



COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS (COAAA)

NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: November 20, 2019

Meeting Location: Frank D. Reeves Municipal Center
2000 14th Street NW, 2nd Floor Community Room

1. **Call to Order**: Chair Kimberly Jeffries Leonard called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.
2. **Roll Call**:

Commissioners Present:

- Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, Public Member, Ward 4 (Chair)
- Salim Adofo, Public Member, Ward 8
- Anthony Diallo Ex-officio member, DCRA, Ward 7
- Kimberly Dickerson Ex-officio member, MPD, Ward 7
- Spencer Gopaul, Public Member, Ward 5
- Sondra Phillips Gilbert, Public Member, Ward 6
- Charles Jones, Ex-officio member, DOES, Ward 2
- Ronald King, Ex-officio member, DC Health, Ward 7
- Prentice Parrish, Public Member, Ward 5
- Lolita Ratchford, Public Member, Ward 1
- Kristin Shymoniak, Public Member, Ward 8

Commissioners Absent:

- Akela Crawford, Public Member, Ward 7
- Vivian Derryck, Public Member, Ward 4
- Latasha Gunnels, Public Member, Ward 8
- Delano Hunter, Ex-officio member, DPR, Ward 5
- Antwan Jones, Public Member, Ward 1
- Ryan Jones, Public Member, Ward 4
- Dorjan Short, Public Member, Ward 8
- Lauren Vaughan, Public Member, Ward 6

3. **Introductions**:
 - Commission on African American Affairs (public members and government representatives)
 - Mayor's Office on African American Affairs (Ashley Emerson, Executive Director and Lionell Gaines, Associate Director)
4. **Office Update**: Executive Director Ashley Emerson discussed the following items

COMMISSION NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

- MOAAA held the Financially Fit DC Series Workshops at Woodridge Library, Anacostia Library, and Dorothy Height Library engaging several hundred residents on personal finance and wealth building, the series will continue in 2020.
- MOAAA, Don't Mute DC, and Howard University collaborated on the Communicating Across Cultures series. There were two events held, one at the Reeves Center and at Google HQ. The event focused on communication strategies with residents of all ages and backgrounds. Howard University Communications Department will produce a report and present it during the Commission on African American Affairs March Public Meeting.
- Black History Month / 2019 Kwanzaa 2019 Event: MOAAA has proposed a signature event at the Lincoln Theatre with Black Broadway on U and the Commission on Arts & Humanities.
- FY 2020 African American Community Grant: MOAAA awarded 8 community based organizations:

5. **Commission New Business:**

- Chair Kimberly Leonard Jeffries: expressed the importance of supporting the community through Fair and equitable Housing. Also, the importance of ownership of real estate in the community.
- Commissioner Prentice Parrish: Stated that fostering relationships amongst different cultures and communities were important. Having discussions where people are, what they're about, and the success of the city will depend on everyone. Economic opportunities and advancement are not beholden to one group. Entrepreneurship is extremely important. Making sure that Black businesses are well-known and making sure longtime residents are up to speed and are able to compete in the new economy. A plan needs to be developed that embraces everyone and educates the community about opportunities and how to take it advantage of the resources available.
- Chair Jeffries Leonard: MOAAA and the Commission should look at January to bring Director Kristi Whitfield (DSLBD). Tourism focused on Black History; focusing on the issues around equality and equity. There should be a campaign leading up to Kwanzaa. Also, she cited how Mayor Bowser released a Housing Equity and Equality report and that there is a deadline for December 20 for comments and suggestions.
- Commissioner Spencer Gopaul: Housing, multi-pronged, and building housing for residents of all income levels. HPAP down payment assistance program; there is a need for additional or increased funding. African American real estate investment trusts (REIT), where groups of individuals can amass wealth and invest into real estate. Public housing and affordable housing; also that we need to own real estate in our community.
- Chair Kimberly Jeffries Leonard: We should focus on rental payments as credit history; collaboration / partnerships that will be helpful around these issues;

COMMISSION NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

- Commissioner Sondra Phillips Gilbert: spoke about the success of the Vacant to Vibrant DC program. Also, briefly mentioning that gentrification and predatory phone calls from speculators to purchase are a point of concern.
- Commissioner Ronald King: Seniors are taken advantage of by the speculators that call
- Commissioner Anthony Diallo: Nonprofit; Home Free USA helped and assisted him as a first time home buyer.
- Commissioner Salim Adofo: explained the Kwanzaa program and spoke about its principles and how to incorporate them into everyone's daily life. There is a prominent place for an event at the Wilson Building for Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday, but a cultural event.
- Chair Jeffries Leonard: using a Commission meeting as an opportunity to organize and advocate for certain policy recommendations for budget; Kwanzaa kickoff for survey and organizing organizations around certain issues areas.
- Commissioner Salim Adofo: organizations grassroots, topic specific,

6. **Open Discussion:**

- Don Folden (Capital Buddy Tours): Questions of gentrification and isolation for DC Natives. The level of development in the city has significantly increased and there is an opportunity to tap into the potential Black tourism of Black. Cities are not taking advantage enough of Black History
- Resident: Congresswoman Norton spoke at the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church about housing crisis and housing issues. There was a discussion and focus on convening residents / organizations around housing. The DCHA housing voucher list has had residents on the list for an extended period of time.
- Director Emerson: Through Financially Fit DC, MOAAA wants to enhance the program but also to make sure were connecting residents to different opportunities.
- Resident: Support for the Go-Go museum; The history of African American Mayors like Maynard Jackson and Marion Barry, he explained that if you were going to do business in the city; there was a certain level of businesses that had to do work with minority contractors.
- Don Folden (Capital Buddy Tours): There is a problem that the community that does not have access to capital, issues with credit, and business opportunities. There are issues on Homelessness, many residents do not want
- Director Emerson: She explained that the period for reviewing the Comprehensive Plan was extended, also the importance of residents reviewing, commenting, and

COMMISSION NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

educating themselves on the Comprehensive Plan and the Housing Equity Report & Survey

- Resident: Inclusionary Zoning class; that many residents do not know about Inclusionary Zoning and do not have enough information; there needs to be improvements around the inclusionary zoning program.
- Resident: Industry associations; working with industry and trade associations; There is a gray space between what the professional organizations know and what the public needs. Inclusionary Zoning
- Director Emerson: Explained that MOAAA will be convening organizations around the areas mandated in legislation. Starting in 2020, the Commission on African American Affairs will have public meetings with the areas of focus housing, health, education, employment, social services, public safety, and business opportunities.
- Sheila Reid: There has been a significant loss of African American businesses and homeowners; Residents in Columbia Heights cannot afford the average selling price. The pathway to middle class / wealth is homeownership. When residents don't have access to homeownership this prevents families to pass wealth on and to take advantage of economic opportunities. Subsidies are needed for affordable housing in order for developers to finance and build these properties.
- Director Emerson: Spoke about Mayor Bowser's Housing goal and strategy. That the Mayor wants to create 36,000 units. Also, that MOAAA will work with DHCD and focus on resident's ability to be ready to purchase homes.
- Chuck Hicks: Homelessness, housing; how do we partner with those who are aware; there are a number of groups that are fighting for those; strengthening rent control. Residents have to advocate for coalitions and partnerships with organizations that are fighting. Vincent Orange / DC Chamber of Commerce dialogue with Black businesses and what is happening across the city. During Black History Month of Tourism, business, and historical events across a few weeks in order to find our niche and sell the city as a destination. The NMAAHC is a part of the Smithsonian system, where their focus is about bringing people from across the country. The city has a few key resources like the African American Civil War Museum, Destination DC, highlighting things that visitors can do in the city while they visit, and DC has a significant amount Black History.
- Resident: Senior affordable housing, DC is building assisted living facilities; Where is the city building senior housing.
- Resident: Howard University social innovation initiative; housing crisis solved by the private sector is a fallacy; two separate housing market; private and non-private housing market. There are housing issues across the country in many states. The Government is spending money in the wrong areas. Government funding has to be spent on human security. There is not an effective mental health system. DCPL are doubling up as homeless shelters and could be opportunities for mental health / therapy.

COMMISSION NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

- Sheila Reid: Anti-discriminatory credit act
- Chuck Hicks: What are the Commission's policy recommendations that can be made to the DC Council and Mayor Bowser.
- 2019 Kwanzaa 2019 Event: Kwanzaa social media campaign, posting history for every day throughout Kwanzaa, and Kwanzaa Event at JAWB.
- Chuck Hicks: list Kwanzaa events on the MOAAA website; contact and reach out to different groups across the city; major kickoff at JAWB.
- Director Emerson: subcommittees around focus and issues areas; planning for Kwanzaa Events;
- Kwanzaa Kickoff; residents have parking issues around JAWB. Location: Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum.
- Family Days at Smithsonian Museums,
- Chuck Hicks: Black History Month calendar to be sent out during the last week of January; Commission to Commemorate MLK; link for Black History Month events in MOAAA's newsletter.
- Howard University Africana Studies 50th Anniversary Celebration

7. **Adjournment:**

Chairwoman Kimberly Jeffries Leonard (Chair) adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.