

**District of Columbia Commission on Aging  
Meeting Minutes for  
Wednesday, September 27, 2017**

**Commissioners Present**

Carolyn Nicholas; Charles Hicks; Buddy Moore; Carolyn Matthews; Barbara Hair; Guleford Bobo; George Arnstein; Romaine Thomas; and Ron Swanda

**Ex-Officio Members**

Tyra Redus, DDOT; David Quick, DCPL; Mary Terrell, DOES; Veronica Longstreth, DOH; and David Quick, DCPL

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

Tanya Reid, Executive Assistant; Michael Kirkwood, General Counsel; Christian Barrera, Special Assistant; Laura Newland, Executive Director

**Guests Present:**

Gail Kohn, Age-Friendly DC Coordinator; Ayesha Curry, DOES; and Dr. Katrina Polk, Community Preservation and Development Corporation

**Call to Order**

Chairwoman R. Thomas (Chairwoman) called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

**Inspiration**

Chairwoman asked if anyone had an inspiration they wanted to share. Hearing none, she read the following Confucius quotation from the cover page of the DC Commission on Aging Annual Report, 2016-2017: “Old age, believe me, is a good and pleasant thing. It is true you are gently shouldered off the stage, but then you are given such a comfortable front stall as spectator.”

Chairwoman directed the Commission’s attention to the Annual Report and presented those present with a copy.

**Review and Approval of Minutes**

The meeting minutes from the Commission’s June 28, 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved without corrections.

**Presentations**

**A. Age-Friendly DC Update, Gail Kohn, Age-Friendly Coordinator**

Age Friendly is at the point of its “final exam.” The final report to be submitted to the World Health Organization is due on October 2, 2017. According to Ms. Kohn, although the final report is pending, the journey continues!

Ms. Kohn, provided copies of the upcoming Age-Friendly Task force meeting flyer. The public is welcome to attend. The meeting will be held this afternoon. The report will be reviewed and discussed during the meeting. The discussion will focus on the following three domains related

to attitude and inclusion: 1) social participation; 2) respect and social inclusion; and 3) civic participation and employment. Ms. Kohn will return next month to present the Commission with copies of the report.

**Questions/Concerns:**

Commissioner Arnstein: Who headed the study at GWU? The Department of Sociology, headed by Ms. Emily Morrison.

**B. Department of Employment Services, Ayesha Upshur (Program Manager)**

**Back to Work 50+ Program:** There is no income restriction for participation in this DOES program. Its focus is on seniors who have an extensive work history and are seeking to re-engage in work on a full-time basis. They help seniors hone their resumes.

An intake for seniors is completed. Income and residency are considered. Participants are put on the wait list, when applicable. Afterwards, participants are matched with one of the host job sites.

A Stakeholder's Symposium will be planned and held in the near future. Employers and job seekers will be in attendance. The employers have been asked to identify what criteria they seek in candidates and how mature workers can prepare for employment. The symposium will give mature workers an opportunity to hear from employers directly and engage with them.

**Questions/Concerns:**

Commissioner Matthews: Expressed her disappointment with the program and gave an example of DOES sending out mixed signals to participants. Afterwards, she asked what DOES's success rate for the program is. Data for program year 2016 shows there were nine permanent placements. The program is expected to place at least 50 percent of participants; however, DOES has fallen below that goal.

Commissioner Bobo: Shared that he is encountering people older than 64 years of age who are looking for part-time positions but are having difficulty finding opportunities.

Commissioner Moore: What are the federal funds based on and can they be increased? According to Ms. Upshur, Congress sets the funding. Previously, there was talk of eliminating the program, therefore, she is not certain the funding will be increased.

Commissioner Swanda: Expressed his disappointment with employers connected to the program terminating employees after 48 months. According to him, SCSEP (Senior Community Service Employment Program) is kind of a joke because it only permits 37 people. According to Vice-Chairman Swanda, in contrast, NCBA (The National Caucus & Center on Black Aging) has additional slots and have more slots than DOES.

Judge Mary Terrell: DOES is under new leadership. We're trying to change the culture in DC to focus on seniors. There is also a new climate at DOES. Ms. Upshur would appreciate any feedback regarding the programs she oversees.

Commissioner Hair: Could you elaborate on the program for people returning to the community? The program is for 22 to 54 year olds and is called Project Empowerment. However, DOES will enroll individuals who are older than 54. 95% of participants have been incarcerated. They do three weeks of job training. They work with a job coach for six months while employed with their host site. Last year 54% of participants found permanent employment.

Commissioner Hicks: What resources does the District have for returning citizens and seniors? Ms. Upshur expressed that the District government has an obligation to employ seniors too. What kind of assistance can people get when they can't work? SCSEP has participants who are employed with District government.

### **C. DC Office on Aging Update, Laura Newland, Executive Director**

A LGBTQ town hall forum was organized by DCOA and held last night. There were various providers in attendance and MPD's LGBTQ unit was represented. Vice-Chairman Swanda, shared that there were over 20 people in attendance and it was well received. Part of the discussion focused on how DCOA can reach more underserved seniors (e.g. isolated, uncomfortable, etc.).

Commissioner Hicks: What were the top three issues/concerns that were discussed? According to the Director the following were the top three issues: 1) Safety; being out and being safe; 2) Housing; and 3) Cultural Competency within the provider network. DCOA intends to focus on creating safer spaces. Under consideration is the creation of a LGBTQ specific space and programming for it.

The Director also discussed the following ideas: 1) A volunteer phone banking program to combat isolation; 2) secret shopping model, by which seniors would be trained to score DCOA service providers to help determine how the providers can improve their services; and 3) LGBTQ specific ambassadors training for members of the community. DCOA will follow up with the attendees for feedback and suggestions for programming.

The annual holiday celebration will be held on December 13, 2017 at the Stadium Armory. The Director will be hosting town halls in October at the wellness centers; they will be held during the last two weeks of October. She encouraged the Commissioners to attend.

Legislative Update: Director Newland will testify on October 5, 2017 on two separate bills: 1) Lawn Care; and 2) Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation.

Needs Assessment: Two main things DCOA decided to focus on: 1) Communications: the agency is planning a communication specific survey. It will help gauge if seniors are familiar with DCOA or its providers. 2) Underserved Seniors: there is a consensus that there are big pockets of underserved seniors. This year DCOA will focus on some of the service gaps it has.

### **Questions/Concerns:**

Commissioner Hicks: I'm wondering what DCOA is doing for the Latin community. And is there a distinct effort for providing services to senior black men? One of the underserved populations is the immigrant populations. DCOA is reviewing all of its programs to ensure everyone has language access to them. DCOA funds the Vida Senior Center, a primarily Hispanic senior center, and an Asian Senior Center. With regard to men, Director Newland

expressed the need for men in the senior community to lead!

Commissioner Moore: We've engaged the male social worker at the wellness center to focus on men's issues. The group discusses issues that relate directly to them; we'll also discuss ways to bring more men into the center.

Commissioner Matthews: We need Safe at Home flyers in Spanish. And homelessness is a big issue among black and Latino men.

Commissioner Bobo: I've been trying to get men involved for two years now. We've done golf, bowling and some other activities for men. The biggest challenge now is that the women want to be involved in the activities for the men!

Commissioner Hair: A woman in my community applied in August for a security camera. I called the number on the flyer, on her behalf, but she has been waiting for an application since August and has yet to receive it. Director Newland asked Tanya to take the resident's name and follow up.

Commissioner Nicholas: Is there something we can do regarding homelessness? DHS is tasked with addressing homelessness. As such, DCOA lets them lead regarding homelessness.

Commissioner Hicks: The Black History Commission recently hosted an event featuring the music of Bessie Smith; it was a huge success! DCOA helped promote the event and was extremely helpful.

Commissioner Bobo: Encountered a senior who was suffering from dementia. The police said that calling APS was a waste of time. Fortunately, they were able to get the lady calmed down and back in her home. Mr. Bobo spent Monday at DBH in a meeting with the Director. Am I out of bounds, in terms of what I did to assist her? No, part of our focus with the ambassador program is that we want to empower seniors to assist others in their community.

Commissioner Nicholas: Can we make recommendations to DHS about homelessness? Of course you can.

Hicks: Elections will be held at the next meeting for the Chair and Vice-Chair. Notice will be provided to everyone.

### **Committee Reports**

Chairwoman requested that Commissioners support a committee if they are not serving as a lead commissioner on a committee.

### **Transportation**

Commissioner Moore: The Seabury Enhanced Connector card is beginning to roll out an application. He hopes to share them at the next Commission meeting.

### **Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation**

Commissioner Nicholas: The council will be holding a hearing on Bill 22-0402, Elder Abuse Campaign Act, to require DCOA to inform the community of elder abuse and financial exploitation.

Vice-Chair Swanda: If it's already happening then why do we need legislation to do what the bill is mandating? For a coordinated effort and to give one agency the responsibility and for accountability. It is currently not happening.

### **Health and Wellness**

Vice-Chair Swanda: DC is looking stable for the near future. Tell people who receive Medicaid that they'll be fine here in DC. Also, Commissioner Swanda has not given up on the wellness center surveys because the Commission is interested in knowing where people come from and how long they travel to get to the wellness centers.

### **Ward Reports**

#### **Ward 2**

Commissioner Arnstein: We have an active village. And broken sidewalks continue to be a massive problem!

#### **Ward 4**

No report.

#### **Ward 8**

Commissioner Bobo: Everything is quiet. He'd like for DCOA and other agencies to support the MPD's Senior Ball. Volunteer police officers and coast guard members will assist with escorting ladies who attend.

Commissioner Hair: The village in our ward is doing great things!

#### **Ward 5**

Chairwoman Thomas: They have worked on organizing the mini commission and held a reorganization meeting last week.

#### **Ward 6**

Vice-Chairman Swanda: Next to the Arthur Caper Recreation Center is an empty building that could be a great facility for seniors. People in my ward would like to take advantage of the asset.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Announcements**

Commissioner Nicholas: Do we have a housing committee since it's such a big issue? Thomas: we need to establish one. If anyone would like to volunteer please follow-up.

Retreat Report: The report was created as a draft to accommodate additions or corrections from the other Commissioners.

Appointment updates: there are candidates up for consideration for an empty slot in Ward 7.

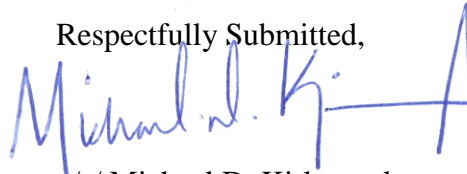
DOES will be at Hayes Senior Wellness Center to provide a more formal presentation regarding jobs for seniors on October 13, 2017.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 pm.

These minutes were recorded by Michael Kirkwood, General Counsel, D.C. Office on Aging, and were formally approved by the Commission on Aging on October 25, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,



/s/ Michael D. Kirkwood

Michael Kirkwood

General Counsel

District of Columbia Office on Aging