell, Pamela Williams
Guests – Joe Hailey, Marigrace Becker, Director – Memory Hub
Staff – Mary Mitchell, Sariga Santhosh, Dinah Stephens, Karen Winston

I. Memory Hub Welcome & Background

The Memory Hub director, Marigrace Becker, gave a warm welcome and overview of the center. The Hub is a welcoming and vibrant community event space, collaborative workspace and training center which aims to redefine life with memory loss. It is operated by the UW Memory & Brain Wellness Center on behalf of the wider memory loss community and aligned professionals. They are located on Seattle's First Hill, in a building owned by founding partner the Frye Art Museum, and is within walking distance of the Harborview Medical Center. The Hub was established through a generous leading gift from the Richard and Maude Ferry Foundation, with additional philanthropic and institutional support.

The Hub focuses on reinforcing themes of dementia-friendly community and strengthens-based approach to living with memory loss. Project goals include:

1. Enhance the local community of support for people with memory loss and their families.
2. Accelerate collaboration and innovation among local organizations that serve people with memory loss and their families.
3. Drive statewide impact in community-based solutions for living well with memory loss.

There are five organizations, each with similar missions, that are housed in the Hub, including 1) The Memory & Brain Wellness Center; 2) The Frye Art Museum; 3) The Alzheimer's Association; 4) Elderwise; and 5) Full Life. The Memory Hub offers several programs and resources, including support groups, caregiver education, creative engagement, library and resource room, an art gallery, a memory garden, the Elderwise Adult Day Program, a Memory Navigator, the ADAPT Brain & Body Wellness Program, Dementia Friends, public lectures, networking and professional- development events, Project ECHO Dementia, and the annual "Reframing Dementia" conference.

The Memory Hub is open to the public on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. A tour of the Hub is offered every first Thursday, from 11-11:30 am, at office location – 1021 Columbia Street, Seattle, 98104. RSVP on the online calendar: www.thememoryhub.org.

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II. 2023 Priorities – Committee Formation

Paula asked members to consider leading a committee for each priority. Of the members in attendance, the following volunteered to be committee chairs.

- Social Isolation Committee – **Charlotte**
- Financial Literacy & Fraud Prevention Committee – **Paula**
- Health Disparities Committee– **Pending**. We will need to follow-up with Jeff Sakuma, Health Integration Strategist, HSD/ADS on the status of the Mayor’s Healthy Seattle Initiative.
- Affordable Housing/Rent Control Committee – **Claudette, Dr. Abe**
 - **Safety in housing for seniors** - Claudette also discussed a client’s complaint about safety issues at the three senior housing building at Rainier Court, located at 3621 33rd Ave. So. The client is concerned about crime and drug activity in all three buildings. There is no security is and only one camera on the property. Will need to determine what the MCAAE can do.
 - **Rent Control** - Dinah provided an update.
 - Currently, there is a law that prohibits rent control in Washington state, so it is impossible for any city in the state to do it without changing the law.
 - A bill to enact rent control was presented to legislators but, unfortunately, the bill did not make it through the current legislative process.
 - Dinah recommended considering a two-pronged advocacy strategy:
 - Highlight it in the upcoming discussion with Mayor Harrell; and
 - Start preparing now to advocate/lobby legislators during the 2024 legislative session.
 - Members also discussed the King County Property Tax Discount Program for older adults, disabled, veterans, and widows of veterans. For an exemption on your property taxes, your household income, after deduction of qualified expenses, must be \$58,423 or less. Dr. Abe would like to advocate for an additional increase in the eligibility threshold.

Paula asked each committee chair to work with ADS staff to identify community partners who can assist with providing more information, creating goals, and planning action steps.

III. ADS Update

Legislative – Sariga provided an update on the current bills ADS is supporting:

- Safeguarding LTSS Case Management Program – The funding for parity with the state is in the budget but currently the amount is unknown.
- Protecting the Health Home Program (Medicaid) – Advocacy to increase the rates was effective and is also on track for inclusion in the final budget.
- Dementia Catalyst Program Expansion – The 2021 legislature funded a two-year pilot program to create or expand dementia-capable services at two Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) sites. This is a vital program for people with Alzheimer's disease and their families. The current ask is for an expansion to the program. It is also on track for inclusion in the final budget.

- The budget forecast is expected to be released on March 20. Hopefully, our budget items will be maintained.
- Charlotte asked about a federal bill—the Infrastructure and Jobs Act of 2021. Dinah reported that the City of Seattle received a grant to continue to make the internet more accessible, especially for older adults. A large portion of that funding is earmarked for the Seattle Housing Authority. Low-income households must be eligible to receive the \$50 discount.
- Advocacy groups are also advocating for an increase in funding for digital navigators. This may determine the future of the program.
- MCAAE members were encouraged to write a letter in support of the digital navigators, in partnership with other senior advocacy groups, e.g., ADS Advisory Council, Bellevue Network on Aging. Sariga will email a template for the letter.

ADS Updates – Mary provided the following ADS updates.

- ADS is in the hiring process for the manager position for the care coordination team (formerly known as the Case Management Program), and interviews are scheduled.
- Interviews for the ADS Budget Advisor have concluded.
- The ADS Deputy Director job announcement has been posted. That position will report to Mary and will be responsible for ADS internal operations (i.e., training, administrative unit, and contracts).
- 75:1 Plan – Title-XIX program needs additional staff. ADS is working on strategies to attract new employees, (e.g., offering to cover costs for Social Work licensing). Mike Wong is working with UW-School of Social Work to develop a pipeline for students interested in working with older adults and case management.

Prep for the Mayor’s attendance at the April meeting – Mary suggested that the commission prepare a letter to the mayor to share our concerns before the meeting. Members would like to highlight the following in the letter.

- 2023 MCAAE priorities and goals, and successes/accomplishments for 2022, e.g., SHARP Seattle, turkey giveaway, Tubman Center support; Heart-n-Soul Hospice Program, etc.
- Concerns about safety for older adults in senior housing buildings. Specifically at Courtland Place on Rainier Ave. The MCAAE could be asked for increased police presence, better assistance/training for landlords dealing with the issues. Joe Hailey suggested replicating similar strategies/relationships implemented by the Congregations for the Homeless (CFH), an organization in Bellevue.
- Update regarding the status of MCAAE appointments.
- WA Cares (LTC insurance program) - AAA directors were asked to assist with outreach for WA Cares. The program is scheduled to start payroll deductions July 2023. Ask the mayor to write a letter to encourage participation.
- Veterans, Seniors & Human Services Levy (VSHSL) – The levy is up for renewal and the King Co. Executive is proposing a significant increase for the levy, but it will need approval from the Policy Committee. The ask would be to strongly support the levy.

- Advocate for rent control.
- Claudette would also like to advocate for an increase in food stamp allowances for those who are eligible.
- Mary will help create a PowerPoint template for the presentation and will assist with a letter summarizing MCAAE asks/concerns.
- Karen was asked to look for possible locations including Southeast Seattle Senior Center, Community Centers, ACRS, CCS. The preference would be the Central Area Senior Center.

IV. Age Friendly

- Dinah thanked the members who shared their stories of the joys/challenges of aging. These stories will be used to enhance the Age Friendly training materials that are being developed.

The meeting ended at 3:30 p.m.