

**D.C. Commission on Aging
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday April 28, 2021
10:00 a.m.**

Commissioners Present

Guleford Bobo, Chairperson; Carolyn Matthews, Vice Chairperson; Gloria Whitfield; Grace Lewis; Maria Wilson; Barbara Hair; Barbara Lee; JoAnne Hersh; Mary Taylor

DACL Staff Present

Laura Newland, Director; Garret King, Chief of Staff; Tanya Reid, Administrative Support Manager; Rinaldo Washington, Special Projects Coordinator

Ex-Officio Members Present

Cesar Barreto, DDOT; Danilo Pelletiere, DHCD; Dr. Sheila Jones, DHS; Veronica Longstreth, DC Health; Aimellia Siemson, Councilmember Bonds Office; Nana Bailey-Thomas, DDOT; Mary Terrell, DOES; Courtney Barbour, DPR

Members of the Public Present

Tony Robinson, DC Housing Authority; Aisha Thompson, DC Housing Authority; Heather Foote, Ward 2 Resident; Veronica Ingram, Ward 4 Mini-Commission

- I. **Call to Order**
Chairperson Bobo called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

- II. **Review and Approval of Minutes**
The March meeting minutes were approved without correction.

- III. **Presentations**
 - a. **Tony Robinson, DC Housing Authority**
Mr. Robinson reported that DC Housing Authority (DCHA) held vaccination events for the seniors at their senior properties. They also had a series of vaccination events with DPR and the Department of Health and Human Services in Ward 5. DC is closing the vaccination registration for those with vouchers because it is now open for everyone. They are still serving those seniors who are homebound. If someone is a voucher holder but not in a public housing unit, they will have to get the vaccine on their own.

DCHA will be going for their budget hearing later in the summer and will request \$50,000,000 for capital funding. DCHA recently started receiving capital funding, over the past three years they received about \$90,000,000. It was used in a variety of locations; the most prominent use of the funding was the Judiciary House. Judiciary House will not be taking on new residents until the renovations are done.

Aisha Thompson from DCHA's Voucher Program informed the Commission that the waiting list for Section 8 is closed; however, there are "local" senior specific vouchers. These vouchers go through other agencies that DCHA partners with.

Vice Chairwoman Matthews asked if Section 8 was eliminated. Ms. Thompson stated that it was not eliminated, the waitlist still exists, but it is closed. It will open as funding becomes available. She also stated that the name changed to the "Housing Choice" voucher program. The program is federally funded.

Commissioner Hersh asked why not let the waiting list continue to grow instead of closing it. Ms. Thompson stated that by regulation the District must have a waiting list when it comes to federal vouchers. The vouchers are based on preferences. The District preference is homelessness. The waiting list is based on order and time. The District has a list of about 30,000. There is currently not enough housing and funding.

Commissioner Hair asked if there was a waiting list specifically for seniors. Ms. Thompson stated there was not, there was only one waiting list. If DCHA receives funding specifically for a certain group, then people who fall into that group would be pulled. An example of this is the Mainstream vouchers, targeted to people with disabilities ages 18 to 61. They do not normally know when they will receive funding until HUD discloses what kind of funding they have available.

Ms. Thompson informed the Commission of the Shallow Subsidy program. The program is not a voucher but is for seniors to help with rent. Seniors can receive up to \$600 monthly or 30% of your income; however, the seniors cannot receive any other rental assistance.

Chairman Bobo & Vice Chairwoman Matthews voiced concerns about safety. Mr. Richardson indicated that people could reach out to him and he would speak with the public safety team.

b. **Laura Newland, DACL**

Director Newland stated the biggest thing DACL is working on is getting back to in-person programming. She'd been dropping into town hall meetings, meeting with seniors and grantees to discuss how in-person programming should look. She'd also been speaking with Director Nesbitt at DC Health to ensure the agency was doing things safely. She reminded the Commission that in-person activity will look different for a while. She does not know how long it will take to get back to pre-COVID participation rates. She asked that people be kind because this is a first for everyone.

Vaccinations will not be a requirement to participate in citywide programming. There will be a "booking" system to ensure that there is equity in participation. Seniors potentially will not be able to stay at the senior wellness centers all day as they have done in the past, because space will be limited.

Director Newland informed the Commission that Chief Operating Officer, Christian Barrera, will be departing the agency, so the agency will be adjusting.

Heather Foote asked the director what lessons were learned during the pandemic. The Director stated there were many lessons learned, one them is that it is hard if a person is not digitally connected. This is true for all ages. It is not just a technology challenge; it is a digital socialization challenge. It is more than providing someone with technology, you must work with them to overcome whatever issues they have with using technology.

She reminded the Commission about the iPad project the agency launched. She acknowledged that DCPL was helping the agency with the project and expressed how wonderful it was to work with them. She also boasted about some of the many programs DCPL has.

Director Newland also stated the biggest challenge has been social isolation and the agency is focusing its programmatic efforts to address it.

DACL's budget oversight hearing is June 22nd.

IV. **New Business**

None

V. **Ward Reports**

Ward 1: Vice Chairperson Matthews mentioned that it was a glaring oversight for Ward 1 not being included in the walk- up vaccination sites. She also mentioned that the discarding of bikes has not improved. Cesar Barreto said he would follow up with her.

Ward 5: Commissioner Lewis expressed concerns about the mail service being delayed.

Ward 8: Commissioner Hair discussed her experience with the Produce Plus and encouraged others to enroll. She also discussed her experience with the Bluerock Care program.

VI. **Ex-Officio Reports**

DC Council: Aimellia Siemson informed the Commission of the Washington Gas Cares program and the Stay DC program. The Stay DC program helps renters with back pay for up to year.

DOES: Judge Terrell announced that Trinity College launched a community health worker training program at the ARC and are recruiting people to attend. The program is an opportunity to get into the healthcare profession. DOES is looking into doing a pilot program.

DPR: Courtney Barbour introduced herself to the Commission as the interim Senior Services Manager.

DC Health: Veronica Longstreth stated she would follow up to see why Ward 1 did not have a walk-up site for vaccination. Vice Chairwoman Matthews thanked Ms. Longstreth for help with the illegal vending in her neighborhood.

Ms. Longstreth indicated that the City is working diligently to keep the COVID cases down and to try to ensure that the District does not have spike in cases as the City continues to open.

DHCD: Danilo Pelletiere provided further information for the Stay DC program. To get assistance with applying for the Stay program call 833-4-STAYDC. The application can be found on <https://stay.dc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/STAY-DC-Tenant-Paper-Application-English-16.pdf>. The deadline is September 30, 2021.

He also stated there will be programming for homeowners that will come with additional federal funding. The American Rescue plan legislation passed in early February 2021. There is money in the homeownership assistance fund, the District will receive a relatively small amount of money to help with things like mortgage and utility assistance program.

DCPL: David Quick informed the Commission starting May 3rd, DCPL will begin having some Saturday hours. He also talked about people being able to get assistance with tax prep.

He also mentioned that the Southwest branch in Ward 6 will be complete soon.

DDOT: Cesar Barreto mentioned that DDOT's headquarters moved to 250 M Street SE. He provided many updates to service requests made by the Commissioners. Additionally, he commented on the concerns Commission Matthews expressed regarding scooters being left in neighborhood. He stated that DDOT was working in the agency's Micro-mobility program to address scooters being left.

Public Comment

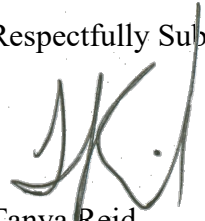
Heather Foote followed up that there are 57 wheelchair accessible taxis operating through TransportDC. They can accommodate electric wheelchairs, but she is still checking to see if they can accommodate two electric wheelchairs.

VII. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:58am.

These minutes were recorded by Tanya Reid, Administrative Support Manager, DC Department of Aging and Community Living, and were formally approved by the Commission on Aging on May 26, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TR', is written over a faint, circular official stamp.

Tanya Reid
Administrative Support Manager
DC Department of Aging and Community Living