

Mayor's Council on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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Meeting with Mayor Bruce Harrell
Central Area Senior Center
May 19, 2023
Meeting Summary

A little over 50 people attended the MCAAE meeting with Mayor Harrell. The Central Area Senior Center's interim director, Twanda Hill, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the center.

MCAAE vice chair, Charlotte Antoine, provided an overview of MCAAE. The MCAAE was established 28 years ago by Mayor Norm Rice and has a legacy of advocacy for our African American Elders. The commissioners serve as the voice of the community and advocate for changes in policies, practices, and programs. Members help educate the community, support community led initiatives, and sponsor research to address gaps in service. The commission also makes recommendations to City officials regarding programs and services of benefit to older African Americans; periodically conducts public forums on issues impacting older adults; solicit public input on various issues and provide formal and informal comments and recommendations to the Mayor of Seattle. An overview of past accomplishments was also provided.

- **2018–2019** — Produced position paper on affordable housing in Central District; Neighborhood Preference Policy; WA State Property Tax Relief; and AAEP Nurse position.
- **2020** — Wrote to policymakers to express concerns about COVID-19 disparities; defunding the SPD; and vaccine distribution equity.
- **2021** — Assisted with outreach and scheduling vaccine appointments for BIPOC residents at highest risk of serious COVID-19 illness.
- **2021** — Submitted letter of support to DSHS on behalf of Heart'n Soul Hospice (first Black-owned hospice in King County).
- **2022** — Successfully advocated to increase funding for one FTE nursing position for the African American Elders Program.
- **2023** — Continuing focus on addressing health disparities among Black elders.

MCAAE members also assists with planning annual events, such as Memory Sunday, Grandparents Day, SHARP Seattle, and the African American Caregivers Forum.

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MCAAE members asked Mayor Harrell the following questions.

What should the MCAAE do to make an impact on our 2023 priorities?

Response - Get involve with voters' registration and support good candidates.

What is Seattle doing for veterans and Tuskegee Airmen and Viet Nam vets?

Response:

- Making sure their needs are met through increased outreach.
- The AAEP is also working with veterans to provide support.
- More outreach is needed to homeless vets.
- VA has six nurses available in supportive housing for veterans.

What are you doing for vets and homeless vets?

Response:

- Mayor Harrell recognized Sam Bruce, a WWII veteran.
- "Not enough" – recognized by White House for All-in grant. Focused approach with Biden admin to work with all resources to get at multiple issues.
- Travels a lot to secure federal resources.
- Plans to attend the G7 conference.
- Discussed the model from Rochester, IL.

Re: St Martins de Porres Shelter for men - The ask was to keep the contract with City.

Response:

- The contract has already moved over to the King Co. Regional Homeless Authority.
- HSD director, Tanya Kim, acknowledged the MCAAE letter and will convey concerns to keep the scope on older men in follow-up report to the City Council.
- His goal is to make sure it stays funded and keeps scope.

Please consider dedicating a mayoral staff person to support MCAAE and a end mee ngs on a quarterly basis.

Response: Mayor Harrell committed to some level of assistance for the council.

Will you assist with increasing public awareness about the MCAAE, e.g., help create a video about the commission and participate in photo opportunities?

Response:

- Agreed to participate in a video to raise awareness of council and help fill vacancies.
- Committed supporting work to increase the MCAAE visibility.
- Open to developing creative ideas to increase visibility.
- Central Area Senior Center is a gem that can be leveraged for advocacy priorities- e.g., candidate forums.

A final question from MCAAE member, Claudette Thomas, regarding safety at the Courtland Apartments for seniors. She stated that the building is a “hot mess” and not safe due to drug activity.

Response:

- Mayoral staff person, Gerald Hankin will follow up.
- Enforcement: Actively recruiting police officers.
- Inherited an understaffed police department.
- Also working on treatment - outreach, community solutions

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

