

# Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County  
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**April 18, 2025 – 2:00–3:30pm**  
**Grace United Methodist Church, 722 30<sup>th</sup> Ave**

**Members:** Benjamin Abe, Tiffany Toms, Pamela Williams, Hiwot Zewdie, Charlotte Antoine, Paul Mitchel

**Members Absent:** Rita Howard, Nathan Yemane, Paula Williams, Claudette Thomas

**ADS Staff:** Michael Adusah, Eldad Mekuria, Mary Mitchell Pearson

**Guests:** Evelin Martinez, Cindy Herdon, Calvin Lassiter, Deborah O'Neill, Sharon Hargraves

## 1. Welcome/Introductions

## 2. MCAAE Business

- Approval of March Minutes
- Members were asked to review the Bylaws, and make notes of suggested revisions, additions, or deletions. These will be reviewed again in October for a formal vote.
- Members level of involvement – Reappointment Packages
- Crystal Dawkins is announced as the new liaison for the Advisors Council.
- 4/23 1pm in-person tour of the Tubman Center
- Joint meeting with the Advisory Council – May 16, 2025

## 3. Washington Homeownership Resource Center - [Black Home Initiative Presentation](#)

Today's presenter is Evelin Martinez, Program and Partnership Coordinator | Washington Homeownership Resource Center. Increasing taxes for seniors and proposing locking taxes at the time of retirement was posed as a potential solution. Also discussed was the Covenant Homeownership Act, which aims to provide relief to homeowners. Resources available for state recovery and advocacy were highlighted. The Washington Homeownership Resource Center is statewide and covers King County, Pierce County, and Thurston County for the Black Home Initiative. The Buyer Readiness Fund helps pay up to \$25,000 in qualifying debt to assist in purchasing a home. Connecting people with resources and services, including credit repair and financial assistance were offered; these services are free of charge. They have a network of over 120 partners and encouraged people to call them for assistance.

The program offers up to 20% down payment and closing costs for home purchases, up to \$150,000. Other programs were mentioned, such as the Welcome Buyers Board. Statistics on the usage of these programs were shared, including the average down payment assistance and

the number of loans closed. The funds for these programs are not likely to run out unless there are changes in legislation.

The first state to pass a specific program is currently under lawsuit. The program is designed to help people avoid foreclosure and is being promoted as a worst-case scenario. Efforts are made to reach out to more people before they go through the foreclosure process. They are also working on a program to help people take advantage of tax exemptions and reductions.

#### **4. Updates**

- ADS Director's Update- Mary Mitchell, ADS Director

The Older Americans Act and a federal funding source for senior centers and programs were discussed. A population act is to be drafted and attended by representatives from the Advisory Councils. The act, which was supposed to be signed in March, is a priority for the national organization.

Mary and staff attended the yearly policy conference in Washington, DC, focusing on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act and the protection of Medicaid funding. Concerns about the restructuring of the Health and Human Services Department and the potential loss of programs were expressed. Mary and ADS staff met with legislative aids, sent a follow-up email, and they await the state budget to assess any cuts to their programs. ADS advocated for additional nutritional funding, which was not fully met. There is concern about the instability of the federal government and its potential impact on their budget.

ADS will know more about potential budget cuts next week and would adjust accordingly. A new long-term care benefits program was introduced, funded by a tax, and its portability was discussed. The program is set to go live in 2026. Discussion followed of potential speakers for future meetings.

- Advisory Council on Aging and Disability Services – Michael Adusah

Michael announced a joint meeting with the Advisory Council is now set for May 16, location pending; the major topic will be advocacy. Members discussed potential advocacy topics, including increasing funding for seniors and communities of color. There was also a discussion about reparations and the Commerce Clause, with Calvin explaining its impact on the economic status of the United States.

Potential for reparations for the black community were discussed, focusing on the impact of freeway construction and compensation for losses. The importance of learning more about advocacy opportunities and spreading awareness to other groups were highlighted.

#### **Joint meeting with the Advisory Council – May 16, 2025**