

# **DC Commission on National and Community Service**

Executive Session Minutes

Monday, October 19, 2015; 6:30 pm

Serve DC Office, Reeves Center, Suite 101

## Welcome and Introductions

Kristal Knight, Director of Serve DC, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

## Roll Call

Joshua Johnson  
Peter Sacco  
Amy Cohen  
Marlene Zakai  
Matt McCollough  
Lars Etzkorn  
Dwight Deneal  
Diane Brown  
Edward Jones  
Gail Oliver  
Saran White

## Reading of Past Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Etzkorn moved to approve the July 2015 meeting minutes and the amended April 2015 meeting minutes with the complete roll call added to them. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cohen, which was voted on and passed (VOTES: 8-0).

## Introduction of New Staff / Serve DC Report

Ms. Knight introduced Ronunda Lee, Serve DC's new Deputy Director, and Janice Hazel, Serve DC's new Communications Director.

Ms. Knight gave an overview of the recent events that Serve DC organized:

1. National Safety Month: Serve DC organized CPR and first aid trainings. Ms. Knight said that they saw an increase in the amount of people registering for the classes once they were held in different locations throughout the city. She added that the DC Fire and EMS Department would be partnering with Serve DC for additional hands-only CPR trainings through the "Hands on Heart" campaign.
2. 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance: Serve DC partnered with one of its grantees for a large scale service project with AARP.

Ms. Knight said that the next Seasons of Service Day would be World Aids Day, during which Serve DC would be partnering with the Office of LGBT Affairs, the Office of Women's Policy and Initiatives, and the Office of Latino Affairs to collect canned food, which would be distributed to a variety of organizations across the District. She said that the organizations that were chosen for the event were recommended by the respective partner offices. She said that the drive would begin on November 1st and would run up until Thanksgiving, and that the food would be delivered on December 1st through December 5th.

Commissioner Jones suggested including the Wanda Alston Foundation as a recipient of the donations from the World Aids Day canned food drive. Multiple commissioners also had questions about the populations that each organization served and how each organization was selected. Ms. Knight said that she could send out more information about each of the organizations.

Commissioner Etkorn suggested lighting up the Wilson Building red for World Aids Day. Ms. Knight said that she would put in the request for it.

With regards to the annual Mayor's Community Service Awards. Ms. Knight said that the Mayor's Office had asked Serve DC to move the event back to a later date. She said that more details would be announced soon, and that she would be following up with commissioners who served on the selection committee for the event last year.

Commissioner Zakai talked about previous recommendations that the Volunteer Recognition Committee made regarding changing the categories for the event, including adding a category that specifically recognized AmeriCorps members and possibly Senior Corps members.

Commissioner Jones suggested recognizing volunteer leaders from each ward of the city. Commissioner Etkorn wondered how Serve DC would pick volunteer leaders from each ward. He said that he was afraid that the process would become too political. He suggested highlighting one category that the Mayor was working on each year and then finding a volunteer per ward for that category. Commissioner Sacco suggested tying the categories with the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) service-areas.

Ms. Knight suggested scheduling another committee meeting regarding the community service awards in order to have a more in-depth discussion about the event. She said that she would also look into what areas the Mayor wanted to highlight for the year.

With regards to the plans for MLK Day of Service, Ms. Knight said that Serve DC had been approached by an organization called We Feed Our People, who each year goes to the MLK Library and the Big Chair in Ward 8 to host an all-day feeding project. She said that the organization also organizes a toiletry and clothing drive leading up to MLK Day and then distributes the donations on MLK Day.

Commissioner White said that it would be helpful to know what organizations We Feed Our People was collaborating with. Ms. Knight said that that the organization was not a 501c3 nonprofit.

Commissioner Jones suggested partnering with the Taproot Foundation for their annual MLK Day of Service, during which professional volunteers offer pro-bono services to local organizations. Commissioner Cohen also suggested again partnering with the George Washington University's (GW) MLK Day of Service. She said that GW had secured Lisner Auditorium for the opening part of the event, and that Ms. Knight could speak at it if she is interested. She said that GW was planning to organize service projects for about 800 people, and that community members would be invited this year.

Commissioner White reminded everyone that CNCS was always looking for service opportunities for White House VIPs to attend. She added that CNCS offered grants for organizations to plan MLK Day of Service projects, and that those grants had already been finalized for the upcoming MLK Day of Service.

Commissioner McCollough wondered if Serve DC and DC residents were challenging themselves to do more than the traditional food and clothing service projects during MLK Day of Service. He suggested organizing projects that were meaningful and long-lasting, and had more community investment.

With regards to Serve DC's emergency preparedness cluster, Ms. Knight said that Serve DC had activated its CERT team for the recent Papal visit to help with crowd control at busy Metro stations. She added that Serve DC would be hosting a blood drive at the Reeves Center from 10 am to 4 pm on October 29th.

Commissioner McCollough wondered, in response to the recent hurricane that swept through the area, how Serve DC could better prepare communities for bad weather, including any bad weather this coming winter. Ms. Knight said that Serve DC was part of the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency's (HSEMA) agency team that assists the city with emergency efforts. She said that Serve DC was in regular communication with HSEMA during the recent weather, and could set up a volunteer reception center and accept donations during weather emergencies.

Ms. Knight added that Serve DC was currently re-working a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Office of Partnerships and Grant Services regarding accepting donations during emergencies.

### Board Vacancies

Ms. Knight said that Serve DC had received applicants for all of the board's vacancies, and that the applicants were all currently going through the appointment process with the Mayor's Office

of Talent and Appointments. She said that she hoped that the applicants would be confirmed within the next few weeks.

### Financial Update

Ronunda Lee, Serve DC's new Deputy Director, talked about Serve DC's two streams of funding: the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). She said that CNCS gives an administrative grant that is matched by the DC government, which supports a portion of Serve DC's staff salaries.

Ms. Lee said that Serve DC also receives funding through memorandums of understand (MOUs) with the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the DC Department of Health (DOH). She said that the funding for the three MOUs with DOH was currently pending.

Commissioner Zakai asked what the SART Team, one of the three MOUs Serve DC receives from DOH, was. Ms. Lee said that the SART Team works on responding to people with pets during emergency situations.

Commissioner McCollough wondered how another DOH MOU for \$40,000 for training for vulnerable populations was being used. Ms. Knight said that DOH and Serve DC picked a contractor to fulfil this training request and used the funding to pay for his salary, as well as for marketing and materials for the trainings.

Commissioner Etzkorn asked what the responsibilities for Serve DC's Deputy Director position were. Ms. Knight said that Ms. Lee would be overseeing the finances for and programs of Serve DC.

Ms. Knight said that Serve DC would be looking more aggressively at outside funding sources in the coming year.

Commissioner Etzkorn asked if there was anything the commissioners could do to support Serve DC in looking for outside funding sources. Ms. Knight suggested that commissioners could help CNCS grant applicants with securing the funding that CNCS required the applicants to have for matching funding.

Commissioner McCollough talked about how some Serve DC grantees had struggled with financial reporting for their CNCS grants. He also talked about how Serve DC staff and commissioners could help organizations better understand the reporting requirements.

### Grants Update

Pamela Weinberg, Serve DC's Grants Management Specialist, said that Serve DC was in the midst of the competitive state grant awards process. She said that the competitive notice of funding availability (NOFA) had been sent to many different organizations across the city. She said that Serve DC would be receiving logic models from the applicants soon, and that the logic models would then be distributed to all of the commissioners.

Ms. Weinberg went over the full grant timeline for the competitive grant process.

Commissioner McCollough was wondering how Serve DC could expand the diversity of the organizations it gave out grants to, especially by working with non-education based organizations. Ms. Weinberg talked about how Serve DC was trying to diversify its formula portfolio in order to eventually move up more diverse organizations to the competitive grant process.

Ms. Weinberg recommended that the commissioners attend site visits for Serve DC's grantees. She distributed the schedule for upcoming site visits.

#### Serve DC Communications Presentation

Janice Hazel, Serve DC's new Communications Director, said that she would like to receive a bio from each of the commissioners to put on the Serve DC website. She was also asking for the commissioners' permission to tag them in some of Serve DC's tweets.

Ms. Hazel distributed copies of news articles that were written about Serve DC's summer emergency preparedness trainings. She also talked about the communications plan for Serve DC's Citizens Snow Team.

Ms. Hazel passed out the monthly service event palm cards that Serve DC's communications team had been producing. She said that the cards had been very popular at community events.

#### Committee Updates

There were no committee updates.

#### New Business / Announcements

There were no new business items or announcements.

#### Adjournment

Commissioner Etzkorn moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Zakai. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.