

**District of Columbia Commission on Aging
Minutes of December 17, 2014 Meeting**

Commissioners Present:

Romaine Thomas, Chairperson; Ronald Swanda, Vice Chairperson; Don Colodny; Barbara Hair; Janet Heisse ; Grace Lewis; Samuel McCoy; Carolyn Nicholas; Brenda Williams; Nathaniel Wilson;

DCOA Staff Present:

Dr. John M. Thompson; Antonette Dozier; Darrell Jackson; Garret King; Gail Kohn; Tanya Reid; Camile Williams

Guests Present: Attorney Sandra Mattavous-Frye, People’s Counsel; Jean Gross-Bethel, Office of the People’s Counsel; Lawrence Daniels, Office of the People’s Counsel; Danielle Lopez, Office of the People’s Counsel; Michael Beason, Office of the People’s Counsel; Herb Jones, Office of the People’s Counsel; Lawrence Jones, Office of the People’s Counsel; Thelma Hines, Seabury Aging Resources; Joe Harris

Call to Order

Chairperson Thomas called to order the regular meeting of the D.C. Commission on Aging (“the Commission”) at 10:07 a.m., on December 17, 2014, at 500 K St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Inspiration and Introductions

Chairperson Thomas offered thanks and appreciation to everyone for the wonderful spirit, wonderful friendship and blessings that have occurred throughout the year, and she asked that everyone continue to work together for the coming year with wisdom and contributions that support the mission of the Commission on Aging

Approval of Minutes of November 19, Meeting of the Commission on Aging

The minutes of the November 19, 2014 meeting of the Commission on Aging were unanimously approved by the members of the Commission on Aging. Ron Swanda motioned to accept the minutes, Brenda Williams second the motion.

People’s Counsel

The Office of the People’s Counsel (OPC) are lawyers who advocate on the half of utility consumers. Counselor Mattavous-Frye established a platform called “C.A.R.E”, Consumer empowerment – every resident of the District of Columbia needs to have a voice at the table

when policy decisions are made; **Affordability** – everyone in the District should be able to afford essential services such as gas, electric & phone; **Reliability** – everyone deserves reliable services; **Energy efficiency**- gives the consumer the tools to conserve energy, i.e. caulking around windows, installing high efficiency etc.

OPC appears before the Public Service Commission (PSC) to fight for lower rates, high quality service, and reliable service. They also represent individual consumers who have disputes with their utilities. They also educate consumers on issues that are relative to their experience and listen to the consumers, their problems and issues they are experiencing. OPC was able to go before the PSC to penalize the utility company, get credits back to the consumer, and secure a \$100,000 grant to the Greater Washington Urban League for low-income consumers. OPC Staff: Jean Gross-Bethel is the direct point of contact; Lawrence Daniels is the Director of Litigation and Lead Attorney in the Merger Application; Danielle Lopez is the lead attorney on the competitive energy supplier issue, was instrumental in the settlement and getting credits back to the consumers affected; Michael Beason is their webmaster and photographer; Herb Jones has been with OPC for years and is active in the community; Lawrence Jones is the Manager of the Consumer Services Division.

OPC: Competitive Energy Suppliers

Lawrence Jones gave the overview of competitive energy suppliers (CES). DC City Council approved legislation in 1999 to de-regulate the District's energy suppliers; suppliers anywhere in the country could now provide utility customers' energy supply. . In late 2012, residents began reaching out to OPC with questions about the new companies calling to offer utility supply service. OPC compiled complaints, questions, etc. and realized there was a problem. OPC petitioned the PSC to investigate all CESs, although the PSC only investigated one CES, Starion.

Danielle Lopez provided information on the Starion case. After speaking with Starion's counsel, Attorney Lopez and the People's Counsel decided the best way to get tangible benefits was to enter in to a settlement. In the settlement, 500+ consumers had their accounts recalculated at Pepco's rate, some got credits and some got refunds; Starion agreed to provide a \$100,000 grant to the Greater Washington Urban League for low-income consumers; and OPC was also able to review Starion's marketing and sales materials and were able to help make them clear and concise. In addition, if Starion does not comply with the terms of the settlement agreement, OPC is authorized to re-institute the matter before the PSC without filing any paperwork if complaints begin to accumulate.

OPC: Pepco/Exelon Merger

Lawrence Daniels reported on the Pepco/Exelon Merger. Pepco has been D.C.'s electric utility provider for the past 118 years. Pepco's parent company, PHI, and Exelon announced in April 2014 that the companies were planning to merge, and in June 2014 they filed the application with a proposal with they wanted to give the District. The law says they must meet 3 criteria: (1) the benefits of the merged companies cannot come at the expense of the consumers, (2) consumers must receive direct and traceable benefits, and (3) the merger must be in the public interest. Pepco & Exelon must prove they can meet these three criteria. Exelon is proposing to

buy PHI, which includes Pepco of DC, Pepco of MD, Atlantic City Electric in NJ, & Delmarva Power in Delaware. . Mr. Daniels reported that Exelon is the largest provider of nuclear generated energy, which is why they want to buy Pepco because their revenue has been down because the cost of natural gas is low and they want to shore up their revenue and returns to shareholders. . Pepco is a “distribution owned company” meaning it does not provide electricity generation; rather, it focuses on the distribution system. Mr. Daniels reported that OPC believes that the application for merger, as filed, does not serve the public interest, because it will produce more benefits for the companies and few benefits for the consumers. OPCs top concerns with application: (1) there is a set standard must be met for reliability, Exelon put in their application that they will not meet that standard in 2018 & 2019; (2) rates could possibly increase because Exelon has a risky profile; and (3) Renewable energy is at risk. DC is a leader in distributed generation, which means you can rent spaces on solar panels and deduct that energy from your bill. Exelon is against it.

Commissioner Swanda suggested that the Commission draft a letter or appoint someone to attend the hearings at the Public Service Commission to testify for or against the merger. People’s Counsel Matavous-Frye also recommended that send a letter to PSC and specifically state what would be beneficial to the constituents, their oppositions and/or concerns. She said that the PSC must ensure that Exelon is held accountable for the promises it makes in the merger process.

Age-Friendly City D.C. Update

Ms. Kohn reported that the Age-Friendly D.C.’s strategic plan has been published and released by Mayor Gray. Tanya Reid will send paper a copy of the strategic to those who want it, otherwise they will receive electronic copies. Mayor Elect Bowser has gone on record saying she is in support of an Age-Friendly City as well as Deputy Mayor Brenda Donald.

Ms. Kohn focused on 1 of 3 initiatives, the business initiative. A pilot was launched to identify age-friendly businesses, including best practices and a committee from the D.C. Economic Partnership has verified the best practices. She encouraged Commissioners to rate businesses on sites like *Yelp!*.

She also recommended that everyone sign up for Smart 911. Smart 911 is still has not expanded to Virginia & Maryland.

She also reported on the block by block by walks. They are moving in to the next phase, Single Member District (SMD) Age-Friendly City Score, which identifies SMDs where there are walkability issues, etc.

DCOA Update

Dr. Thompson thanked the Commissioners for the work they do, their support, leadership, and advocacy for the District’s seniors. He spoke about ways to move the agency forward, like getting more partners such as the YMCA. He also thanked Darrell Jackson, Jr. and the External Affairs & Communications team for their work on the Holiday party.

Bill Mark-up Correction

Commissioner Nicholas commented that proposed legislation creating a separate Department of Aging had expired, so it is unnecessary for the Commission on Aging to send a letter to the Judicial Committee. Commissioner Nicholas recommends that the Commission on Aging recommend another Councilmember to introduce the legislation next year, possibly Anita Bonds. Chairperson Thomas said they would refer this matter to the Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Abuse Prevention Committee. Commissioner McCoy will help.

Commissioner Nicholas reported that the *Beacon Newspaper* ran an article on Montgomery County, which has created a new unit in the State Prosecutor's office to prosecute people who exploit seniors. Camile Williams suggested that this be presented during the next performance hearing.

Committee Reports

Chairperson Thomas said that it may be time to review the committees, to determine current preferences of the members of the Commission on Aging. She will put together a survey to help with the process.

Housing

Commissioner Williams has been in contact with members of the transition team, to see if they will make senior housing a priority.

Health

Ron Swanda pointed out a federal study that states that the District of Columbia has the highest number of disabled District residents over the age of 65 who live alone, which is the highest in the nation.

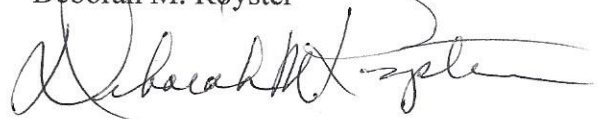
Other Matters

Rules and procedures of the Commission and authorizing legislation were handed out. Commissioner Heisse went to the Open Government Transition Hearing, she was surprised by the amount of feedback from Ward 5, and otherwise it was a wide range of personal stories. Chairperson Thomas wants to offer input to the transition team about senior issues. Commissioner Nicholas said she would help Chairwoman Thomas.

Adjournment

Upon motion and unanimous approval by the members of the Commission on Aging, the December 19, 2014 meeting of the Commission on Aging was adjourned at 11:57 a.m. These minutes were recorded by Tanya Reid, Executive Assistant, D.C. Office on Aging, and were formally approved by the Commission on Aging on January 28, 2015.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah M. Royster

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah M. Royster", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

General Counsel
District of Columbia Office on
Aging