

# Mayor's Council on African American Elders

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## Meeting Summary

August 24, 2018

**Members Present** – Brenda Charles-Edwards, Chair; Benjamin Abe; Ina Howell; Dr. Brenda Jackson; Paul Mitchell; Claudette Thomas

**Absent** – Noris Daniel; Janice Davis; Tricia Diamond; Mattie Taplin (Emeritus); Jim Watkins; Cynthia Winters

**Guests** – JR Gillespie; Trey Rabun – Amara Foster Care Program

**ADS Staff** – Brent Butler; Cathy Knight, Karen Winston

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### I. Committee Reports

#### Low-Income Housing Committee

The committee reported that in the Seattle area, there is a shortage of low-income housing. The City may be committed to developing more “affordable” housing, but even affordable housing is not attainable for older people on fixed incomes. The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) is one of the largest low-income housing providers in Seattle, however, there is a two-year waitlist for individuals and families, including older people.

The committee recommends advocating for:

- Establishing vacated city-owned property as low-income housing,
- Developing rent control policies or a cap on rental increases,
- More set-asides for low-income units.

Brent agreed to help the committee research surplus city-owned vacated property and stated that this is typically governed by statute (see Sale of Surplus City or Town Property information, <http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Legal/General-Government/Sale-of-Surplus-City-or-Town-Property.aspx>) and (see sale of County owned property <http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Legal/General-Government/Sale-of-Surplus-County-Property.aspx>) He also reported that he met with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights staff about the legality of reserving (setting aside) a percentage of units in a new development for older adults. He stated that the Fair Housing Act protects certain classes of individuals but not age (see, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/FHLaws](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/FHLaws)) Legislation (*Housing for Older Persons Act of 1995*) allows developers to discriminate by age so long as at least 80% of the households have someone 55 or older. More specifically, the Housing for Older Persons Act of 1995 (HOPA) provides exemptions to familial status if a community meets either of the following conditions:

Co-sponsored by:



1. All of the occupants of the community are over the age of 62.
2. At least 80 percent of the occupied units include at least one resident who is verified to be over the age of 55, and the community follows a policy that demonstrates an intent to provide housing for those aged 55 or older.

<https://www.55places.com/blog/yes-age-restricted-communities-are-legal>

### Property Tax Committee

The committee discussed maintaining the presence of African Americans in the CD, and the Africatown project is a step in that direction. Gentrification in the CD has been fueled by businesses such as Microsoft, Expedia, Amazon, Google, Vulcan, and Starbuck's, causing property taxes to increase dramatically. This has created a hardship for many older residents who are struggling to age-in-place.

The committee recommends joining forces with other advocacy groups, such as AARP and the ADS Advisory Council. Brenda reported that AARP is working with WA State Senator Manka Dhingra and has also hired a full-time lobbyist to work on the issue. Benjamin attended a housing meeting in Kirkland and referenced policy development in Washington, D.C., to provide 100% property tax exemption for people age 75 and older. The committee recommends supporting this effort and advocating for:

- A property tax freeze that would be based on your income at the time of retirement.
- Increasing the penalty for fraudulent and predatory practices.
- Dr. Abe Benjamin asked about the possibility of advancing the co-housing model. Brent shared the co-housing model that is in place at APEX (see <http://apexcoop.org/>) and explained that this limited equity condominium in Belltown served largely low-income adults; 80% of the residents had to be low income. The Coop owners in this co-housing community were required to participate in one or more committees, such as membership, building or finance.

Cathy reported that King County is planning to use excess levy funds (\$12,000) and partner with senior centers to assist older residents with the property tax relief application process. Perhaps the MCAAE can assist with outreach for this effort.

### African American Elders Program (AAEP) Support Committee

The committee met with Margaret Boddie, AAEP Program Manager, to discuss the needs of the program. Margaret explained the current contract does not include funding for a nurse and that case managers are only able to serve discretionary clients (those not receiving Medicaid/COPES services). Margaret wants her program to serve Medicaid-eligible clients. Currently, there are about 2,700 African Americans receiving Medicaid services. Margaret would like support with advocating for a large share of those clients to be served by the AAEP, so that clients can receive culturally sensitive services.

Next Steps – Based on information provided by the committees, Karen will create a draft report on the MCAAE 2018 priorities, in preparation for a future meeting with Mayor Durkan.

## **II. September MCAAE Meeting**

The September meeting will be held at (confirm SESSC).

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting will be Friday, Friday, September 21.