

**District of Columbia Commission on Aging
Draft Meeting Minutes¹ for
Wednesday, May 25, 2016**

Commissioners Present

Romaine Thomas, Chairperson; Ron Swanda, Vice-Chairperson; Jacqueline C. Arguelles; Brenda Atkinson-Willoughby; George Arnstein; Barbara Hair; Robert Dorsey; Grace Lewis; Clarence “Buddy” Moore; Carolyn Nicholas; Constance Woody.

D.C. Office on Aging (DCOA) Staff Present

Laura Newland, Executive Director; Garret King, Chief of Staff; Michael Kirkwood, General Counsel; Tanya Reid, Executive Assistant; Aurora Delespin-Jones, Program and Grants Manager.

Guests Present

Gail Kohn, Age-Friendly D.C. Coordinator; Heather Foote, Ward 1 resident; and Joe Williams, AARP, DC; Vivian Grayton, Seabury Resources for Aging.

Call to Order

Chairwoman Thomas called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. Immediately afterwards she thanked everyone who attended Seabury’s annual awards program on Sunday, May 22, 2016.

Inspiration

Chairwoman Thomas shared an inspirational reading about the weather.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes from the Commission’s April meeting were approved as read with a correction on page six, paragraph two.

Presentations

A. “AARP” Reverend Joseph Williams, AARP D.C. State President

Overview: Rev. Williams initially shared information about upcoming AARP DC events. AARP is sponsoring financial planning days around the country for seniors; the planning days are free workshops where attendees will have an opportunity to address personal finance questions one-on-one with certified financial planners. (He did have a date for an upcoming workshop here in D.C. but indicated the information is available via AARP’s website. Rev. Williams shared that the “Fraud Watch Network” would be held on Thurs., May 26, 2016, at the Washington Senior Wellness Center, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. On June 11, 2016, AARP is scheduled to participate in the Capital Pride Parade. And AARP will be at the Citi Open (here in D.C.) on July 16, 2016, in conjunction with the state offices of Maryland and Virginia (of AARP). The Citi Open is held at the Rock Creek Tennis Center.

¹ The final (approved) meeting minutes will be posted on Wednesday, June 29, 2016, the Commission’s next meeting date.

In addition to events, Rev. Williams also shared some of AARP DC's legislative priorities. According to him, Mayor Bowser recently signed the "Caregiver Advise, Record and Enable (CARE) Act of 2016."² The CARE Act requires that hospitals provide patients with an opportunity to select a caregiver after hospital admission, and it requires that hospitals record contact information for the caregivers and consult with them about the patients care plan after discharge.

Also, Rev. Williams is working with DC Council member Kenyan McDuffie to introduce the Uniform Power of Attorney Act, which will give more oversight to people who have a POA. AARP DC is also currently working with Legal Counsel for the Elderly to help seniors with home modifications, similar to DCOA's Safe at Home program. According to Rev. Williams, the goal is to make the initiative more expansive.

Additionally, AARP DC has partnered with DC Council member Anita Bonds concerning undue influence and financial exploitation. They intend to assist seniors who are being taken advantage of via the internet.

Lastly, AARP DC is a strong advocate of the Age-Friendly DC initiative. They supported the strategic plan during the Gray administration and are committed to seeing it thru to completion.

Questions/Concerns: Vice Chairman Swanda asked Rev. Williams to discuss the vertical village established by his nonprofit, Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC). CPDC took a campus approach and married it with a village approach to establish the vertical village. A hub campus and satellite campuses, which are connected to the hub, have been established in southeast, southwest and northeast D.C. The goal was to create an aging in community model to allow seniors to go from one building to another with relative ease. Plans are underway to incorporate a health component into the model.

The village is funded with private funds. And its residents are seniors who previously resided in subsidized housing. Similarly, to belong to the village seniors have to pay something. Essentially, the amount is based on what residents are able to afford. There is a movie theater, hair salon, and other services in the building or on-site. Willoughby asked if they could come see it.

Commissioner Hair asked how DC can have a village that will encompass seniors that live in different areas of the city. According to Rev. Williams, villages are grass-roots startups and you don't want to lose that aspect. And seniors should decide what the programs will be. (Rev. Williams inferred that the government should not be involved.)

Commissioner Nicholas asked how the POA law will work. Rev. Williams offered that the law lacks protections for seniors and people with disabilities and it has not been updated in the last 15 years. Vice-Chair Swanda asked if other states have enacted such legislation. Rev. Williams shared that in the AARP network, yes, they have, particularly Maryland and Virginia.

² Rev. Williams provided each Commissioner with a handout highlighting the passage of the CARE Act and explaining it.

B. Age Friendly DC Report/Update: Gail Kohn, Coordinator

As part of her May update, Ms. Kohn shared that the Age Friendly DC (AFDC) initiative is still in implementation phase and it has been for over a year. Conversations are now being had concerning evaluation of the initiative. In 2017 D.C. will go forward with the next five year cycle. AFDC is not an implementing body; it works with DCOA which implement programs. AFDC makes things happen by encouraging program implementers.

Ms. Kohn reminded the Commission that the AFDC task force includes government members and people from the private sector who serve as members. And there are a host of community partners.

With regards to performance, according to Ms. Kohn, there are roughly 15 District agencies responsible for 38 initiatives regarding aspects of AFDC.

Ms. Kohn spoke briefly about the Genesis project; it consists of young people with children who live in the same building with seniors. Some of the seniors are EDP waiver recipients. AFDC Business Initiative: Ms. Kohn distributed a list of businesses designated as age-friendly. Currently, 32 businesses have been designated as such for 2016. Ms. Kohn also provided the Commissioners with nomination forms for additional businesses which may be age-friendly.

Questions/Concerns: Commissioner Willoughby asked what the EPD waiver is. It stands for Elderly and individuals with Physical Disabilities waiver and it allows participants to receive up to 24 hours of care in the community rather than in a facility. It's a Medicaid program. Commissioner Willoughby also inquired about what's being done to make District seniors aware of AFDC. She then recommended the AFDC initiative adopt a "champion" of the cause to promote the initiative and/or educate the public about it. According to Ms. Kohn, such an effort couldn't be undertaken without money. However, the Beacon Newspaper is the quickest to respond to the initiative and share information about it. And the Washington Post and the Washington Times are both aware of the initiatives because they both attended AFDC's event to recognize businesses.

Commissioner Arnstein expressed that AFDC started with the block-by-block sidewalk effort; but he's not seen improvement in his neighborhood. He inquired how the Commission could stimulate action. According to Ms. Kohn, the Mayor proposed funding for sidewalk repairs but the Council reduced the amount of funding the Mayor proposed. Sidewalks are just as important as roads. Nonetheless, DDOT is working on it.

Commissioner Arguelles recommended that the city government be more in touch with its communities. "People are making decisions for the community without talking to the people in the community. The government should hear it from the horse's mouth!" According to Ms. Kohn, fortunately, Laura Newland is going out into the community on a regular basis. Also, the Office of Planning has issued an amendment process to their comprehensive plan which will permit people to express their views on the comprehensive plan and the age-friendly initiative. Chairwoman Thomas encouraged the Commission to share information with the community.

Commissioner Hair shared that she recently called 311 told them she was a senior, and was afraid she would fall on a sidewalk near her home. In response, the sidewalk was repaired within a few days!

C. D.C. Office on Aging Update: Laura Newland, Executive Director

According to Director Newland, DCOA is in a period of transition; she and her team are looking at how they do things internally. And they're looking at how the agency runs its programs. The agency is taking this time of transition as an opportunity to have the conversation with seniors regarding what will work and what they want to see from DCOA.

Director Newland referenced a letter she recently sent to Chairwoman Thomas. In the letter, she formally requests the Commission's advice regarding changes to policies and programs. Director Newland indicated that the options in the letter are not the Commission's only options but they are items she and her team are considering. She suggested the Commission consider discussing the letter and its contents at its retreat in July. She also encouraged Commissioners to talk to people in the community about the items listed now in order for her and the Commission to have a thoughtful conversation in July regarding them.

Director Newland introduced Aurora Delespin-Jones to explain the items referenced in the letter. Ms. Delespin-Jones was recently promoted to Program Manager. She has been with DCOA for 12 years but with District government for 39 years. And she was recently awarded the 2016 Cafritz Award.

According to Ms. Delespin-Jones, DCOA wants to create a culture of inclusion. Therefore, the agency is requesting the Commission's help to identify specific things seniors would like to see DCOA do with programming. First, regarding the underserved and isolated, how can DCOA serve this group more efficiently? How can DCOA best utilize dollars and avoid a duplication of services? Second, with regard to its service delivery model, DCOA is considering how it can make services more efficient and empower the lead agencies. Some of the options to consider include the following:

1. One provider for all six wellness centers: Currently, DCOA has six grants, one for each center. What is the best method for operating the wellness center?
2. Lead agency model: At present, each lead agency operates in each ward and they do not cross the wards; albeit one exception. Nevertheless, whoever is the operator in the ward provides services to seniors in that ward. Can DCOA permit the lead agencies to provide all services, including operating the wellness centers in the ward?
3. Case management provider model: It is part of DCOA's lead agency grants; however, the agency could do provide case management under a city-wide contract (or multiple contracts). Sometimes DCOA serves the same clients that DHCF serves under the current model and, therefore, duplicating services.

Director Newland would like a response from the Commission regarding her request by July 30, 2016, after the Commission's retreat.

Questions/Concerns: Commissioner Willoughby asked how she will know the capacity of some of the agencies to take on additional responsibilities. Ms. Delespin-Jones Aurora offered that DCOA has information on models from other cities that can be shared with the Commission. DCOA has assessed its current providers (e.g. number of social workers, pay scales, etc.) and is still assessing whether it has the capacity to carry out and operate a new model, whatever it might be.

According to Director Newland, the District is the leader in the country in aging services. She's asked the DCOA team to ask themselves if they could create a system and what would it look like. If the system is drastically different than what we have now then we'll need to plan and work together as a community to get there. It could be a multi-year plan.

Commissioner Nicholas asked if the requirements would be uniform if DCOA were to establish the lead agency model. Ms. Delespin-Jones indicated that the core service model structure would be the same but differences would exist in each ward. Commissioner Nicholas asked if there would be an entity overseeing the lead agencies. According to Ms. Delespin-Jones, yes, DCOA's own grant monitors would oversee the lead agencies.

Commissioner Arnstein asked if DCOA has a sample prototype for a provider for the whole city. Ms. Delespin-Jones said yes; Seabury is the prototype.

Commissioner Moore asked if there is one provider with the capacity to handle all six wellness centers. Ms. Delespin-Jones indicated there could be; however, DCOA would need to run a competitive process in order to find out.

Chairwoman Thomas expressed that it is significant that the Commission work together as a team. She encouraged the Commissioners to talk to lead agency managers and visit the wellness centers to solicit feedback. She requested that if Commissioners have additional suggestions to let her know before the next meeting in June. The group unanimously agreed to move forward with Director's Newland's request at the Commission's upcoming retreat.

Additional updates from DCOA: Director Newland reminded the Commission that the needs assessment is focused on seniors in the community and whether or not DCOA is meeting seniors' needs in the community. George Washington University (GWU) is conducting the assessment and it will be completed by September 30, 2016. GWU will contact Commission for input.

Commissioner Nicholas asked what seniors will be interviewed. Director Newland stated DCOA is working on that determination and added that she welcomes the Commission's assistance with determining how best to reach more seniors and particular seniors.

Director Newland also discussed budget cost sharing or the idea of seniors contributing small amounts of money for services. Currently, the agency has only one budget cost sharing program: ConnectorCard. There are concerns DCOA is making all its programs cost sharing. According to Director Newland, that is not the case but the agency is considering it as a way to expand some programs.

Again, DCOA has been meeting with providers about people who transition to Medicaid services. Director Newland is hosting another provider meeting with the lead agencies to talk about some of them becoming Medicaid providers. Seabury will have an opportunity to grandfather in current riders so its clients may remain with them, although those clients receive Medicaid.

Questions/Concerns: Chairwoman Thomas shared that there will be facilitators for the topics of Discussion at the Commission's retreat. She asked the Commissioners if they know of facilitators who might be helpful to make suggestions and let her know. Also, she requested (of DCOA) a consolidated list of the lead agencies and managers. She said it would be helpful in case the Commission would like to visit a lead agency.

Vice-Chairman Swanda reminded the group that the Commission is not scheduled to meet in August. He also requested that GWU contact as soon as possible, regarding the needs assessment.

Committee Reports

There were no reports or updates from committees.

Ward Reports

Commissioner Arnstein shared that the DC council has provided \$250,000 for DC Villages for FY17. However, it is not reflected in the final budget. He urged his colleagues to do something to support the idea of ensuring monetary support for DC villages.

Vice-Chairman Swanda expressed his concern that the Ward 6 Senior Wellness Center is way too small, as evidenced by the center using the Commission's meeting space to conduct a special activity. He noted it's another instance where additional space is needed for the wellness center.

Commissioner Lewis, on behalf of Ward 5, shared that the Ward 5 Resource Center held a tremendously successful Ward 5 Senior Day last week. The seniors had a great time. It was the largest one she's seen.

New Business

The Commission's retreat is tentatively set for July 20, 2016. A space has yet to be secured. Commissioners are encouraged to share any space ideas with Director Newland. A space to accommodate approximately 50 people is required.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Announcements

Commissioner Arguelles shared that Commissioner Moore received an award last night. It was given by the Emergency Center on Georgia Avenue. This year it was given to three men and three women; in the past it was just given to women.

The Ms. Sr. D.C. pageant will be held on June 26, 2016 at the University of the District of Columbia.

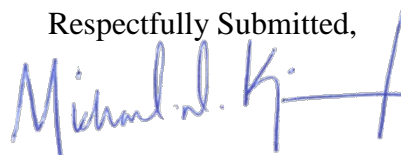
Chairwoman Thomas shared with the Commission the short video featured at Seabury Resources for the Aging's 2016 Leadership in Aging Awards this past Sunday. The video highlighted the two evening's honorees: Chairwoman Romaine Thomas and St. Anselm's Abbey School.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

These minutes were recorded by Michael Kirkwood, General Counsel, D.C. Office on Aging, and were formally approved by the Commission on Aging on [date].

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael Kirkwood
General Counsel
District of Columbia Office on Aging