

DC Commission on National and Community Service

Executive Session Minutes

Monday, July 20, 2015; 6:30 pm

Reeves Center, Second Floor Community Room

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Love called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Roll Call

Justine Love
Brandon Andrews
Peter Sacco
Marlene Zakai
Joshua Johnson
Lars Etzkorn
Chris Ashton
Gail Oliver

Reading of Past Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from the commission's April 2015 meeting were read individually and discussed as a group. Multiple commissioners suggested minor edits to the minutes.

Commissioner Etzkorn made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 7-0-0).

Introduction of New Staff and Serve DC Report

Kristal Knight, Executive Director of Serve DC, introduced Pamela Weinberg, Serve DC's new AmeriCorps Program Officer. Ms. Knight said that Ms. Weinberg had replaced Sarah Watkins, and that Ms. Weinberg started at Serve DC in late March.

Ms. Knight also introduced Khadijah Ismail, Serve DC's new Executive Assistant. Ms. Knight said that Ms. Ismail started at Serve DC in June and had replaced Sheena Washington.

Ms. Weinberg introduced herself and provided an overview of her professional background. Ms. Ismail then introduced herself and gave an overview of her responsibilities at Serve DC.

Ms. Knight said that Ms. Ismail would be regularly communicating with the commissioners in order to ensure open lines of communication between Serve DC and the commission.

The commissioners then introduced themselves.

Grants Update

Formula Grant Awardees

Ms. Knight gave an overview of the new formula grantees, which included three new subgrantees. She talked about Serve DC's goal of diversifying its portfolio of grantees.

Competitive Grant Awardees

Ms. Knight said that there was one new competitive grantee, Playworks DC, which previously was a formula grantee.

Youth Opportunity Grant Update

Ms. Knight said that Serve DC received 25 inquiries and 2 applications for the Youth Opportunity Grant. She said that Community College Preparatory Academy and the Alliance for Concerned Black Men went through the entire application process, but unfortunately Community College Preparatory Academy ended up dropping their application at the end of the application period and the Alliance for Concerned Black Men could not guarantee the required funding match for the grant. She said that the Serve DC team talked with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) about the need to provide more time for applicants to go through the application process.

Ms. Knight added that Serve DC had developed "Summer of Service Seminars" to train local organizations on how to write grant applications for CNCS. She said that the seminars were being held at the Northeast Library every other Thursday from 3:30 to 5:00 pm, and that information regarding the seminars was posted on the Serve DC website.

Commissioner Zakai suggested that the commissioners could use their personal connections to recruit pro bono grant writers to assist organizations that were thinking about applying for CNCS grants. Ms. Knight added that it was very hard for organizations to quickly go through the CNCS grant process unless the organization had an experienced grant writer on staff.

Commissioner Andrews asked if pro bono volunteers could also attend the grant seminars. Ms. Knight said that anyone was welcome to attend.

Commissioner Zakai suggested that Serve DC and the commissioners could talk with other state commissions about how they supported potential applicants. She also suggested working with the business community to financially support applicants who were having trouble securing the required matching funds for CNCS grants. Chair Love said that she would look into working with the business community.

FRESH Summer of Service Mini Grants Update

Ms. Knight gave an overview of the police service areas (PSAs) that the Mayor's office had identified as needing support. She talked about how the mini grants would focus on programming in those PSAs, and that the grants would also have to align with the CNCS priority areas. She said that the mini grant process was currently on hold with the Mayor's office and that, once the process started, available grant funding would be between \$1,000 and \$10,000 per grant. She said that Serve DC would also be working with successful applicants to help them apply for larger Serve DC grants in the fall.

Commissioner Zakai wondered where the funds for the mini grants came from. Ms. Knight said that the funding came from Serve DC's state administrative grant from CNCS.

Commissioner Etzkorn asked why the Mayor's office put the grant process on hold. Ms. Knight said that the Mayor's office was re-evaluating its oversight of grants administered by the Executive Office of the Mayor.

Multiple commissioners expressed concern with the fact that the grant process was put on hold.

DC Be Ready Update

Ms. Knight said that Serve DC had trained over 500 DC residents in first aid and CPR in the month of June, in addition to over 200 DC government employees, as part of the "DC Be Ready" initiative.

Commissioner Etzkorn asked if there was an opportunity to also train the DC Summer Youth Employment Program participants in first aid and CPR. Ms. Knight said that Serve DC was working with the Department of Employment Services to train a portion of the program participants.

CNCS Funding Update

Volunteer Generation Fund

Ms. Knight that Serve DC was going to be given funding from CNCS that was aligned with the President's "My Brother's Keeper". She said that, through the funding and in partnership with the Taproot Foundation, Serve DC would be working to grow the capacity of local organizations that serve men and boys of color. She gave an overview of the DC events that had already occurred as part of the initiative. She added that Serve DC had also been tasked with hosting a one day volunteer fair on August 18th which would include skills-based volunteers that would be offering services to local organizations.

Commissioner Andrews provided further background on the Taproot Foundation and his work on the initiative. He said that the commission could also use the Taproot Foundation's model of service in order to assist local organizations with writing CNCS grants in the future.

Board Vacancies

Ms. Knight said that the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments wanted to fill board vacancies in large groups, and that she needed more recommendations for all of the vacancies previously discussed with the commission. She said that she wanted commissioners to send recommendations directly to her.

Chair Love recommended that the commissioners commit to sending two names each to Ms. Knight by next Monday, July 27th.

Committee Updates

Community Development Committee

Commissioner Andrews said that the committee had been working on a plan to address some of the development and funding questions that the commission has had over the past year. He said that the committee had entitled the plan the "Community Change Plan".

Volunteer Recognition Committee

Commissioner Andrews said that the committee completed a review of the 2014 Mayor's Community Service Awards, including a review of all the award categories. He said that the committee planned on making some recommendations for changes to award categories in order to more greatly highlight AmeriCorps members and the involvement of the corporate community.

Programming and Evaluation Committee

Commissioner Andrews said that committee met recently and had a robust discussion about Serve DC's grant categories and their competitiveness. He highlighted the need to do a needs assessment for DC and an assessment of the application requirements. He said that the committee was also looking at ways to improve grant competitiveness through technical assistance and outreach to potential applicants.

New Business and Announcements

Chair Love talked about the Metropolitan Police Department's upcoming "National Night Out" event on August 4th from 5:30 to 9:00 pm. She said that there was an opportunity for commissioners to assist with the event and that she would send out more info regarding it.

Chair Love also talked about the upcoming 20th Anniversary of the Million Man March on October 10th. She said that there was also an opportunity for commissioners to assist with the event, and that she would send out more info regarding it.

Chair Love also recommended that commissioners organize an event to assist the homeless and senior citizens during the coming winter months.

Chair Love adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.