

Mayor's Council on African American Elders

C/O – Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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August 20, 2021

Members Present – Dr. Benjamin Abe, Interim Chair, Dr. Brenda Jackson, Sheila Mary, Paul Mitchell, Mattie Taplin, Claudette Thomas, Pamela Williams, Paula Williams

Members Absent – Charlotte Antoine

Guest – Rex Brown, Director, HSD Safe & Thriving Communities Division

ADS Staff –Karen Winston, Mary Mitchell, ADS Interim Director

I. Approval of August Meeting Summary

Motion to approve August meeting minutes. (No meeting in September)

- Dr. Abe: move to modify or accept minutes
- Moved by Claudette
- Seconded by Mary
- Passed unanimously among council members

II. Safe & Thriving Communities Director

Rex Brown, the new Safe & Thriving Communities (STC) division director, began by thanking MCAAE members for advocating to maintain the elder abuse detectives in the Seattle Police Department budget. Those positions were transferred to the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) which led to the creation of the new division. Rex has been in the position since July 7, 2021. Prior to that, he worked for the State creating innovative diversity, equity, and inclusionary programming. He also served in the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services as the senior director for the Office of Equity & Inclusion.

Rex was born and raised in Providence, Rhode Island, but lived most of his life in Boston, Massachusetts. He lived in Olympia, WA for seven years before moving to Seattle three months ago for his new position in HSD. He has degrees in English and Philosophy from Boston College, and also attended law school there. Rex has worked in government for 20 years.

The STC was created from the blood of George Floyd and so many others who have been the victim/survivors of police brutality. The division is a full partner with the City of Seattle in working to forge a new way to create community safety. Rex acknowledged the pivotal moment we are in – that BIPOC communities would actually be considered first in the creation of the division – because it is the least invested-in and the most vulnerable population in the city and in the country. “If there is not equity in the health and safety of BIPOC communities everywhere, then there isn’t for anyone anywhere,” he said.

Co-sponsored by:



Rex's vision and goal for the division is to create a new way to experience safety, as well as guiding and living the safety that we want to create. He has asked many colleagues about safety, however, most could not provide a definition of what it means for them to feel safe, because they have never experienced it. For African Americans in the U.S., this is a common experience that he wants to change. Rex wants the Safe & Thriving Communities division to be one that changes that trajectory forever.

As the STC comes together, there will be nine critical positions including senior planners and strategic advisors. Some of the positions are currently open and the next position openings will be for a Strategic Advisor for community engagement, and also for a Grants & Contracts Monitor. MCAAE members were asked to assist with getting the word out about these opportunities.

Question – What are the current things in process to promote safety in the community?

Response – The division received an allocation of \$10.4 million in 33 contracts that are community led. Several contracts have been awarded to provide wrap-around services following a decrease in crime in hot spots; services to decrease domestic violence; and several other contracts. Seattle is the first city to approach the work in this way.

2021 Supportive Re-Entry RFP – In addition, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was released today. The STC division is seeking applications from community-based organizations to support currently and formerly incarcerated individuals to gain knowledge, skills, and support; connect or reconnect with cultural roots and supportive communities; and to obtain long term, living wage employment in order to transition successfully from incarceration and into the community. For this RFP, the term "reentry" is used to describe assisting people returning from incarceration to "reenter" systems and institutions that may lead to economic and social progress. "Rerooting" refers to the process of connecting people back to their cultural roots and communities. Since much of incarceration is about isolating people, a process of rerooting is necessary to ground people despite the systemic barriers that still exist. For all individuals returning from incarceration, being part of strong and connected communities provides accountability and supports their ability to thrive. This RFP is investing \$1,383,000 in City of Seattle General Fund for culturally appropriate reentry and rerooting programming. Initial funding will be for the period of December 15, 2021-December 31, 2022. [Click here to visit the RFP page to learn more.](#) MCAAE members were also asked to assist with getting the word out about this funding opportunities.

Question – Will the funding be used as help the newly released get housing?

Response – Yes. There is some rental assistance included in the RFP.

Question – Last year, due to the pandemic, many older adults received early release from prison. The AAEP received several referrals for these individuals, many age 70 and older, and had been in prison for 20 to 30 years. These individuals struggle to survive and need a lot of support. The AAEP experienced difficulty trying to get them reintegrated into the community. Will the funding be available to help them, too?

Response – Anyone who was formerly incarcerated can receive assistance with these funds, and the agencies interested in receiving the funding are aware of this need. Following the RFP process, when the funding awards are announced, Rex promised to follow-up with the MCAAE regarding the outcome.

Question – If we know someone who needs a referral, who would we make the referral to?

Response – A referral can be made to agencies after the RFP process is completed and funding awards have been announced. In addition, 33 organizations that received funding during the summer for the Community Safety Capacity-Building RFP, should be able to assist, including [CHOOSE 180](#); [Community Passageways](#); and The Regional Peacekeepers Collective, etc. A list can be provided.

III. ADS & Legislative Updates – Mary provided the following updates.

HSD Updates

- Interim HSD Director, Helen Howell, started a new position as the Deputy CEO for the King County Regional Homelessness Authority. The new appointed acting HSD Director is Tanya Kim, a previous HSD deputy director, will serve in the role until the newly elected mayor fills the position.
- A second position is open is for the HSD Deputy Director. The position would oversee ADS and homelessness contracts. The deadline for applying is October 19. HSD would like to hire someone who has a proven record of leading with equity. If you know someone, please share the information with them.

ADS

- The hiring process to fill the ADS Director position has started and filling the ADS Deputy Director position is also underway. As interim chair of the MCAAE, Dr. Abe's name was forwarded to participate on the interview panel. If anyone else is interested in participating on the interview panel, please forward your name, email address and phone number to Karen.
- October 18 was the deadline for all City of Seattle employees to be vaccinated unless they requested an exemption for medical or religious reasons. ADS received nine requests for exceptions that are currently being reviewed. If exemptions are not approved, those employees may be required to do regular testing. All new hires will have to show proof of vaccination.

- Mayor Durkan released an executive order mandating that all contractors and their employees be vaccinated. This conflicts with the Governor's order because the homecare agencies were exempt from vaccination due to a shortage of homecare workers. ADS is working with City attorneys to determine how to address the conflict.
- Karen reported that the Mayor's Office has asked for assistance with sharing information with the community members about COVID-19 vaccinations for the remaining unvaccinated individuals, kids 5-11 once they become eligible, and individuals eligible for boosters. Karen will forward an email that members can then forward to family, friends, and contacts.
- Starting November 1, ADS case managers will resume in-home visits. In some cases, telephone assessments will still be used, however, the goal is to get eyes on our clients.
- Looking ahead to 2022 and beyond, Mary would like to strategically focus on increasing African American participation in ADS-funded programs and services.

King County

- A meeting is scheduled with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority to talk about current resources and partnership opportunities. Attention is focused on the Eviction Moratorium and when it will be lifted. The goal is to keep people in their homes. Mayor Durkan extended the moratorium for residential and commercial evictions to January 15, 2022.
- Dr. Jackson requested a separate meeting with Mark Dones, instead of inviting him to a regular meeting.

State

- Meetings are starting with state legislators. So far, a meeting occurred with Representative Gregerson. Next week, meetings are scheduled with Representatives Sullivan and Chop. We are asking for \$12mill in General Fund and a \$12mill federal match to help stabilize the Case Management Program. We are also asking for parity with state agencies when it comes to receiving funding.
- The WA State Council on Aging Conference is scheduled for October 20, and the Senior Lobby Conference is the next day on for October 21. Both are day-long conferences. Karen will forward registration information if it is not too late to register.

Other Announcements

- Karen announced that the mayor included funding in her proposed budget for nurse position for the AAEP. Karen asked for volunteers to advocate for the position at upcoming public hearing. Margaret and Dr. Abe will attend.
- Mary reported that the letter of support requested by Y.B.G. Healthcare, has been drafted. In November Nathan will present to the ADS Advisory Council. If approved, the letter will be sent as a joint letter of support from both advocacy groups.

- The Southeast Seattle Senior Center will have a vaccine pop-up on October 16, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. New Beginnings Christian Fellowship will also have a pop-up clinic on November 6.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for **Friday, November 19, 2021.**