

<b>MEETING MINUTES</b>	<b>COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING</b>		
<b>Date</b>	June 14, 2022	<b>Meeting Time</b>	10:00 AM
<b>Chairpersons</b>	Olivia Farrow & James Campbell	<b>Meeting Location</b>	Zoom meeting

## Attendees:

<b>COMMISSIONERS</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>STAFF</b>	
Claudia Balog	√	Alice Huang	
Dr. Yvonne Bronner	√	James “Jim” Macgill	√
James “Jim” Campbell	√	Heang Tan	√
Barbara “Reba” Cornman	√	Rochelle Purnell	√
Dr. Thomas Cudjoe	√	Keidra Rowe	√
Dr. Jenny Pena Dias-Hayes	√		
Dr. Odessa Dorkins	√		
Monte Ephraim	√		
Olivia Farrow	√		
Susan Francis, Esquire	-		
Dr. W. Daniel Hale	√	<b>EX-OFFICIOS</b>	
Elizabeth F. Johnson	√	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa	
Sonja Merchant-Jones	√	Michael S. Harrison	
Pastor Brian Murray	-	Alice Kennedy	
Councilwoman Sharon Middleton	-	Reginald Moore	
Dr. Sarah Szanton	-	Christopher Ryer	
		Brandi Stocksdale	
<b>INVITED GUESTS</b>			
Director Janet Abrahams	√	<b>REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Deputy Mayor Faith Leach	√	Jasmine Barnes, representing Councilwoman Middleton	√
Matt McNabney	√	Nicole Hart, DHCD	√
Betsy Simon	√	Leslie Yancey, Rec & Parks	√
		Sean Bloodsworth, DSS	√
		Ondoria Harmon, MON	√

## I. Welcome and Opening Remarks Jim Campbell & Olivia Farrow

Co-Chair Campbell reported that the Co-Chairs had met with the Mayor for the 410 report show. He noted that this week is Protect Week in Maryland, which addresses financial literacy in Maryland and that tomorrow is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Financial abuse is a growing concern in Maryland.

Co-Chair Farrow noted that the Mayor's Town Hall was successful. She presented a flyer from the United Golden Ager Group, led by Dr. Marvin Cheatham, requesting that July 24- July 30 be set aside to encourage everyone to visit/check-in with older adults in their lives. Dr. Cheatham has asked for the Commission's endorsement of this initiative.

Commissioner Cornman commented that Dr. Cheatham's concept should go beyond one week, and noted that the verbiage on the flyer was somewhat out of date. Deputy Commissioner Tan said that Dr. Cheatham was open to feedback, and has a weekly radio show, in which he invites BCHD's Division of Aging and CARE Services (Baltimore City's Area Agency on Aging) to participate. Commissioner Cornman suggested that nonprofits should be part of the discussion about reaching out to older adults in the community. Co-Chair Farrow agreed that nonprofits should be part of Commission meetings; Deputy Commissioner Tan said that the staff could work on this over the summer.

Dr. Bronner said she thought Dr. Cheatham's project was a good first step, and that there was an opportunity for the Commission to cooperate with Dr. Cheatham and United Golden Agers. Co-Chair Farrow asked for an endorsement of Dr. Cheatham's project: Dr. Bronner moved, seconded by Co-Chair Campbell and the vote was unanimously in favor.

## II. Approval of May Meeting Minutes Commission Members

Co-Chair Campbell asked for approval of the minutes. The minutes were adopted as presented.

## III. Housing Authority of Baltimore City Janet Abrahams

Deputy Commissioner Tan introduced Janet Abrahams, President and CEO of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC).

President Abrahams addressed a series of questions which the Commission had previously submitted to HABC.

### **Why did HABC decide to do the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program?**

RAD is a voluntary HUD program that gives public housing programs access to capital funding; it requires the buildings to be converted to private ownership, before the funded can be accessed. In 2015 HABC began converting high rise buildings using the RAD financial platform, because these buildings had a backlog of repairs and necessary

upgrades at a projected cost of more than \$1 billion. HABC receives a limited amount of federal funds for capital improvements, and estimated that, based on funding available, it would take 200 years to address the backlog. Enrollment in RAD has resulted in an investment of \$864.5 million in former HABC buildings.

Once converted to RAD, the buildings are no longer owned or managed by HABC. The new owners have ground leases with HABC, and are now responsible for all maintenance and services in these buildings.

HABC used to have “seniors only” buildings. Twenty years ago, HABC was sued; the plaintiffs claimed that “seniors only buildings” were discriminatory. The suit was settled with HABC being required to comply with a consent decree; it cannot refuse admission to these buildings to younger families and persons with disabilities. Most of the buildings are now “mixed use” buildings, with both older adults and persons with disabilities living in them.

Under the consent decree HABC identifies the applicants from its waiting lists for apartments in the RAD building, but the RAD owners have their own processes for screening of the applicants. HABC still visits the buildings and has a department that responds to inquiries and concerns from the residents.

**How is maintenance conducted in these buildings?** In RAD buildings, residents with maintenance issues call the building management office and put in work orders. These buildings are subject to inspection by the State, and HUD, depending on how they are financed. The private management firms conduct their own move in inspection. At HABC owned buildings residents use a similar work order system, but work orders are addressed according to prioritization criteria, with emergency situations addressed first.

**How are residents’ rights and safety protected?** In RAD buildings, the resident’s lease protects their rights. RAD leases have an attachment that have the same provisions protecting resident rights, including grievance rights, as residents had before the RAD conversion.

Some RAD buildings have 24/7 security, and some have evening security, until management returns the next day. HABC owned buildings have different security arrangements. HABC employs a safety manager who works in partnership with the police department; the police use a CCTV system to monitor the situation on properties.

**How is service coordination provided?** HABC’s Service Coordination team includes the RAD sites, in its activities, even though this is not required. HABC has its own service coordination department. RADS are required to have service coordination. Some service coordinators in RAD buildings are part-time.

### **Questions from Commission members and responses from President Abrahams**

Q: Could there be separate floors in these buildings for older adults and persons with disabilities?

A: Legally HABC cannot isolate families like this, but HABC is advocating for some balance in the buildings between the two populations,

Q: Older adults in these buildings have concerns about safety. What is the policy that requires the mixing of the older adult and disabled population?

A: The mixed building policy is a HUD policy and resulted from the law suit described previously, where the plaintiffs alleged that seniors only buildings discriminated against younger persons with disabilities. HABC must comply with a consent decree that resulted from the law suit, which prohibits HABC from limiting tenants by age. HABC is proposing a ratio to balance the populations but numerous parties to the consent decree, represented by lawyers, are resisting this idea, and conversation is on-going.

Q: Can you tell us more specifics about HABC oversight over RAD and specifics such as staffing/unit ratios?

A: No ratio of resident services staffing to units was negotiated at the time the RAD agreements were signed. The operating agreements stated that the private firms will provide services, but there are no ratios. In addition, HABC has no enforcement mechanisms in the agreements.

Q: Is any kind of assessment tool is used to tailor services for an individual, and to assure “goodness of fit?”

A: There is not an assessment tool used at the time a tenant becomes eligible for an apartment. Tenants obtain apartments as they become available. Mixed use can work; President Abrahams has seen it work elsewhere, but here in Baltimore there are serious issues with security. After two years in a RAD building, tenants qualify for a Section 8 tenant-based vouchers, and have the opportunity to move anywhere in the country. Older adults are taking advantage of this option to move out of the City.

Q: Was the \$800 million money invested in the building tax payer money?

A: It has been a mix of federal funds, tax credit generated funds and private investment funds.

Q: Does HABC has any control over the rent the investors charge the tenants? Does the City receive any money as a result of this relationship?

A: The rent that the tenants pay is based on their income, not the rent. The maximum they pay toward rent is 30% of their income. The funding relationship for rental subsidies is directly between HUD and the investors who own the buildings.

Q: Did the investors pay the City to own the building?

A: HABC has a ground lease with the owners: \$1 for 99 years.

Co-Chair Farrow thanked President Abrahams for a very informative presentation and a productive dialogue.

#### IV. Report by Area Agency Director (Deputy Commissioner Heang Tan)

Deputy Commissioner Tan reported that

- the Area Agency on Aging is participating in World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and Protect week, and is a partner in city wide coordination effort to address elder abuse.
- The Mayor's Town Hall had over 2600 residents calling in. 83% were older adults. The top issues raised were safety and housing.
- Last week our team coordinated an educational event in collaboration with the school system to educate attendees about services for grandparents caring for grandchildren; 147 grandparents attended.

## V. Commission Committee Reports

### Advocacy

Co-Chair Campbell reported that the Committee has been focusing on care in nursing homes and assisted living facilities in the City, and followed bills during the General Assembly that sought to address care issues in these facilities. He also mentioned that the Commission's meeting on private equity investments in nursing homes was scheduled for June 29.

### Public Outreach

Acting Assistant Commissioner Alice Huang reported that the Outreach Committee wants to schedule more town halls, and wants to explore the logistics for these. She invited Commission members to join the committee to help with planning.

Commissioner Ephraim suggested that as part of outreach, the Commission on Aging could participate in Pride events next year. Chase Brexton has an Elder Pride program that provides a tent as part of the Pride event. The Elder Pride tent has evolved into an intergenerational convening.

## VI. Commissioner Discussion and Announcements

Dr Hale asked what is being done to prepare for the anticipated heat waves this summer. Deputy Commissioner Tan reported that there would be cooling centers available, and that automated calls would go out to clients alerting them when Code Red is declared, and what services are available.

Co-Chair Farrow noted that St Agnes is advertising Maryland Department of Aging's Senior Call check program.

Dr. Cudjoe expressed interest in hearing more about these programs and whether they are being utilized and if these programs have been evaluated.

Deputy Commissioner Tan noted that the Department's Office of Emergency Management runs the Code Red operation and tracks participation. We do not see a lot of older adults using senior centers as cooling centers; visitors tend to be the general public. She said that the Area Agency on Aging has asked for local participant data for the Maryland Department of Aging's Call Check program.

Ms. Harmon suggested that Dr. Cheatham's initiative could include encouraging visitors to help older adults help with every day tasks, such as mowing lawns. She also asked about the availability of air conditioning units and fans this summer, similar to the fan/air conditioning project from 2020.

Deputy Commissioner Tan said that the 2020 initiative was funded one time through CARES Act funding to encourage older adults to stay home during the first year of the pandemic (before vaccines were available). Ms. Hart said that we have about 40 air conditioning units left, but no funding is available for installation. People can call the Light program at 410-396-3023 for a unit; DHCD will make the delivery, but cannot do the installation.

Ms. Harmon asked if ARPA funds could be used to purchase air conditioners. Ms. Hart said that DHCD is expanding the work scopes for its programs, including Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors, to include central air conditioning. It is important to address air conditioning as part of a larger upgrade for a house; installing window units without considering the house's electrical capacity is not advisable.

## VII. Closing Jim Campbell & Olivia Farrow

Co-Chair Farrow announced the next meeting is September 13. Co-Chairs Campbell and Farrow thanked the Commission members and wished everyone a good summer.