

MEETING MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS  
JANUARY 19, 2022, 09:00 A.M.

1. Meeting called to order by Dell Gines at 09:04 a.m.
2. Roll Call at 9:04
  - a. Karine Sokpoh (Not Present)      Leban Njuguna ( Not Present)
  - b. Gwen Ester (Not Present)      Clarice Jackson (Not Present)
  - c. Mark Smith (Not Present)
3. Gwendolyn Ester Arrived at 09:12; Laban Njuguna arrived at 09:22; Clarice Jackson arrived at 09:34; Mark Smith arrived at 09:57
4. Dell Gines called for a review for approval of the October 20, 2021, minutes at 09:07. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Vernon Joseph and seconded by Glenn Freeman. After some discussion the minutes were unanimously approved to be amended to reflect a statement at the end of the minutes that reads “respectfully submitted by:”
5. BUDGET – No major changes to the present budget. Current expenditures are \$214.24 for advertising, which is reflected on the budget sheet. Vernon Joseph suggested to use an itemized budget list for each monthly expenditure. The DAS staff will also keep up with budget items and expenditures.
6. COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS – Committees should consider meeting bi-weekly or more if necessary. LaShawn Young will be remaining as the executive chairperson until the end of her term in July 2022. However, it was discussed and agreed by all commission members that Dell Gines continue as interim Chairperson of the Commission until LaShawn Young feels she has recovered and caught up enough to continue as the Chairperson.
7. Connie Edmond suggested that the Bylaws should address the issue concerning replacing members that resign, or are removed from service for cause.

8. Discussion was had that Dell Gines has been handling the meetings and organizing events and sending out emails to keep the Commission informed. All commission members agreed and expressed their appreciation for his diligent work.
9. Discussion was had that the Executive Director will assume the day-to-day activities to alleviate the tasks of the executive committee chairperson.
10. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT – Toni Clarke explained the selection and interviewing process for choosing the Executive Director. Glenn Freeman asked why only two candidates were brought before the commission body for final decision, because it was his understanding that at least three candidates would be considered by the entire commission body for final selection. Toni requested Glenn defer his question until the official meeting was adjourned for discussion of that item or go into executive session.
11. Connie Edmond recommended that Toni clarify how the posting for the Executive Director position was conducted. Toni gave a detailed explanation of how the selection and interviewing process by the selection committee was carried out. Toni explained that the initial deadline for applications was extended from November 8, 2021, to December 8, 2021, to allow an opportunity for more candidates to apply to have a larger candidate selection pool. The December 8, 2021, deadline was again extended through mid-December to accommodate applicants.
12. Connie Edmond requested Dell Gines to explain the American Rescue Funds availability. Dell explained the purpose and use of the Rescue Funds and how application could be made to access those funds, if feasible, due to the tardiness in timing of pursuing the funding request.
13. Dell stated Travon Brooks (a person familiar with the funding availability and process) believes the Commission is in a good position to qualify for a funding request since the COAA represents African Americans across the state.
14. Gwendolyn Easter recommended applying for the funding whether it is timely or not and suggested Senator McKinney be contacted to explain more on the funding and the process to obtain it.

15. Dell Gines gave an opposing opinion during a discussion regarding the commission members being available to meet with and address concerns and needs of residents in North Omaha. Dell stated he believed the organizational focus should not solely be on North Omaha being the only community served.
16. William Awodele (Femi), suggested that the commission develop a strategy for engaging plans to pursue funding instead of chasing funds and seek out other senators' input regarding setting aside appropriations for funding the commission in the future.
17. Glenn Freeman stated the commission should proactively engage the community to find out what the community needs are and avoid just making decisions based on assumptions of what the community needs, as many other organizations have done in the past.
18. William Awodele (Femi), suggested the commission should have its own agenda through the Executive Director, who would be responsible for making community contacts and building rapport on behalf of the COAA.
19. OLD BUSINESS – Holding Meetings in North Omaha. – Discussion was had about what was discussed previously to hold meetings in Lincoln and Omaha. Clarice Jackson suggested that some people in North Omaha (which consist of the highest concentration of people of color) may be unable to travel to Lincoln. It was discussed that since North Omaha represents the largest population of blacks in the state, meetings should be held in Omaha as well as Lincoln for community convenience of attending COAA meetings.
20. NEW BUSINESS – No formal new business. Discussion was had on the next step processes for serving on committees.
21. DeMoine Adams and Glenn Freeman stated they would serve on the Finance Committee; Toni Clarke agreed to serve on the Policy Committee. Discussion was had and recommended that an executive committee member will serve on each committee set up by the Commission.

22.PUBLIC COMMENTS – Public comments were opened at 10:24. No Public comments.

23.The commission went into executive session at 10:25.

24.Motion was made by Vernon Joseph to come out of executive session and seconded by Glenn Freeman. The COAA voted and selected Christopher Banks as Executive Director for the Commission on African American Affairs.

25.Motion to adjourn was made by Toni Clarke and seconded by Connie Edmond.

Respectfully submitted by:  
John Carter