

# Mayor's Council on African American Elders

C/O – Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County  
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May 21, 2021

**Members Present** – Dr. Benjamin Abe, Interim Chair

**Members (Appointment Pending)** – Charlotte Antoine, Sheila Mary, Paula Williams, Pamela Williams

**Members Absent** – Dr. Brenda Jackson, Paul Mitchell, Claudette Thomas

**Guest** – Sharon Sobers-Outlaw

**ADS Staff** – Brent Butler, Mary Mitchell, Karen Winston

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## I. Interim ADS Director, Mary Mitchell

Following member's introductions, Mary Mitchell was introduced and shared information about her background and her career. Her parents, Mary and Dewy Hunter, owned Hunter's Auto Wrecking on Empire Way, now known as MLK, Jr. Way. Her grandparents were originally from Texarkana, Arkansas and migrated to the northwest in the mid-40's.

Mary graduated from Garfield High School in 1988. She has worked with the City of Seattle for 29 years. She started her career in the Seattle Police Department (SPD) in the records section as a trainer. After 12 years, she transferred to Parking Enforcement, where she was promoted to supervisor. She completed training to become a certified mediator, and also participated in trainings for the City's Race and Social Justice (RSJI) Core Team. This allowed her to facilitate RSJI trainings within SPD called, "Race – The Power of an Illusion." Mary then moved to the Department of Finance to assist with creating the marijuana ordinance. She later became division director but, two years later, she made the choice to step down. She returned to the same position after four months.

Since the murder of George Floyd and the pandemic, Mary has had a great opportunity to lead with grace, while giving time and attention to operating in a relational culture as opposed to White supremacist culture. Her focus has been on training staff to understand what race is, developing a Racial Equity Toolkit, and working to embed anti-racist policies for future generations.

In 2021, the director of the Seattle Human Resources Department, Bobby Humes, contacted Mary and asked her to be interim director at ADS. She accepted and is now working with staff to identify areas needing improvement and addressing inequities. Mary is committed to leading with grace, to be very vocal, to uplift, and connect people with needed resources. Human Services is a new area for Mary, but she is quickly learning about the aging network, legislative matters, contracts, and case management services.

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## II. Legislative Updates – Mary provided the following updates.

### Federal:

- **Am Rescue Plan** – Passed earlier this year and effectively doubles funding for AAAs through the Older Americans Act.
  - Funding is one time to help with COVID response and recovery thru FY 2024.
  - AAAs are waiting for guidance from the state on allocations and allowable uses.
  - N4A and other advocacy orgs are advocating to sustain these long overdue increases in aging network programs.
  - Related – In early May, Mary joined fellow WA state AAA directors for a meeting with Sen. Cantwell’s staff. The purpose was to seek her support for [n4a 2021 policy priorities](#) - specifically, sustaining recent investments in OAA programs.
- The third federal prong of the Biden administration (following Am Rescue Plan for COVID response/recover and Am Jobs plan for infrastructure) is the **American Families Plan**. The plan will
  - Focus on health and wellness of families,
  - Paid leave for new parents and family caregivers,
  - Makes permanent some of the temporary programs in the Affordable Care Act, including Medicaid Expansion and subsidies that make health plans affordable for many.
- Huge road ahead to get both Jobs and Families plan passed. Expect to hear more from staff about advocacy opportunities on both bills.

### State:

- The 2021 legislative session that ended on April 25 was the first fully virtual session for both legislators and the advocates.
- Thanks to aging network advocates, including the MCAAE and ADS Advisory Council, who put in a lot of hard work to help pass our legislative priorities.
- Last fall, the state was considering across the board 15% cuts to long-term care services.
  - We are so fortunate that our legislators recognized AAA’s role in keeping older adults safe and did not pursue cuts to health and human services.
  - Thanks to greatly improved economic forecasts, which once predicted \$9B shortfall, the legislature was able to include healthy investments in digital equity, affordable housing, climate change, and,
  - AAAs received an additional \$7.5M to address workforce challenges resulting from the pandemic.
  - The legislature also responded to digital divide inequities that were highlighted and exacerbated during the pandemic. There is funding for infrastructure development (mostly rural areas), digital equity grants through the Public Works Board and a statewide digital navigators’ program (the first in WA and maybe the country to offer tech help in more languages than just English and Spanish)

- The ambitious progressive agenda included bills to fix our state’s upside-down tax code. WA state is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the burden it places on its lowest income residents for tax collection (primarily through sales and property taxes).
  - After decades-long fight, a capital gains tax passed (**SB 5096**), imposing a 7% tax on high-end capital gains for the wealthiest 1% to fund education and childcare. Opponents are already working to overturn the bill through a lawsuit that claims it is an unconstitutional income tax.
  - Another major win was the passage of the Working Families Tax Credit (**HB 1297**), which provides a tax break for families that are eligible for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. Amount will depend on family size and income, but anti-poverty advocates have been fighting for this legislation for decades.
  - Finally historic investments in housing include \$175M for the Housing Trust Fund and significant support for affordable housing, rental assistance, and foreclosure prevention.
  - Related, the legislature also passed ‘just cause’ eviction laws that protect tenants from 20-day termination notices w/o cause; ensure a tenant’s right to a payment plan if behind on rent; and the right to legal counsel in eviction cases in court.
- In the past few weeks, the governor has been signing bills into law and exercising his line-item veto. Some of these are budget related, including use of expanded federal match for Medicaid. We are waiting to hear from the state as to if/how these may impact AAAs.

Question: Is there summary of regulations governing caregiver Individual Providers vaccinations and disclosure? Are caregivers required to be vaccinated? Can a client require that someone entering their house be vaccinated?

Answer: Case Management Bulletins indicates that vaccination status is [HIPPA protected](#).

**Age Friendly** – Brent provided an overview of Age Friendly Seattle for new MCAAE members.

- The City of Seattle joined the [AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities](#) in July 2016. Seattle was the 104th community in the U.S. to sign on to the network, which provides access to resources and information on age-friendly best practices, assessment and implementation models, and experiences of towns and cities around the world.
- Age Friendly Seattle makes improvements in eight areas, defined by the World Health Organization, that influence health and quality of life for older adults.
  1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
  2. Transportation
  3. Housing
  4. Social Participation
  5. Respect and Social Inclusion
  6. Civic Participation and Employment
  7. Communication and Information
  8. Community and Health Services

- This initiative aims to help the region support the positive contributions of older adults and enable people of all ages and abilities to achieve their potential.
- The 2019 Age Friendly Action Plan identified 86 independent actions within 29 broad initiatives, including housing.
- Brent also highlighted a few of the accomplishments in the 2019 Report on Accomplishment, including the four action items that the MCAAE partnered on, including: 1) an increase in affordable housing in the Central District; 2) develop preference policies for neighborhoods impacted by gentrification; 3) property tax relief for older homeowners; and 4) increase investments to improve service delivery for older African American in south King County.
- 2020 Accomplishments included
  - Coordinated 36+ online programs that promoted safe and civic participation,
  - Improved language access to online programming for immigrant communities, please hearing access,
  - Developed focused COVID-19 messaging, and
  - Advanced accessibility training for City employees.
- 2021 Priorities include:
  - Advance COVID vaccine access & acceptance among BIPOC communities,
  - Align with Reimagine Seattle – crosswalk AFS action items with City access & eligibility strategies,
  - Partner with state & local leaders to advance digital equity for older adults,
  - Expand social connectivity through innovative pilots with community partners (e.g., digital navigators, hotspots & tablet distribution)
  - Build upon City ADS training to include a module on dementia-friendly services.

For questions regarding Age Friendly Seattle, contact Brent at [brent.butler@seattle.gov](mailto:brent.butler@seattle.gov).

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for **Friday July 16, 2021**.