

Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

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

Members: Benjamin Abe, Tiffany Toms, Pamela Williams, Hiwot Zewdie, Charlotte Antoine, Claudette Thomas, Deborah O'Neill, Calvin Lassiter, Paul Mitchel

Members Absent: Nathan Yemane, Crystal Dawkins

ADS Staff: Michael Adusah, Stevie Elliott, Eldad Mekuria, Dinah Stephens

Guests: Cindy Herndon

Summary: The meeting began with approval of the July minutes as presented, followed by a debrief of the Caregiver Forum addressing issues impacting caregivers and disabled individuals. Discussions also covered Federal and State updates on social programs like Medicaid and Medicare, followed by a City of Seattle Councilmembers Candidate Forum debrief on senior and disability issues. The meeting concluded with the MCAAE Advocacy Tracker Presentation/Discussion, outlining strategies for local political advocacy and addressing challenges faced by African American older adults, such as housing, nutrition, caregiving, Medicare, and the impact of gentrification.

Key Discussion Points:

- **Caregivers Forum Planning:**
 - Forum scheduled for November 2nd at the Northwest African American Museum.
 - Considered themes, including information on the new Medicare "Guide" program.
 - Approved June meeting minutes and observed a moment of silence for Charlie Mitchell.
- **Federal and State legislative Updates**
 - Discussed upcoming changes to Medicaid, SNAP, and Medicare (work requirements, more frequent eligibility reviews starting December 2026).
 - Emphasized the need for outreach to diverse communities and using their program for advocacy.

- **Candidate Forums Debrief:**
 - Expressed concern about Seattle City Council candidates' limited knowledge on Medicare and caregiving.
 - Identified the need for more education and engagement with candidates on senior and disability issues.
 - Highlighted specific accessibility issues in Seattle (sidewalks, traffic signals, waterfront park).
- **African American Elders Advocacy Strategy:**
 - Planned to invite Mayor Harold to discuss issues affecting African American elders.
 - Considered developing a candidate questionnaire.
 - Began outlining specific problems for advocacy, starting with complex SHA applications.
- **Housing Challenges for Aging Black Elders:**
 - Discussed high property taxes, inaccessible homes, and complex applications driving elders from their homes.
 - Noted increasing homelessness among older adults due to behavioral health issues and lack of affordable housing.
 - Highlighted maintenance issues in facilities (e.g., non-functioning elevators).
 - Mentioned the need for culturally appropriate nutrition options for Black older adults.
- **Nutrition :**
 - Identified challenges: lack of culturally appropriate options, limited knowledge of resources, and physical access.
 - Proposed creating a comprehensive list of food assistance programs.
 - Suggested an "Instacart for seniors" program.
- **Caregiver Challenges and Support Needs:**
 - Discussed lack of training, economic strain, and workforce shortages for caregivers.
 - Emphasized the need for better resource access, especially for family caregivers.
 - Noted difficulties navigating the system and financial struggles of middle-income caregivers.

- **Addressing Gentrification's Social Impact:**
 - Discussed how gentrification leads to loss of social connections due to displacement.
 - Explored solutions, including giving displaced residents first choice in new housing.
 - Mentioned revisiting previous recommendations to the city council.
 - **Digital Equity for Senior Citizens:**
 - Discussed distributing laptops and finding community technology programs.
 - Planned to compile ideas and actions for the next meeting.
 - Encouraged attendance at an upcoming community call regarding reparations.
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Actions:

- **Council Members:** Review advocacy tracker and add potential solutions before next meeting.
 - **Staff:** Research and compile a list of senior nutrition programs in Seattle.
 - **Council:** Investigate "Instacart for seniors" program.
 - **Council:** Revisit previous recommendations on housing priority for displaced residents.
 - **Council:** Explore options for obtaining and distributing laptops to seniors.
 - **Staff:** Update advocacy tracker with discussed problems and solutions.
 - **Staff:** Prepare for detailed solutions discussion at next meeting.
 - **Council Members:** invited to attend July 23rd community call on reparation's issues.
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Next Meeting; August 15, 2025