

DC Commission on African Affairs

Commission Meeting Date-02//09/2011

Meeting was called to order at 6:20 p.m. at 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue Wilson Building Room 301. Quorum was established.

Attendees Present:

Asmara Sium
Yusuff Yinusa
Nokwenza Plaatjies
Lafayette Barnes
Louisa Buadoo
Hammere Gebreyes
Ngozi Nmezi, OAA Director

Dr. Ben Ogwezi, Guest
Awa Sall, Guest

Absent:

Chinwe Binitie
Martha Benyam
Nana Seshibe
John Lloyd
George Banks

Approval of Minutes:

- Unable to approve formal minutes of our December 8 meeting as quorum was not established at the onset of the meeting. As the meeting progressed, we were able to establish quorum but decided to vote on minutes at our next meeting.

Reports:

Director Ron Collins of the Office of Boards and Commissions presented his understanding and vision of the Commission on African Affairs. The following summarizes his main points:

- The commission was both statutorily and by a mayor's order established.
- The aforementioned implies (among other things) that the commission is to decide for itself the electing of officers deemed important for our work as a commission.
- Many commissions will elect to have at minimum a Chair, Vice-Chair and Recording Secretary.
- The Chair should not prepare the minutes and agenda
- The OAA could provide staffing for the commission however, because of capacity constraints they are unable to do so.
- Ex-officio members should be attending the commission meetings.
- Mr. Collins and his office will send a request to the heads of departments where our ex-officio members are to enforce their attendance, participation and guidance.

- It is the commissions' responsibility to provide to the mayor, the council and its citizens all relevant information about the needs and concerns of our constituents. For example, if there is legislation pending in the council that is relevant to the African immigrant or immigrant community we should be represented in the talks and testify at hearings.
- The Commission must agree to take on an issue only after a vote from the commission as a whole.
- The Chairperson is the one that should speak on behalf of the commission unless the commission authorizes someone else. This must be voted on.
- The OAA website should include the following: list of commission members; minutes and/or dates of all meetings, where we meet and it should be available on the citywide calendar.
- All Commission meetings are public.
- Always note official actions in minutes
- The best Chair is one who lets everyone have his or her say. Show your appreciation, be welcoming and make everyone feel like we are a part of something great.
- Do as much or as little as you want as a commission. It is our job to share the goodness, greatness of our community and deal with issues that are of importance to our constituents and the continent of Africa.
- We need to set goals. 1. What type, and 2: How many activities
- Everyone should participate and bring something to the table as a commission.

Questions from the Commissioners and Director Collins Responses:

1. Is DC residency a requirement?
A: No, some connection to the District is appreciated. Ex. someone who works with our constituents but lives outside of DC.
2. What is the process for removal of commission members?
A: Attendance is critical to the effectiveness of the commission. You should consider creating rules of procedure that spell out obligations and what happens if a commissioner misses meetings. The actual statute does not spell out what we should do.
3. Is there a bank account? Can we fundraise as a commission?
A: Yes, there was a bank account that was being shared by the African and Caribbean Affairs. Not sure what happen to the bank out but recalls seeing a reimbursement to the OBC. Cannot speak to what happen to the reimbursement. The CFO can establish an account in the name of the commission for the purpose of the work of the commission. You will need clearance from the ethics office prior to doing so.
4. How do we establish a relationship with our community?
A: Create Brochures, fliers, etc and pass them out to our community at faith based centers, community centers and the alike. Prepare reports about what the District is doing for immigrant communities. Before reaching out to certain communities, the commission must vote on all outreach efforts. All of the fliers need clearance from the OAA, Director of Communication and legal counsel office.
5. Is the commission acting on its own or in coordination with the OAA as it relates to outreach, fundraising, etc?

A: We should collaborate with and work in conjunction with the OAA in order to make sure what we wish to do is lawful and proper. It is the commission's job to assist, help and guide the office.

6. Does the commission have money for transportation costs or events?
 - A. The commission does not have money for commission related costs. Stipends have to be budgeted for in the OAA fiscal plan. The OAA does not have money to give for transportation.
7. What is OAA's budget? (Question for Ngozi Nmezi)
 - A. \$181,150, \$9,000 of which is non-personnel.
8. Can the Commission have its own separate budget? (resume questions for Mr. Collins)
 - A. No. The commission can fundraise or someone can give a lump sum to the commission for its work. Monies go into something called an O type fund for the benefit of commission activities but it is not a separate budget like the OAA has.
9. Does the bank account have to be in DC or outside of DC?
 - A: Will have to defer to Brian Flowers, Legal Counsel
10. How can we increase funding for the office on African Affairs
 - A. Increasing your visibility through events may help toward increasing OAA's budget but in times like these "DC deficit" where nearly all budgets are being cut, it's less likely to see an increase in the budget.
11. Are we allowed to raise funds?
 - A. Yes, but needs clearance from legal counsel and ethics counsel
12. Can embassies donate money?
 - A. It is possible but donations cannot be based on conditional arrangements. The ethics office and legal counsel must review all donations.
 - B. Can we lobby the council for money for the OAA office?
 - A: Yes, you can advocate for an increase in the budget but you must be realistic.

OAA Director Nmezi update:

- Bring Thorn Pozen into to talk about the way to properly solicit funds.