

COAA meeting: November 14, 2012

Attendance list: **Ngozi Nmezi, Sefanit Befekadu, Lafayette A. Barnes, Ify Nwabukwu, Georges Banks, Tereguebode Goungou, Nana Seshibe, Yinusa Yusuff, Louisa Buadoo-Amoa, Jean Francis Varre.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:20pm by the Chair Mrs. Nana who thanked Commissioners for filling her in while she was absent; she also thanked Ngozi for the hard work her office is doing.

- I- Approval of the minutes pending corrections.**
 - a. September 12 minutes:**

Add attendance requirements to the minutes.

- i. Louisa moved first accepting the minutes with corrections to be made. Lafayette moved second, and all were in favor.
 - b. October 10 minutes**
 - i. Sefanit was the first to move for minutes' approval and Louisa moved second; the minutes were unanimously approve with revisions to be made.
 - c. Retreat minutes**

Question: what was the issue with the Senegalese group?

Answer: PR is closing the facilities they are in and can't afford keeping the group in by itself. So they need to find another location in DC. They have talked to the Mayor at the festival, not sure what happened after.

- i. We will need to contact Hassane who runs the group at 202-255-2379 and invite him at our next meeting.
 - ii. Sefanit will send an email around for folks to suggest resources available in DC for the Kankouran group.
 - iii. Louisa moved first to approve the minutes, Sefanit seconded and all were in favor to approve the minutes with the corrections.

Note: all the corrections should be sent to the secretary to be inserted to the final minutes.

Question: Chime asked about the "cases of neglect to be brought to the Mayor" under the discussion of the buzz words under legislation?

Answer: Ngozi: Gable went through the buzz words from last year were it was suggested to bring to the Mayor any issue concerning our community annually. She suggested the commission can bring issues to OAA and then OAA take it to the target agencies.

II- Scheduling of subcommittee presentations:

- a. Need to sync presentations with the Ex Officio members of the Commission.
 - b. Georges suggested reaching out to the Director of the Board of Commissions for help getting the agencies to attend our meetings and Lafayette agreed. Louisa thinks we should invite some of them each time not all at once.
 - c. Chime recommended we decide carefully whether we want them in all meetings just to attend or we want them to present.
 - d. Ngozi clarified that Ex Officio members (Directors or Designees) have to attend all meetings, but not all the whole meeting. They can attend the beginning or the end of meetings.

- e. Chime: we do not need to close part of the meeting to the Ex Officio members.
- f. Georges: we will need to look for another location to meet with all the Ex Officio, current location is too small.
- g. More discussions continued, but the Chair recommended that we go with Ngozi's suggestion.

III- Updates from OAA: Ngozi gave updates on:

- a. Health Education planning committee: the committee had its first meeting and is in preliminary talks about having activities in spring of 2013. Some commissioners were present and 8 other stakeholders.
 - i. Nana suggested we reach out to the Howard University folks who presented last year. Ify will get the mobile van when dates are set. All suggestions should be directed to Ngozi. Yusuff will contact Dr. Disu, one of the presenters.
- b. Dream Act Hearing: was a success; Loide, Ngozi, and Youth from Howard University (President and Vice president of the Student Association) testified. Goungou and Jean Francis attended and two seniors. The 3 testimonies were so great and Ngozi asked the Commission to thank Loide for her testimony.
- c. Job circle: 21 participants attended the job circle. They are looking to learn and improve resume writing, interview skills etc. Many hold degrees from their countries and are looking for certification in US. Winta did a summary of the session. See flyer.

IV- Other business: Guest from Safe DC

Goungou introduced the guest Kate from DC Safe. Kate Vandertuig is the Outreach Coordinator at DC Safe; she presented the work of the organization:

DC Safe is an organization working with Domestic Violence victims from all wars in DC; but immigrant face extra difficult situation he police, etc. DC Safe is a crisis emergency agency not a shelter and can respond any time even in the middle of the night advocating with the police. DC Safe provides emergency housing or all the needs to the victims. Dc Safe does training to the police in how to deal with the victims, understanding their own general order. DC Safe stands with the victims and actively advocate for them. DC Safe has an intern who is Amharic speaker and will connect her to the OAA to follow up.

Chairwoman thanked Kate for her presentation and briefly reminded every one of the African culture on domestic violence which prevent victims to report abuse.

Chime: is currently working on some issues through online conversation with the youth and this issue recurred a lot thinks that advocacy needs to form around this particular issue. He will connect with the Intern at DC Safe to connect the dots. What is the long term strategy for the victims? Where do you refer survivors to?

Kate: Safe works closely with many other organizations and agencies that have pro bono lawyer for free counseling and a sliding scale fee based on income. There is no affordable housing in DC which makes things difficult. There are resources for the survivors and DC Safe refers survivors toward these resources. For long term, the survivor has the option to choose what they want to do after. Recommendation: The Violence against Women Act can help with the statistics; the Act is about to be reauthorized this year with the focus on immigrants.

Sefanit: does DC Safe focused on domestic partnerships?

Kate: not to tell anybody or impose values to people. Just to focus on physical and emotional abuse.

Lafayette asked about statistics on African propensity. Kate this is not a propensity, but a higher rate in all the communities that have extra barriers.

Ngozi: would love to work with the Intern about research. To what extent do you work with the Office of the Victims services? Where do the victims come from or where were they referred from?

Kate: DC Safe gets all of the finances from the Office of the Victim Services. DC Safe does not get referral from other organizations, but works closely with the police and other organizations to help the victims in emergency crisis. DC safe used to work with ECC, but she doesn't have details. The intern may have more information.

Nana charged Chime to follow up with DC Safe at kvandertuig@dcsafe.org

V- Announcements:

- a. Chime announced his online project with youth and will present about it at the next meeting.

VI- Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 10pm.