

District of Columbia Commission on Aging
Minutes of February 24, 2016 Meeting

Commissioners Present

Romaine Thomas, Chairperson; Ron Swanda, Vice-Chairperson; Barbara Hair; Jacqueline Arguelles; Charles Hicks; Janet Heisse; George Arnstein; Constance Woody; Grace Lewis; Carolyn Nicholas; Brenda Atkinson-Willoughby; Clarence "Buddy" Moore.

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; Dominique Vinson, Information and Referral/Assistance Supervisor; Darlene Nowlin, Customer and Information Specialist.

Guests Present

Brenda Williams, former Commissioner; Bettie Florence, Ward 4 Mini-Commission; Gulliford Bobo, Ward 8 Mini-Commission; Gail Kohn, Age-Friendly D.C. Coordinator; Lisa Jacobson, Dignity Memorial; Sadaf Ahmad, Alzheimer's Association; Steven Walker, Director, Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments.

Call to Order

Chairperson Thomas called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Immediately afterwards, Clarence "Buddy" Moore, Ward One, was welcomed as a new appointment. Commissioner Moore's confirmation is forthcoming.

Inspiration

Chairperson Thomas shared the following inspirational quote by evangelist and philanthropist John Wesley: "Do all the good you can; by all the means you can; in all the ways you can; in all the places you can; at all the times you can; to all the people you can; as long as ever you can."

Review and Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes from the December 16, 2015 meeting were approved as read without corrections.

Presentations

A. Director Steven Walker, Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments (MOTA)

Prior to his presentation, Director Walker conducted a swearing-in of commissioners who were recently appointed or re-appointed to the Commission on Aging, which included the following commissioners: Moore, Nicholas, Hicks, Atkinson-Willoughby, Woody and Arguelles. Each commissioner was presented with certificates of appointments. According to Director Walker, the next round of terms expires in October 2016.

Director Walker's office makes recommendations to the Mayor for members of the community to serve as appointed leadership staff or members to boards and commissions. Hence, Director Walker discussed his office's review of the establishment order for the Commission on Aging. He is working to determine the exact number of Commissioners. And he is committed to rectifying imbalances with regards to ward representation, race, gender, sexual orientation, professional backgrounds, etc. Specifically, Director Walker expressed that he would like to ensure there are at least two commissioners represented from each ward but is working to determine the number of allowable members.

In addition, Director Walker expressed he would inquire about the inclusion of ex-officio members or persons with particular professional expertise to attend meetings either officially or unofficially.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hicks, regarding commissioners making recommendations for vacancies on the Commission, Director Walker asked commissioners to work with the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, or Director Newland on recommendations. The public may learn of vacancies for boards and commissions are listed on MOTA's website or at www.dc.gov. In addition, in the near future, vacancies will be shared via the Mayor's newsletter, and Director Walker intends to visit communities to talk more about the city's boards and commissions.

MOTA's website is currently down but will re-launch soon. When it does, it will display a roster of Commissioners and include: a photograph, biography, the ward represented, date of appointment and term expiration. The first group will roll out the first week of March and all 170+ commissions will be completed by the end of April.

Director Walker said every commissioner has a dc.gov e-mail address. His office will send a link to each Commissioner to activate the email address. Director Walker's e-mail address: steven.walker@dc.gov and his office telephone number: 202-727-6101.

B. Age-Friendly D.C. Update- Gail Kohn, Age Friendly D.C. Coordinator

Currently, Age-Friendly DC is engaged in a private-public partnership with George Washington University (GWU). As such, a group of students at GWU is studying how satisfied older D.C. residents are with their lives.

The study is seeking D.C. resident participants from each ward; however, wards two, three, seven, and eight are the primary focus. The study is seeking 10 people from each of these wards. A smaller focus is on wards four, five, and six and, therefore, the study is only seeking six people from these wards. Additional participants are not needed for ward one.

The study requests seniors 60 plus years old. Eligible participants must be interviewed and the questions are not invasive or uncomfortable. Specifically, the questions seek information regarding how comfortable participants are with their lives. The interviews last approximately one hour and are conducted in a public place. The interviews must be conducted face-to-face and not by telephone.

In addition, focus group sessions, consisting of 2-4 residents, will be conducted. The group sessions will also last approximately one hour; however, study participants may opt out of participation in them.

Ms. Kohn asked for the Commission's assistance with getting additional participants and requested that names be provided by the end of this week. Several of the Commissioners indicated their willingness to participate in the study.

In addition to discussing the life satisfaction study, Ms. Kohn also provided information regarding income life expectancy disparities in D.C. She shared a comparative analysis, by wards, of the number years beyond 65 years of age a resident is predicted to live. The predicted difference between residents in wards seven and eight, versus residents in wards two and three, were startling. Director Newland shared that the Department of Health (DOH) is working with the Department of Healthcare Finance to determine better healthcare models to address health inequities among the cities' residents. And DOH has created an office of equity and inclusion to address such issues.

DCOA Update- Laura Newland

DCOA Acting Director Laura Newland reminded the commission that she was appointed in November 2015. Since that time she's been getting to know her staff better. She introduced the five members of her staff in attendance. In addition, Director Newland asked the two non-DCOA staff (Lisa Jacobson and Sadaf Ahmad) present to introduce themselves.

After introductions, Director Newland expressed that DCOA's recent performance oversight hearing went really well. She thanked Chairperson Thomas for her testimony. And she indicated that there was a positive shift in the types of questions that were asked of her because of DCOA's ongoing communication with the councilmembers.

Director Newland also discussed budget changes for fiscal year 2017. According to Director Newland, DCOA will audit its grantees' budgets. DCOA staff will be expected to hold grantees accountable. And grantees have been told there will be no automatic renewals of grants.

Director Newland shared that DCOA's application for a needs assessment has been issued. The needs assessment will help address requests for additional funding by grantees. In response to those requests,

Director Newland says she's stressed the importance of grantees demonstrating the existence of such needs with data. The purpose of the needs assessment is to evaluate where DCOA is currently and establish a plan for FY 2017. (DHCD is also working on a housing needs assessment that will look at housing needs for seniors.)

After her presentation, Director Newland fielded various questions from Commissioners. With regards to the DCOA's budget, she shared that DCOA's budget structure will be different for FY17. Specifically, the budget will be more transparent; the budget has been restructured to show how its major dollars are being spent. Director Newland says DCOA is comfortable with its budget. Her team has made an effort to look at duplicative services among sister district government agencies, especially as it relates to transportation to ensure residents' needs are being met. The budget has not been approved. Director Newland will formally submit it to the council next month. Afterwards, DCOA will schedule town halls in the wards to address concerns and to field questions regarding it.

Director Newland agreed to inquire about Seabury's flexibility concerning limitations on the number of passengers transported from the wellness center for recreational trips.

Director Newland committed to DCOA providing more technical assistance to grantees. She indicated that reimbursement rate increases will be done by a schedule and the schedule will be released once it's set.

Director Newland indicated that DCOA is creating an advisory committee to assist with planning for the senior symposium. She agreed to follow-up with the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson regarding ex-officio participation. The symposium will be held in August at Dunbar High School. The DCOA External Affairs and Communications team will be reaching out to the Commissioners and the community for different tracks for inclusion at the symposium.

The Commissioners were provided with a one page summary of the 2012 needs assessment because the completed assessment is over 300 pages in length. However, a link to the entire assessment will be provided as well.

Director Newland's confirmation hearing is tentatively scheduled for March 10, 2016 at 10 a.m. Committee has not posted an official notice about it.

Committee Reports

No reports. But Commissioner Nicholas shared that the elder abuse and financial exploitation bill is still in committee. Nicholas said a letter of support for the bill would be helpful.

Ward Reports

Vice-Chairperson Swanda noted disparities of services among the various wards. He asked Director Newland to look at disparities, particularly in Ward six.

New Business

Commissioner Nicholas inquired if the Commission would be interested public safety issues concerning pedestrians.

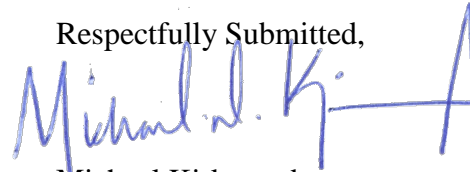
Chairperson Thomas mentioned the Mayor recently citing locations for homeless shelters. She asked those present to consider seniors, keep up with it, and have compassion about it.

Adjournment

Upon motion and unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.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 March 23, 2016.

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael Kirkwood
General Counsel
District of Columbia Office on Aging