

Mayor's Commission on African American Elders

c/o Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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March 20, 2026. 2:00–3:30pm
Grace United Methodist Church, 722 30th Ave

Attending

Members: Chair - Pamela Williams, Vice Chair - Tiffany Toms, Dr. Benjamin Abe, Calvin Lassiter, Deborah Hughes, Paul Mitchel, Debroah O'Neal

Members Absent: Hiwot Zewdie, Brady Rainy, Claudette Thomas

Staff: Eldad Mekuria, Emily Zinter, Mary Pearson, Michael Adusah, Maggie Thomson, Jacqueline Cobbs

Guests: Dominique Stephens, Morgan Costello-Hostettler, Peggy Paul, Charlotte Antoine, Cindy Herndon, Sharron Hargraves, Erica Thrash-Sall, AyeNay Abiye

Welcome

Council members and guests introduced themselves and shared their roles within the community.

MCAAE Business

Minutes: Motion to approve February meeting minutes passed.

Presentation: Digital Equity and Access, by PCs for People

MCAAE Priority Goals:

Housing: Advance equitable senior housing policies to protect older adults from displacement, increase Black homeownership, and expand property tax exemption programs by increasing income limits. Concerns raised about reverse mortgages and current tax policies impacting elders' ability to age in place.

Caregiving: Strengthen support for family caregivers, especially those in the "sandwich generation". Noted lack of mayoral focus on elder care compared to childcare. Identified needs for respite care, financial support, and education for caregivers of individuals with dementia/Alzheimer's.

Nutrition: Improve equitable access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food. Discussed underutilization of food banks by African American elders and the need for alternative solutions like pea patches and mobile food banks.

Social Isolation: Reduce isolation among African American older adults to combat depression, suicide trends, and elder homelessness.

Conversation with Seattle Mayor's Office staff:

The Mayor's office acknowledges affordability as a top priority and is working on shelter expansions and tiny homes for the unhoused.

Expressed willingness to explore increasing income limits for property tax exemptions in collaboration with King County.

Acknowledged the current mayoral focus on childcare but committed to bringing the raised elder care and other senior-specific concerns back to the administration for consideration and collaboration, including researching best practices from other municipalities and rejuvenating existing city programs.

Mentioned the Mayor's interest in reparations and a potential broader advisory board for the African Diaspora in Seattle.

ADS Staff Update:

Advocated in D.C. for the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA), protection of existing funding (Title 3B, Title 6, Title 3E), and prevention of cuts.

Highlighted the negative impacts of the HR1 bill and a federal investigation into Washington State for potential Medicaid fraud.

Noted the AAAs' role in implementing broader state initiatives due to their extensive network with community-based organizations.

Expressed concern about a new AI model ("WISER" - Wasteful and Inappropriate Services Reduction model) being piloted, which could deny care services.

Closing

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved.

Next Meeting; April 17, 2026