

Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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MCAAE RETREAT #1

March 21, 2025 – 2:00–3:30pm

Grace United Methodist Church, 722 30th Ave

Members: Rita Howard, Claudette Thomas, Tiffany Toms, Pamela Williams, Hiwot Zewdie, Paul Mitchell

Members Absent: Charlotte Antoine, Benjamin Abe, Nathan Yemane

ADS Staff: Michael Adusah, Eldad Mekuria, Mary Mitchell Pearson; Waing Waing

Guests: AyeNay Abye and Jarvis Henderson—Tubman Center for Health and Freedom; Calvin Lassiter; Danielle Friedman, Queen Carter, Sharon Hargraves, Deborah O'Neal, Beverly Smith

1. Welcome/Introductions

2. MCAAE Business

- Voting for New Chair. Rita Howard nominated Pamela Williams for Chair.

MOTION: Motion passed unanimously.

- Approval of January and February Minutes

MOTION: Minutes approved unanimously.

3. Tubman Center for Health & Freedom Presentation

AyeNay Abye discussed the founding of their organization, named after Harriet Tubman, which focuses on health justice and integrative medicine. Their mission is to build health institutions that meet the needs of the community and address health and wellness from both systemic and clinical approaches. Their partnership with the Rainier Valley Leadership Academy was highlighted; this is where their first clinic opened to teach a class on community health research. The organization's model is successful due to community research projects and partnerships, with over 24,000 community members involved.

Their primary care clinic, the Healing House, is undergoing expansion, and there are plans to open a third clinic in 2027. The emphasis is on holistic care, connecting patients with community resources, and conducting research to improve their services. Members were invited to seek care at their clinic and participate in their clinical trial.

The organization is expanding mental health services and forming an advisory group to support and grow mental health work. The focus is on intergenerational mental health, considering the whole family unit from birth to end of life. Various events are organized by the organization, including an annual gala and community basketball. Rita proposed potential partnerships between the Tubman Center and MCAAE, leveraging their advocacy skills and ability to connect with the black elder community.

Areas of potential collaboration were explored given the advocacy priorities of the MCAAE of nutrition, housing, and health. AyeNay highlighted two State engagements this legislative session the Tubman Center is focusing on: 1) Tubman Health made it onto the budget and want to stay in the final budget 2) have made a written testimony on Medical Debt. Members expressed interest to support for legislation aimed at removing medical debt from credit reports. The conversation concluded with a discussion on the upcoming \$53 million dollar project in Rainier Beach, which includes neighborhood improvements.

4. Updates

- **ADS Director's Report**

Mary provided updates on the ADS outreach strategy development with the Department of Neighborhoods, an upcoming community forum with Council Member Solomon, and a new partnership with King County's Adult Services Division to expand age-friendly and dementia-friendly programs countywide.

Mary had an opportunity recently to connect with Michael Bailey, who used to be director of the Human Services Department, and who is now in King County with the Adult Services Division. Mary has secured commitments from him to work in partnership to expand the AgeFriendly and Dementia Friendly programs countywide. Mary expects to receive a list of resource access fairs that Mr. Bailey's team will be hosting, and he has also offered to provide a table to ADS, or to pass out our materials. Mary will provide this information to members and interested parties.

The progress of the WA Cares project was highlighted, with Angela Miyamoto taking over as the internal lead. The city's budget deficit was discussed, and the potential cuts to the health home program. There is an upcoming advocacy trip to Washington, DC to protect Medicaid funding and possibly reauthorize the Older Americans Act. Michael added that the Older Americans Act has been bipartisan in the past but faces uncertainty due to the current administration's funding priorities. Mary emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive workplace and supporting team members during challenging times.

The role of the Advisory Council on Aging and Disability was discussed and the need for a new liaison. Claudette mentioned her involvement in a cohort group and the possibility of nominating someone to attend the council's meetings. Mary shared updates on the African American Elders program and the potential candidate for the position. The importance of dedication, mentorship, and advocacy was stressed in the council's work was.

- **Advisory Council on Aging and Disability Services**

Pamela asked if someone could be appointed as the new liaison with the Advisory Council, which meets every second Friday. The advocacy committee meets from 10:00 to 11:30am, and the full council meets from 12:00 to 2:00pm. Pamela had been attending the full council meeting to report back on MCAAE meeting highlights. Members will be reminded via email of the need for a new liaison.