

**COAA MEETING MINUTES**

The following minutes are taken as the COAA/ MOAA and the public input was reported.

March 6, 2019	6: 16 PM	MAYOR’S OFFICE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS	6th Floor
Meeting called by	Interim Chair Margaret Kamara called the meeting to order at 6:13 pm		
Secretary	Secretary Etayenesh Asfaw		
Attendees	<u>MOAA:</u> Director Mamadou Samba, Deputy Director Aly Kaba, Language Access Coordinator Gelila Getaneh, and Community Outreach Specialist Thierry Tchenko  <u>Commissioners:</u> Etayenesh Asfaw, Richmond Danso, Carmen Eliam, Hellen Fissihaie, Margaret Kamara, Johanna LeBlanc, Noel Karl Lebondzo Gandou, Theodore Ngatchou, and Salimata Sangare  <u>Aspiring Commissioner:</u> Marilyn Yaguibou  <u>MPD</u> Kevin Johnson Jr Oliyad Chibessa  <u>Public:</u> Yafet Girmay (National Black United Front - Vice chair of international affairs); Shelia Wojloh, Laura Lee Randolph (representing the English Center, MOAA grantees), Shelia Wojloh, and Silvia Garrick (DPC), and Nanythe Talani		
AGENDA			
OLD BUSINESS: The January 2019 Minutes were approved with suggestions from Director Samba that the formal abbreviation of the Office be MOAA and not OAA and that images of flyers not be included in the minutes to keep them short; correction to spelling of <u>Shelia</u> Wojloh			
Introduction	Acting Chair Kamara welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologized for her tardiness.		

<p><b>MOAA Updates &amp; Announcements</b></p>	<p>Director Samba made the suggestion to exclude images of flyers in the January meeting minutes to shorten the minutes. The Commission will review this suggestion.</p> <p>Director Samba also made the recommendation to reference the Office of African Affairs as MOAA instead of OAA. Chair Kamara informed him that the recommendation was noted and that the change will be made going forward.</p> <p>Director Samba recognized MPD Officers Johnson and Chibessa. He spoke about the MPD MOAA Ride Along program and empathized the need for Commissioners to participate in the program.</p> <p>He suggested that an Old Business Section be added to the agenda for follow-up on items.</p> <p><b><u>a. MOAA/DFHV Partnership</u></b></p> <p>Department for Hire Vehicles (DFHV) and MOAA established a partnership to help the cab drivers and others in the transportation field.</p> <p>The partnership allowed MOAA to hire two community outreach staff members within DFHV who will provide language support and help as subject matter experts in this area. Abdoul is one of the hires from Mauritania and he will serve as the French and Arabic liaison for MOAA and Dept for Hire Vehicles. Yared is from Ethiopia and he will be serving as the Amharic liaison for MOAA and Dept for Hire Vehicles. The MOAA now has 6staff, which increases the capacity of the office.</p> <p>MOAA also received 10k to do workforce development in the African community. Director Samba said he is working with different agencies to build partnerships and to increase community engagement.</p> <p><b><u>b. MPD Update</u></b></p> <p><b>Officer Chibessa</b> was given an opportunity to introduce himself. He is the first new hire from the Ethiopian community in the MPD. He is in the 4<sup>th</sup> District and he is helping with the African task force community liaison program of MPD. MPD will be educating the community about their rights. The MPD office will explain the challenges and the cultural context of the African community.</p> <p><b>Officer Johnson</b>, who has been a long time member with MPD and the African task force liaison unit was also recognized. <b>Director Samba</b> said <b>Officer Johnson</b> is willing to go to the community with the commissioners if they wish and is looking for new ideas to engage the community. The officers passed their business cards and</p>
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left to attend another program.

### **MOAA Recap of Events**

*January 17, 2019 Happy Hour with YEP and YAP*

MOAA hosted a Happy Hour series in partnership with the Young African Professionals and Your Ethiopian Professionals. Director Samba said the event was successful and the office hopes to make it a quarterly series.

Resource Fair and Free Tax Prep: March 2, 2019

Just last week, the MOAA hosted a Resource Fair and Free Tax Prep, which allowed the community to receive easy-to-access information on bank accounts, employment, financial education, and free tax preparation assistance.

### **MOAA Upcoming Events**

- a. Community Health and Resource Fair with Office on Aging coming up March 13, 2019
- b. Cultural Competency Training with MPD April 12, 2019
- c. Mayor's State of the District Address – UDC March 18, 2019 at 5:30pm
- d. Workforce Development Training April 19, 2019
- e. FY 2020 Budget Oversight Hearing TBD in April
- f. DC African Cup of Nations TBD
- g. African Fashion Expo TBD will be at the Reeves Center in May tentatively.

MOAA will partner with different DC government agencies and CBOs to provide job readiness workshops leading up to a multilingual job fair in May. The date hasn't been confirmed. The event will be after 4pm.

MOAA encourages the commission to help with these events to make it bigger and reach a larger audience, including African Heritage Month coming up in September.

**Chair Kamara** congratulated the office and the staff for the work they are doing and offered to help the office.

<p><b>COAA</b> <b>Announcements</b></p>	<p>a. <b><u>Introduction of 2019 Executive Officers</u></b></p> <p>Etayenesh Asfaw (Secretary) Hellen Fissahaie (Vice Chair) Margaret Kamara (Chair, elected by Commission and awaiting appointment) Johanna LeBlanc (Vice Chair)</p> <p><b>Chair Kamara</b> said she is interested in the Chair position and has been leading the organization for the past year and hopes to be appointed.</p> <p><b>Director Samba</b> wanted to learn more about the Commissioner’s interest in serving in their roles and for this reason each gave a brief statement on the same. <b>Vice Chair Leblanc</b> is interested in serving in this role to help the commission runs smoothly. She is fine being a member to help in the role. <b>Vice Chair Fissahaie</b> is also interested in serving as Vice Chair because she is already doing work for the community and wants to engage the city and embassies to help the city to do more.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Ngatchou</b> stated he likes the passion in his fellow Commissioner who are interested in the leadership roles and expressed his support for them.</p> <p><b>Director Samba</b> expresses approval of <b>Commissioner Asfaw</b> for the role of secretary, which no one usually volunteers to hold.</p> <p>The Commission, taking the previous recommendation of <b>Director Samba</b>, has divided the Vice Chair position into two roles to ensure support of Commissioners demanding schedules.</p> <p><b>Director Samba</b> urged that the commissioner officer roles are also inclusive of men to make it diverse. Interim Chair Kamara challenges the male more commissioners to take a more active role.</p> <p>Commissioner <b>Eliam</b> introduced <b>Ms. Marilyne Yaguibou</b>, aspiring commissioner. Yaguibou recently retired from the World Bank after 24 years of service in various areas that included Communications, Distance learning, and was involved in various African groups. She holds a degree in Criminal Justice and moved to DC from Maryland.</p> <p>b. <b>Presentations of COAA Strategic Plan</b></p> <p>The Commission presented its strategic plan for 2019. The priorities of the COAA are based on the results of the 2018 Urban Institute profile of DC Immigrant population.</p>
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	<p>The key priorities of the COAA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Employment</li> <li>● Healthcare</li> <li>● Immigration</li> </ul> <p>The plan is to make direct connections with all of the DC agencies and encourage their attendance at the public meetings and events. Commissioners will learn more about the agencies and make contact with them. The MOAA relationship with MPD is the model for what the COAA hopes can happen with other agencies.</p> <p><b>Chair Kamara</b> and <b>Vice Chair Fissahaie</b> empathized that the COAA strategic plan aligned with that of MOAA and the intent is to leverage existing resources and support the office.</p> <p><b>Chair Kamara</b> gave the example that while Africans are interested in education and aspire to higher learning language barrier may keep them from knowing about the opportunities that is available to them such as the UDC free associates program to all DC residents.</p> <p>She noted that the highly paid Africans are in transportation. She credited this to the ability of African business owners such as Henok Tesfaye of U St. Parking, creating jobs for Africans.</p> <p>The Commission is putting together a skills bank to share with MOAA so that the Office can utilize Commissioners based on their expertise.</p> <p>The Commission plans to work with the interfaith community to disseminate information about DC programs to increase reach. The example was given that sometimes members of the community may not feel comfortable with coming to public events and by hosting events at various wards, the public will be better served. Issues such as immigration was discussed as a huge issue affecting the immigrant community. A suggestion was made that it may be best to target newly arrivals to educate them on making sure they maintained their records and not allow for passports and visas to expire.</p> <p>The conversation on immigration was discussed further and below are some of the highlights.</p> <p>There is a need to help the illegal community that is not getting the assistance they need. It is important people are aware of their rights. There is a need to meet the African community halfway to help them with their needs. There are lots of events to young professionals but there is a need to help the people that are not connected.</p>
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	<p>Attorneys that can help the community should be identified. There is a need to have legal firms that can provide pro-bono assistance to help African communities. There is a grantee through OAA that received funds to help with immigration.</p> <p>A note was made to ensure not to expose the illegal immigrants and cause harm by publicizing which Wards they were most likely to reside.</p> <p><b>Director Samba</b> shared that the Mayor has allocated additional funds towards immigration. There is a 1 million dollar program to provide citizenship assistance to DC employees who are DC residents.</p> <p>Program requires one to be a permanent resident, eligible for citizenship. The funds are awarded on a first come first served basis and attendees of the citizenship workshop.</p> <p>The MOAA held an immigration event and didn't get a large turnout and it is important to do different outreach to help boost attendance. One of the grantees of the MOAA community grant is a immigration legal aid</p> <p><b><u>COAA Programming:</u></b></p> <p><b>Commissioner Eliam</b> spoke about proposed programming-MOAA/COAA Open House; an event that could help bring more public awareness of the Office, its services, and the Commission to the people of the District.</p> <p><b>Director Samba</b> asked about the plan to implement the Commission's strategy and the commission said they would provide a timeline to MOAA and more details. The Commission plans to share its priorities with hard printed copies by next meeting. Copies were provided to MOAA for printing but it was overlooked. A meeting to discuss the strategic priorities with MOAA is to be scheduled.</p> <p><b>Director Samba</b> announced the Mayor is planning a trip to Ethiopia. More information will be sent to the Commission. The Director stated he wanted to engage them on the opportunity as the Mayor is looking for advice and recommendation from the African community, specifically from Ethiopians and those who are familiar with the culture.</p>
<p><b>Presentations were made by two of the grantees of the FY19 MOAA African Community Grant:</b></p>	<p><b>Deputy Director Kaba</b> introduced the grantees of the Mayor's African Community Grant program. He gave an overview of the Grant.</p> <p>The Asylum Seeker Assistance Project (ASAP) project sent asylee to provided her experience and The Washington English Center sent representative Laura Lee to present on their program.</p>

	<p><b>Lanit</b> is a lawyer and an asylum seeker who came as a Fulbright and was interning at the Voice of America. She is an investigative journalist and had worked on a subject that could compromise her security in the Congo. She applied for asylum and did not have funding to support herself during that time. There are challenges to adapt to the American system especially to get a job such as working on resumes and interviewing skills. She worked as a Food Assistant and it was challenging and not satisfying. Asylum Seeker Assistance Project helped her with life skills such as resume and mock interviews. There is a need for coaching to help Africans. She went back to work for VOA after getting assistance from ASAP. There is emotional and psychological help in addition to help to look professional for interviews.</p> <p>Helping ASAP also helps families as asylees support their families in their home countries.</p> <p><b>Laura Lee</b> from Washington English Center is committed to her students and volunteers. The organization has programs all the time to serve students. The center has students that are Africans. The Washington English Center offers free services to help find a job. She shared a video about the organization, which had several testimonies from the residents. Students from over 100 countries use the Center. Deputy Director Kaba shared that he had been a student at the English center and found it helpful. Prices are affordable and there are scholarships for students that can't afford it.</p>
<b>Public Comments</b>	<p>Public Comments: <b>Vice Chair Fissahaie</b> opened the meeting for public comments.</p> <p><b>Shelia Wojloh:</b> John Hopkins School of Medical, lived in Liberia, retired but still conducting research</p> <p><b>Nanythe Talani:</b> sister of Officer Chibessa, came to support her brother</p> <p><b>Isaac Osei Asare:</b> A videographer talked about his role with the City of Takoma and current ventures and introduced himself and expressed interest in working with COAA/MOAA, quickly before departure.</p> <p><b>Yafet Girmay:</b> part of National Black United Front; looking for collaboration for Soweto day in June to provide the historical context of South Africa and is seeking ideas.</p> <p><b>Vice Chair Leblanc</b> asked for clarification and advice on expectations of Commissioners in participating in hearings since the upcoming hearings were noted by the Office. The office agreed to look into it. <b>Chair Kamara</b> suggested that Commissioners visit the website of the hearing and oversight committee for training materials and examples from past hearings. Commissioners were concerned that there was conflict between the guideline and advocacy role of commissioners in past hearings and requested some training.</p>

	<p><b>Secretary Asfaw</b> spoke about Art and Environment and Education initiative that she is working on with Carmen. Hellen can provide connections and suggestions.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Sangare</b> suggested that Commissioner Asfaw work with universities have associations within universities have African students will be an easier target engage the university students.</p> <p><b>Vice Chair Fissihaie</b> shared an upcoming project: her company is working with MOAA to highlight Nigeria and its influence both on the Continent and abroad– August 24<sup>th</sup> and 10% of proceeds will be going back to DPR.</p> <p><b>Vice Chair Fissihaie</b> is also working on Taste of the World, a week long food exhibition. Aetna is going to be a potential partner and she asked if there are African health organizations interested in collaborating.</p> <p><b>Commissioner Ngatchou</b> shared that the Renaissance Center is hosting an event for the celebration of Francophone to showcase culture. Flyers of the event will be shared to commissioners and MOAA.</p> <p><b>Silvia Garrick</b> of DPC departed early from the meeting and was not present to give public remarks.</p> <p>Staff of MOAA thanked commissioners for their effort.</p>
<b>Adjourned</b>	8:02 pm.