



**COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
(CAAA)**

**JANUARY MEETING MINUTES**

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Meeting Date: January 27, 2021  
Webex Meeting

1. **Call to Order:** Chair, Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.
2. **Roll Call:** Quorum was established. Quorum is established when there is a presence of one third of the Commission (voting and non-voting Ex-Officio). There were 12 Commissioners present, 8 Public Members and 4 Ex-Officio.

**Commissioners Present:**

- Salim Adofo, Public Member, Ward 8
- Spencer Gopaul, Public Member, Ward 5
- Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, Public Member, Ward 4 (Chair)
- Kimberly Dickerson, Ex- Officio Member, MPD, Ward 7
- Kristin Shymoniak, Public Member, Ward 8
- Melanee Woodard, Public Member, Ward 5
- Anthony Diallo, Ex-Officio Member, DCRA, Ward 7
- Ronald King, Ex-Officio Member, DC Health, Ward 7
- Vivian Derryck, Public Member, Ward 4
- Deneira Owens, Ex-Officio Member, DHCD, Ward 7
- Lauren Vaughan, Public Member, Ward 6
- Sondra Phillips-Gilbert, Public Member, Ward 6

**Commissioners Absent:**

- Charles Jones, Ex-Officio Member, DOES, Ward 2
- Delano Hunter, Ex-Officio Member, DPR, Ward 5
- Lolita Ratchford, Public Member, Ward 1
- Ryan Jones, Public Member, Ward 4
- Prentice Parrish, Public Member, Ward 5

3. **Approval and Correction of Minutes:** Commissioner Melanee Woodard made a motion to accept and approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Spencer Gopaul seconded the motion.
4. **MOAAA Update:** MOAAA Interim Director Rev. Bowen welcomed public members and shared the importance of the commission and its impact in the African American Community emphasizing the COVID-19 vaccination. Associate Director Gaines shared

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Black History Month Celebration updates. He shared that the MOAAA bulletins and emails will be sent to share upcoming Black History Month events throughout the month.

### 5. Guest Speakers:

- **Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt - Director, DC Health**
  - Dr. Nesbitt addressed the “why” communities of color choose not to accept the COVID-19 vaccination.
    - 90% of residents that are white or non-Hispanic, 80% Hispanic/Latinx, 61% African American which include healthcare workers and essential workers have taken the vaccine
    - DC Health is working to place vaccines strategically throughout communities of color. DC Health also created a registration portal and call center to schedule vaccine appointments.
    - DC health has begun to start to see a prominent gulf of who wants to be vaccinated and who needs to be vaccinated.
    - An equity model to the vaccine registration process has been added since then, about 70% of vaccines were claimed by the elderly populations in Wards 2,3,and 6. Wards 1,4,5,7,8 have access to register a day-ahead to register for the vaccine. 55% have been claimed in those wards since the implementation. There has been more success by having outreach done by healthcare workers and providers in those wards.
- **Dr. Reed Tuckson- Black Coalition Against COVID-19 (BCAC)**
  - Dr. Tuckson encouraged the participants to support Dr. Nesbitt and DC Health’s initiatives to tackle COVID-19. He also urged participants to continue to wear masks and social distance. Dr. Tuckson shared that there are three mutations of COVID. Two of the mutations are much more contagious than before. A third mutation, originating from South Africa, may bypass the current vaccination’s protections. He shared that 25% of African Americans nationwide have hesitation to the vaccine which has decreased since the roll-out of either vaccine. BCAC is working to ensure that Community Based Organizations are financially supported so that communities of color have the same access to the vaccine as white communities.
- **Answers to questions that were asked during the presentations included:**
  - There are not enough doses of the vaccines for every resident at this time. The District receives 9,500 doses a week currently. There are 86,000 seniors in the districts. 200,000 residents have documented chronic health conditions. Vaccines are distributed to healthcare providers and specialty pods for the most vulnerable residents. DC Health is not accelerating how vaccines are issued at this time. Second doses have not been used as first doses so that the second doses are ensured to be used appropriately. There is no need to delay a second dose.
  - Wards 7 & 8’s correct use of masks should be improved. Masks with an exhalation vent should not be used. The more layers of fabric, the better. A

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surgical mask provides better protection than a fabric mask and an N95 respirator surgical mask provides the best protection.

- Due to the Tuskegee experiment experience, there are multiple protections that have been established for people of color. Now, multiple people of color supervise research studies and sit on review committees and are advocates for communities of color. There are over 20 million people in the US that have received the vaccine and there have not been any concerns. The risk:benefit ratio is clear.
  - Regarding side effects of the second dose and allergic reactions: Side effects are similar to symptoms to those that have been diagnosed with COVID-19. The reactions to the vaccine is the participant's body reacting and preparing antibodies to fight the virus. These symptoms last a couple days. Anaphylaxis has risen since the roll-out of the vaccine. After receiving any COVID-19 vaccine, it is recommended that individuals be observed for 15 minutes without a history of anaphylaxis and 30 minutes for those that have a history of anaphylaxis. A history of anaphylaxis does not disqualify you from taking the vaccine. If one is allergic to a component/ingredient in the vaccine they are disqualified.
  - The vaccine keeps you 95% protected from the virus but does not stop one from transmitting the virus to others.
  - The vaccine does not contain any live virus and one still has the risk of being exposed if they are not following protocols. Antibodies are not produced in a way that will protect someone a week after they receive the first dose. For the majority of people that have received the vaccine, antibodies are strong enough to provide protection against the virus 10-12 days after the receipt of the second dose of the vaccine.
  - During the week of receiving the vaccination (first and second dose), participants will be contacted by VSafe to gather information and follow up on their vaccination process. Manufacturers of the vaccine will use this data for their Phase 4 clinical trials which result in continued approval of distribution or removal.
  - The number of vaccination sites will expand as the administration phases increase. This also is reliant on the number of providers that are able to appropriately store the vaccines. Currently 3 sites in Ward 7, 3 4, and 8. Ward 8 has sites that are designed to process a large number of residents of that ward in comparison to the other wards.
- **Porcha Johnson- President and Owner of Black Girl Health Foundation**
    - Black Girl Health Foundation is a sisterhood movement of living their best life by making informed decisions about their health. Working alongside black health providers to share information.
    - Black Girl Health Foundation partners with the community to form workshops on healthy living nationally. Upcoming events include Minds Matter DC, a college ambassador program that recruits college students to produce mental health campaign projects. Minds Matter is partnering with Howard University. 6 mental health workshops will be live streamed February 20. Workshops will cover topics that include hormonal impact from foods, yoga, and therapy. It is free to the public. Registration is recommended. MOAAA will post the event details soon.

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- **Sylvia Cyrus- Association for The Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)**
  - Carter G Woodson National Park will be open 2022
  - Black History Month events through the month of February starting February 1 focusing on the Black Family. The February 3 event will include a collaboration with Mae Jamison and PBS books. February 20 will include a conversation with Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham and Henry Louis Gates. This event has an admission fee starting at \$50. ASALH.org
- **Charles Hicks- DC Black History Committee**
  - The DC Black History Committee will have multiple Black History Month events throughout February. A virtual kick-off will be held February 1 at 10:00 AM with Keynote speaker Dr. Reed Tuckson. MOAAA will share all event information.

6. **Commission Business:** The Commission did not have any items in the agenda.

- **(Old Business)** Making recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan, Budget and Engagement Forum and procedures -- Vice-Chair Gopaul revisited the importance of the Budget and Engagement forum and including community organizations and stakeholders in the process by generating a survey and receiving feedback so that it can be used to generate recommendations to the Mayor Bowser.
  - Chair Jefferies-Leonard suggested that the Commission develop a process to receive concerns from stakeholders and present them to Mayor Bowser. Mr. Charles Hicks suggested that the Commission collaborate with other community groups, such as Power DC, that have begun reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and create coalitions based on topic areas. Vice-Chair Gopaul suggested that the Commission also partners with DC agencies. The Commission will hold a (non-public) meeting to develop a timeline. Commissioner Owens suggested that the Commission collaborate with the commissioners that represent D.C. agencies to gather information and determine next steps.

7. **Public Comments:** Below are action items for Commissioners:

- Ms. Brenda Jones shared concerns regarding the use or lack of use for vacant lots throughout the District. Commissioner Deneira Owens will work with Ms. Jones to address the concerns.

8. **Adjournment:** Chair, Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard adjourned the meeting at 8:11 pm.