



COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS (CAAA)

SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: September 16, 2020

Webex Meeting

1. **Call to Order**: Chair, Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard called the meeting to order at 6:30 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 10 Commissioners present, 8 Public Members and 2 Ex-Officio.

Commissioners Present:

- Salim Adofo, Public Member, Ward 8
- Vivian Derryck, Public Member, Ward 4
- Kimberly Dickerson, Ex- Officio Member, MPD, Ward 7
- Spencer Gopaul, Public Member, Ward 5
- Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, Public Member, Ward 4 (Chair)
- Ronald King, Ex- Officio Member, DC Health, Ward 7
- Prentice Parrish, Public Member, Ward 5
- Sondra Phillips Gilbert, Public Member, Ward 6
- Kristin Shymoniak, Public Member, Ward 8
- Melanee Woodard, Public Member, Ward 5

Commissioners Absent:

- Akela Crawford, Public Member, Ward 7
- Anthony Diallo, Ex- Officio Member, DCRA, Ward 7
- Latasha Gunnels, Public Member, Ward 8
- Delano Hunter, Ex- Officio Member, DPR, Ward 5
- Charles Jones, Ex- Officio Member, DOES, Ward 2
- Ryan Jones, Public Member, Ward 4
- Deneira Owens, Ex- Officio Member, DHCD, Ward 7
- Lolita Ratchford, Public Member, Ward 1
- Lauren Vaughan, Public Member, Ward 6

3. **Approval and Correction of Minutes**: Commissioner Spencer Gopaul made a motion to accept and approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Sondra Phillips-Gilbert seconded the motion. Dr. Jeffries Leonard (CAAA Chair) called a vote on the motion and the Commission unanimously approved the meeting minutes.
4. **MOAAA Update**: MOAAA Director Ashley Emerson provided an update from MOAAA. She explained the FY 2021 African American Community Grant closed on

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August 7th and thanked those that assisted with reviewing the grants. She explained that MOAAA will announce the FY 2021 African American Community grantees. This year, there are 8 community based organization that will provide services to the African American community. MOAAA's grant funding will support virtual programming and the grantees provided virtual outreach plans. Director Emerson shared COVID-19 public health guidance, resources, and reiterated the need for safety precautions during COVID-19. Resources can be found at [Coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov). Director Emerson shared MOAAA's social media numbers have tripled over the past year. She shared the importance of the 2020 Census and shared that Ward 8 has the lowest response rate. Director Emerson announced her resignation as Director of MOAAA effective Friday 9/18/2020. Director Emerson said that she enjoyed advancing the initiatives and priorities of Mayor Bowser and expressed gratitude of working with the Commission on African American Affairs. She thanked everyone for trusting her to lead the Mayor's Office on African American Affairs.

5. Commission Business:

- (Old Business) Commissioner Gopaul inquired about the chair appointments for committees: economic development, health, education, special events/current affairs. Chair Jefferies-Leonard appointed Commissioner Parrish as chair of the Economic Committee, Commissioner Gunnels as Chair of the Health Committee, and Commissioner Derryck as Chair of Special Events/Current Affairs Committee. Commissioners Derryck, Gunnels, and Parrish accepted the nominations. Commissioners and Community Members will have the opportunity to join committees.
- (New Business) Commissioner Derryck shared that she composed an Op-Ed discussing Black Lives Matter. Commissioner Derryck will share with the commission.
- (New Business) Commissioner Gopaul shared that DC Young Democrats is holding a set of events for the Get Out and Vote Campaign over the next few weeks to educate our communities and register residents to vote for the Nov. 4 elections. He will send the information to the commission. Dir. Emerson shared that all voting sites will be open as well. Chair Jefferies-Leonard suggested working with other agencies to encourage residents to complete the Census. Wards 8, 7, 6, and 3 have low response rates. Commissioner Gilbert informed the commission of the scams that have been generated. Director Emerson encouraged residents to visit [Census.dc.gov](https://www.census.gov) for resources and additional information.
- (New Business) Commissioner Gopaul shared that the moratorium on evictions will be lifted at the end of September which can result in a high rate of evictions across the District. He requested recommendations for resources and sharing with the community. Director Emerson suggested that commissioners and residents direct others to [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov). Commissioner Gilbert shared that DC Tenant Union is a resource that advocates for tenants. She will share the information with the commission.

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- (New Business) From Community Member Michael Wallace shared a concern regarding youth unemployment in the District. Chair Jefferies-Leonard shared that the age limit for the summer youth employment program has been extended to age 24. Wallace specified a surplus of art and humanities jobs but not a lot of paid training/internships or entry level positions for youth to enter the arts field. Commissioner Gopaul shared information regarding a high school workforce program offered during the school year by DOES.

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

- Community Member Alfred Swailes shared that Councilman McDuffie proposed the Reach Act which included a budget allocation for conducting a disparity study across the District. Community Member Swailes shared the importance of educating the community on this study and giving them an opportunity to share their concerns with the Council so that our African American communities can have access to additional resources that would benefit the growth and development of the community. Commissioner Gilbert inquired whether some of the funds proposed in the budget will be allocated for community education. Community Member Swailes confirmed. Director suggested that the commission will invite a representative from Councilman McDuffie's office to share more information regarding the Reach Act.
- Community Member Alicia Burke (Rich Capital Concepts Org) shared her concerns with the increased frequency of gun violence in our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative impact it has on the youth. Commissioner Dickerson shared that she would share initiatives dedicated to address violence in the communities with the commission.
- Community Member Brenda Jones shared concerns that African American residents are being overlooked during the gentrification process. She inquired ways to ensure that our residents are not being overlooked and erase the historical impact that has been left behind by African American culture. Chair Jefferies-Leonard suggested using social media to share DC Black History. Director Emerson highlighted the multiple endeavors that spotlighted African American culture and history throughout the District. Director Emerson made a recommendation to replay the Sunday Family Dinner videos on the MOAAA's social media accounts. Community Member Alicia Burke shared that the Bloomingdale neighborhood will hold a virtual block party that will celebrate African American contributions from that neighborhood. She will send information to the commission to highlight on the website.
- Director Emerson recommended that MOAAA have public meeting schedules listed on the DC schedule on DCTV.
- Community Member Lynn Dyson shared information regarding Robert Hooks Day. More information can be accessed at www.mmtidc.org for the 49th Anniversary of the DC Black Repertory Company and Robert Hooks honoring among others Sweet Honey in The Rock and Dr. Calvin Rolark which will be broadcasted via Zoom Oct. 18th from 6PM to 8:30PM.

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- Community Member Jackie Love-Baker shared information regarding the DC Lawyers Project in the Commission chat. The DC Volunteer Lawyers Project offers internships opportunities for pre-college or college students who are interested in legal and advocacy services for domestic violence children, immigrants, and children living in homes with violence, substance abuser, and untreated mental illness. Ms. Jackie Love-Baker informed the Commission that the DC Lawyers Project is looking for interns who are from diverse backgrounds to serve vulnerable DC residents. The Project works with Urban Alliance to provide stipends as well. Inquiries can be emailed to Sania Ali at sali@dcvlp.org for more details or visit dcvlp.org.

7. **Adjournment:** Chair, Dr. Kimberly Jeffries Leonard adjourned the meeting at 8:19 pm.