

City of Miami Beach

City Manager

Summary of Articles

Jay Melder

(Note: Articles Follow In Reverse Chronicle Order)

Articles

- *After Confusion, Microsoft Identified as New Vaccine Portal Vendor*, Washington City Paper, March 5, 2021.
- *D.C. Housed the Homeless in Upscale Apartments. It Hasn't Gone as Planned*, The Washington Post, April 16, 2019.
- *D.C. Mayor Bowser Announces Key Appointments*, Targeted News Service, March 6, 2019.
- *Building a New Hospital at St. Elizabeths East*, Medium August 13, 2018.
- *Exclusive Interview: The Overhaul of Human Services in Washington*, Street Sense Media, April 7, 2016.
- *The Real Presidential Issue*, The Reveille, Louisiana State University, July 13, 2004.
- *I Was Robbed*, The Reveille, Louisiana State University, July 2, 2004.
- *Justice Moore Should Look at Law, Not Good*, The Reveille, Louisiana State University, September 5, 2003.
- *Calif. Race Becoming Reality TV*, The Reveille, Louisiana State University, August 29, 2003.

Websites

- District of Columbia, Office of the City Administrator – <https://oca.dc.gov/page/internal-services>
- District of Columbia, Internal Services – <https://is.dc.gov/biography/jay-melder-0>
- LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jay-melder-5422b32a/>
- Responding to Homelessness in DC, American University Humanities Lab – <http://aumanitieslab.com/crisis-narratives/responding-to-homelessness-in-dc/>

Audio

- Coronavirus Brings the Digital Divide into Stark Relief – *The Koyo Nnamdi Show* – *WAMU 88.5 American University Radio* March 23, 2020
<https://wamu.org/story/20/03/23/coronavirus-brings-the-digital-divide-into-stark-relief/>

Documents

- *Washington DC Mayor Muriel Bowser Holds News Conference on the New Coronavirus*, CQ Transcriptions, March 31, 2020.

AFTER CONFUSION, MICROSOFT IDENTIFIED AS NEW VACCINE PORTAL VENDOR

WASHINGTON CITY PAPER

Amanda Michelle Gomez
March 5, 2021

D.C. residents are relieved to know that this will be the last week of the first come, first serve COVID-19 vaccine portal, where people hurry to book an appointment Thursday and Friday mornings, and sometimes encounter crashes and error messages. On Friday, residents reserved the appointments at vaccinate.dc.gov and the call center within minutes. (Disclaimer: This reporter tried to book due to a qualifying medical condition.) Some users encountered problems this morning, leading one councilmember to reach out to the executive again for answers.

“This morning, there was a 6-minute delay in activating vaccinate.dc.gov because traffic was more than 3x higher than last Friday’s peak,” said the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) in a statement to *City Paper*. “Once the site was able to be activated at 9:06am, residents were routed to the Microsoft vaccine scheduling application which functioned as expected. More than 4,500 vaccination appointments were made through the portal within 10 minutes.”

Even though relief is near—in the form of a pre-registration system that’s scheduled to launch next week—Mayor **Muriel Bowser**’s administration struggled to answer some key questions after it previewed the new way forward on Thursday, March 4: What day will the pre-registration system launch? And is Microsoft responsible for the new system? And it’s also not entirely clear how DC Health will decide who to send notifications to to book appointments once people pre-register.

After questions arose over what vendor is responsible for the pre-registration system Thursday night, the mayor’s spokesperson said Microsoft is Friday early afternoon. “We continue to develop and test a pre-registration portal with Microsoft to alleviate the traffic issue,” said OCTO. “However, the demand will remain high, and we will continue to advocate for more vaccine.”

A Council oversight hearing Thursday night with agencies responsible for the new pre-registration system made it seem as if the executive was not ready for the launch. “We still got teams right now testing, working on things, so that is not yet determined,” said Chief Technology Officer **Lindsey Parker** of the launch date. Perhaps most concerning to locals was the news that D.C. had not yet selected a vendor for the pre-registration system Thursday. “Stiff drink rating : [Four cocktail glass emojis],” tweeted At-Large Councilmember **Elissa Silverman**, following the hearing where she asked executives whether the new system is Microsoft’s, as the company is responsible for the current portal. “We announced [the] launch of a system that we haven’t committed to buying.”

Earlier on Thursday, Bowser held a press conference where her team previewed what the new pre-registration system would look like. Parker suggested they’d use a Microsoft platform after Thursday’s

signups through vaccinate.dc.gov went smoothly. “We’ve done a number of load tests over the past week to make sure we were ready for today. This is going to be the same platform that’ll support the pre-registration system,” said Parker at the noon press conference.

Hours later at the Council hearing on health, Parker deferred the question of who’s responsible for the new pre-registration system to Assistant City Administrator **Jay Melder**, who said: “We are working on two different paths for the pre-registration system ... We have Microsoft working on that solution, which Lindsey Parker is discussing. We also have Accenture working on a solution ... We want to make sure that when we do transition to a pre-registration system that it is the right one. That it has been through the right testing. That it has the right features that we are looking for.”

The pre-registration system Parker previewed to the public was Microsoft’s. “That’s what it is going to look like,” said Melder when asked why the executive would preview a solution they hadn’t committed to yet. The executive previously said they’d launch the pre-registration system sometime in mid-March because officials wanted to make sure whatever platform they rolled out was strong. Last week’s repeated technological failures likely hurried officials to launch the new pre-registration system. D.C.’s partnered with Microsoft near the start of the public health emergency, but Accenture, who was in the running, also offers a vaccine management solution. Ohio, for example, appears to use the Accenture solution.

Other states, including neighboring Maryland and Virginia, have been operating a pre-registration system, so why was D.C. slow to do the same? Parker said DC Health approached OCTO in September 2020 to identify a technology solution for its vaccine rollout, and they went with Microsoft because they were familiar with their solution, team, and workflow. The portal launched on Dec. 16. DC Health’s **Patrick Ashley** told At-Large Councilmember **Christina Henderson** in response to her question about this that the city was one of the first in the country to use this technology, so the pre-registration system did not exist in September. “We looked at a number of different systems to see what was in the marketplace,” said Ashley. “This was the best product at the time and then we developed it from there.” D.C. publicly announced its intention to move to a pre-registration in late January.

It’s also unclear exactly how DC Health will decide who to notify after the public pre-registers. (DC Health is responsible for the programmatic side of things, while OCTO is responsible for implementing technology.) DC Health Director Dr. **LaQuandra Nesbitt** suggested at the Thursday press conference that the date of registration would be weighed the least. The agency is also weighing a person’s ZIP code, medical history, and occupation. Tens of thousands of people are currently eligible for the vaccine, so DC Health would have a lot of control over who to send notifications to so people can book appointments. “We can go in every day however frequently we decide. We can say we want age range between X and Y, and we want this many appointments to go to this group,” said Ashley. He added that DC Health is committed to transparency. Nesbitt said seniors would be favored in the new system, as would people in priority ZIP codes, communities hit hard by COVID-19 but have lower vaccination rates. The mayor’s spokesperson said operational questions will be discussed next week. (Select hospitals and health centers are also booking appointments for their own patient population, so people aren’t just getting vaccinated through the portal or pre-registration system.)

The public *does* have more insight into last week's snafu. "Unfortunately we didn't sound the alarms with Microsoft early enough to handle the massive uptick in usage we've experienced," Parker told the Council. "As a result we saw three days that resulted in extreme frustration to users and served to dismantle public trust in the vaccine portal. And for that I'm incredibly sorry." When DC Health expanded eligibility to residents 18 to 64 with qualifying medical conditions, concurrent users increased from 62 to over 20,000. But the number of appointments were similar. As for Feb. 25's technical failure, officials also realized they forgot to expand eligibility after resolving the traffic issue. "Tired eyes missed one workflow and we will not let that happen again," said Parker. She said OCTO and Microsoft have since improved their workflow and increased server capacity to avoid problems this week. Microsoft is also paying more attention to D.C. after receiving a lot of bad press. Parker has a lot of hope for the new pre-registration system.

D.C. HOUSED THE HOMELESS IN UPSCALE APARTMENTS. IT HASN'T GONE AS PLANNED

THE WASHINGTON POST

Peter Jamison
April 16, 2019

The SWAT team, the overdose, the complaints of pot smoke in the air and feces in the stairwell — it would be hard to pinpoint a moment when things took a turn for the worse at Sedgwick Gardens, a stately apartment building in Northwest Washington.

But the Art Deco complex, which overlooks Rock Creek Park and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is today the troubled locus of a debate on housing policy in a city struggling with the twin crises of homelessness and gentrification.

Located in affluent Cleveland Park and designed by Mihran Mesrobian — the prewar architect behind such Washington landmarks as the Hay-Adams Hotel — Sedgwick Gardens was once out of reach for low-income District residents.

That changed two years ago, when D.C. housing officials dramatically increased the value of rental subsidies. The goal was to give tenants who had previously clustered in impoverished, high-crime areas east of the Anacostia River a shot at living in more desirable neighborhoods.

At Sedgwick Gardens, the effort met with wild success. As of February, tenants with city-issued housing vouchers had filled nearly half of the building's roughly 140 units.

Mixed-income developments aren't rare in the District, where officials often require that new buildings preserve some space for working-class residents.

But the situation at Sedgwick Gardens is different: Many of the new tenants are previously homeless men and women who came directly from shelters or the streets, some still struggling with severe behavioral problems.

The result has been a high-stakes social experiment that so far has left few of its subjects happy. Police visits to the building have nearly quadrupled since 2016. Some tenants have fled. In February, responding to complaints, the city began staffing the building with social workers at night to deal with problems that arise.

Some tenants with vouchers say they have been made to feel unwelcome by their new neighbors, a dynamic that has unavoidable undertones of race and class in a largely white neighborhood.

More established tenants contend that they support the goals of the voucher program, but that it has gone badly awry at Sedgwick Gardens, transforming the building into a dumping ground for people unprepared to live on their own.

Even some Sedgwick Gardens residents who receive public assistance say the complex was colonized by the city's housing programs too rapidly and without sufficient oversight.

"It's not about the voucher program. It's not about racism. It's about people's conduct and behavior," said Lorraine Starkes, 61, a formerly homeless woman who moved into Sedgwick Gardens using a voucher about two years ago.

Starkes, who is black, said some of her fellow tenants with vouchers were not properly screened by city officials before moving in. Now, she said, those residents have overwhelmed her new home and "are trying to turn it into a ghetto."

The drama within Sedgwick Gardens's red-brick walls exposes challenges and contradictions in the "housing first" policies for reducing homelessness that have been adopted by the District and many other cities.

That approach calls for placing the homeless in long-term housing without first requiring treatment for mental illness or addiction. Many experts say it is the best way to help people who have trouble helping themselves amid the chaos of homelessness.

But as housing first has emerged as a national policy consensus, some have begun to warn that it is being applied too broadly and at times with inadequate support for people who aren't ready for the independence and responsibilities of living by themselves.

City officials insist those mistakes have not been made at Sedgwick Gardens, calling the disturbing incidents isolated cases.

"I think the reason the issues at Sedgwick Gardens came to a head is that there were a couple of residents that were causing a problem. That could have been true whether they had a voucher or not," said D.C. Council member Brianna K. Nadeau (D-Ward 1), who chairs the council's Committee on Human Services. "I want us to be careful not to demonize everyone who finds stable housing through a subsidy because not everybody who needs a subsidy is a criminal."

'My home's right here'

Built in 1931, Sedgwick Gardens rises on Connecticut Avenue NW less than a mile north of the National Zoo. Past an elegant stone carriage porch is a cavernous lobby, ringed by Moorish arches and featuring a fountain of marble and blue tile, that could be the setting for a scene in a Raymond Chandler novel.

Until recently, the building was occupied by a quiet mix of tenants made up primarily of couples and single apartment dwellers, said Carren Kaston, a former literature professor who has lived at the complex for more than three decades and is president of the Sedgwick Gardens Tenant Association.

That began to change about two years ago.

In late 2016, the board of the D.C. Housing Authority — which sets payment standards for vouchers issued in the city — increased the maximum value of vouchers to 175 percent of fair market rent, as set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

That meant vouchers could be used for one-bedroom apartments renting at up to \$2,648 a month, according to Housing Authority documents. At Sedgwick Gardens, the going rate for one-bedroom units was about \$2,200 per month in 2017, according to a former tenant who moved in that year without public assistance.

Tenants with vouchers pay 30 percent of whatever income they have toward rent, with the city subsidizing the rest.

The move came in a city desperate to offer its residents more affordable living options — and to move the chronically homeless off the street. At the last official count in 2018, there were 6,904 homeless people in the District, which has a population of just over 700,000. A recent study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition found that the District has experienced the most intense gentrification of any city in the country.

Naimah Simkins, the former property manager at Sedgwick Gardens, said that in early 2017, she listed basement units she was having trouble leasing on a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website. Soon, there was a trickle of formerly homeless or low-income veterans bearing vouchers issued by the D.C. government.

Cleveland Park is a bastion of urbane liberalism where just 1 in 20 voters supported President Trump in the 2016 election. Yet from the beginning, Simkins said, it was clear that some of the building's older residents were discomfited by the new basement dwellers.

She likened the dynamic to “The People Under the Stairs,” a 1991 kitsch horror movie in which a well-to-do couple live above a cellar filled with mistreated children.

“It would be, like, the smallest thing that they would call the police on,” Simkins said. She said the more established tenants “feel uneasy, but if they would just reach out and talk, they would see that (tenants with vouchers) are human beings, too.”

After moving into the building about two years ago, voucher holder Joseph A. Bundy, 69, said he was smoking outside one day when another resident approached him: “This lady came up and said, ‘Don’t you know there’s a park up the street?’ I said, ‘What you talking about, a park up the street? My home’s right here.’ ”

Lawrence Hilliard, a 69-year-old Marine Corps veteran who previously lived at the homeless men’s shelter on New York Avenue, said a social worker took him on a tour of apartments where he could use his rental voucher. At the initial addresses in Southeast, Hilliard said he was warned by residents that the sound of gunshots made it hard to sleep at night.

Sedgwick Gardens, in a neighborhood of parks and small businesses where Hilliard had done odd jobs as a young man, was a revelation.

“It was away from the violence and the foolishness, man, that’s the main thing,” he said, smoking a cigarette on a recent evening in the building’s parking lot, which adjoins a vibrant patch of World War II victory gardens still tended by community members. “And then the violence and the foolishness came up here.”

'I have a shotgun'

There were 121 calls for police service at Sedgwick Gardens in 2018, up from 34 in 2016. City officials said despite that volume, officers determined just five times last year that a crime had taken place. Still, a number of the incidents left residents rattled.

On Palm Sunday of last year, officers responding to a noise complaint encountered Robert Gingell, who according to a police report could be heard throwing objects around his third-floor apartment.

When they knocked on the door, Gingell allegedly said, “If you try to come into my apartment, I have a shotgun and will shoot all of you. I will pick you off one by one.”

A police tactical team filed through the historic carriage porch and across the limestone-and-marble lobby and set up a perimeter outside Gingell’s apartment, where he holed up until the next morning. Although no gun was found, Gingell was arrested. He was released — and then arrested again at Sedgwick Gardens two days later, accused of striking another tenant in the head with a flashlight.

Gingell could not be reached for comment. Court documents say he pleaded guilty to a charge of attempted threats to do bodily harm, agreeing to undergo mental health and substance abuse assessments and treatment as necessary.

In February, his community supervision officer reported that he no longer lived at Sedgwick Gardens, but at another apartment building in Northwest Washington.

About a month after the SWAT team’s visit, police were called to the building to investigate the whereabouts of 68-year-old tenant Jacob Brooks, who according to building staff had not been seen in weeks. When he did not answer his door, police entered his apartment and found him on the floor of his bedroom, unconscious and not breathing, according to an incident report. Fire and emergency medical services officials called to the scene declared him dead.

The chief medical examiner determined that his death was caused by drugs including fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that often causes overdoses when it is mixed with heroin.

City officials declined to say whether Gingell or Brooks were receiving rental assistance, citing privacy laws.

Tenants say they have also confronted a slew of less serious nuisances such as panhandling, marijuana smoke in the halls and feces discovered on a landing in the stairwell.

Diane McWhorter, a Sedgwick Gardens resident and author of “Carry Me Home,” a Pulitzer Prize-winning book about segregation and the civil rights movement, said bureaucratic bungling was undermining the laudable aims of the voucher programs.

“I became extremely disillusioned with the city as a result of this whole thing because I kind of lost faith in their willingness or ability to respond to what was happening on the ground,” McWhorter said.

“Cleveland Park is the ideal community to test this out because by and large the existing residents are very hospitable to these ideas,” she added. “It just would behoove them to try to make this work here. Because the odds are, if it can’t work here, they’re going to have a hard time selling it in communities that aren’t as ‘woke.’ ”

McWhorter said landlords also have little incentive to turn away tenants unfit for independent living because the vouchers guarantee them rents in excess of market rates.

And there is an added perk. In buildings such as Sedgwick Gardens, where many older tenants pay less for rent-stabilized units, apartments that are let out to tenants receiving public assistance don’t revert to rent control once those tenants leave. Last year, the D.C. Council took action to close this loophole, but the law has not yet gone into effect.

A spokeswoman for Daro, which owns and manages Sedgwick Gardens, said the company had not taken steps either “to solicit or discourage voucher holders from applying” and noted that it was illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants receiving government rental subsidies.

She said Daro addressed problems with tenants as they arose.

“Beyond enforcing lease violations and working to evict tenants who repeatedly violate the terms of their lease, Daro has worked with city officials, police, case managers, housing officials and other tenants to create a safe environment,” she said.

Housing first — or housing only?

For decades, the homeless often faced obstacles in the search for long-term housing. Among them was the mind-set that issues such as chronic mental illness or addiction should be under control before people became eligible to live outside shelters or group homes.

“Housing first” revolutionized that attitude. Backed by a formidable body of research showing that it reduces chronic homelessness, it has become the dominant philosophy in the District and many other cities.

“Housing is therapeutic in and of itself, and there should be no behavioral barriers to access to housing,” said Jay Melder, the District’s assistant city administrator for internal services. “Housing first is a best practice, nationwide.”

But as that practice spreads, some are urging caution against a one-size-fits-all attitude.

Particularly for those who have endured prolonged bouts of homelessness or mental illness, the approach is risky, said David Buck, associate dean of community health at the University of Houston College of Medicine.

While studies clearly support the effectiveness of housing-first programs, Buck said, they can fall apart when participants don’t get the follow-up care they need.

Government officials and advocates for the homeless “want one answer for everyone,” Buck said. “Housing first and just the voucher works great for some people. But for people who are chronically mentally ill or chronically homeless . . . those people don’t do as well just jumping in.”

A majority of the D.C. Council is backing a bill, introduced by Nadeau, that would require buildings with at least 20 units and 30 percent or more of them occupied by tenants receiving housing assistance to offer on-site access to social services such as health care, nutrition counseling and child care. Nadeau said the bill did not arise in response to complaints about Sedgwick Gardens.

Melder noted that only a portion of the voucher holders at Sedgwick Gardens are formerly homeless or in need of ongoing social services. Some, including families, simply qualified for public assistance because of their low incomes.

Case managers were assigned to those who required services, he said, even before the city began stationing social workers at the building two months ago.

But Sedgwick Gardens tenants say some of their new neighbors seem lost.

Jane Hardin, 79, has lived in the building since 1974. She said most of the voucher holders are good neighbors, apt to say hello or open a door for her. She likes seeing some of the older men who have moved into the building playing checkers in the basement common space.

Then there is the woman who moved in alone down the hall, who moans and screams incomprehensibly for long stretches of the day and night, who seems to badly need help she isn’t getting. On Christmas Day last year, Hardin said, she found her sitting by herself near the elevator. It seemed like a good time to try to establish a connection.

“I looked at her and just said, ‘Merry Christmas,’ and she nodded her head and almost smiled,” Hardin recalled. “But I haven’t been able to build on that.”

D.C. MAYOR BOWSER ANNOUNCES KEY APPOINTMENTS

TARGETED NEWS SERVICE

Targeted News Service
March 6, 2019

District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser issued the following news release:

Today, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced a series of appointments in her Administration:

Lucinda Babers, to be Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure

Ms. Babers has served as the Director of the District Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) since 2007. She has led the agency through a significant transformation, including the closure and opening of three service centers, elimination of passenger vehicle safety inspections, creation of a more secure credential (along with central issuance), and implementation of REAL ID and Limited Purpose Credentials. Prior to her service as director, Ms. Babers served as Deputy Director of DC DMV and held senior management positions at Amtrak. Ms. Babers holds a Master of Science in Business from Johns Hopkins University.

Jay Melder, to be Assistant City Administrator for Internal Services

Mr. Melder currently serves as Chief of Staff for the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. In this role, Mr. Melder manages high-priority Mayoral health initiatives and oversees all health and human services outreach and community engagement. Previously, he served as Deputy Director in the Mayor's Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs, where he coordinated relationships with the DC Council on Health and Human Services and Labor and Workforce issues, and as Chief of Staff at the District Department of Human Services, where he managed over 1,000 full time employees and a budget of over \$500 million. Mr. Melder holds a Master of Fine Arts from American University.

Wayne Turnage, to be Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

Mr. Turnage is currently the Director of the District Department of Health Care Finance (DCHF) and concurrently serves as Interim Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. Mr. Turnage has spearheaded efforts to reform several of DCHF's major provider reimbursement systems, established a program of accountability for the agency's redesigned managed care program, and organized and oversaw the implementation of a plan to reduce fraud in the Medicaid home care program. Prior to his administration appointment, he served as Chief of Staff at Virginia Commonwealth University and as Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources for Virginia Governor Mark Warner. Mr. Turnage holds a Master of Public Administration from Ohio State University. With this appointment, Mr. Turnage will continue his concurrent role as Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and Director of DCHF.

BUILDING A NEW HOSPITAL AT ST. ELIZABETHS EAST

MEDIUM

Jay Melder
August 13, 2018

On Friday, August 10, under the shade trees, earthmovers and historic facades of Saint Elizabeths East campus, something happened that promises to change the future of health care in Wards 7 and 8 and across the District for the better: Mayor Bowser signed a Letter of Intent with The George Washington University Hospital to build, operate, maintain, and govern a new, state of the art community hospital and health complex at the St. Elizabeths campus.

Not only will this new hospital and health complex provide the acute care, ambulatory and new baby services residents need and want, it will also serve as the hub to the entire, comprehensive and integrated GW Hospital health care system — meaning that District residents (especially residents of Wards 7 & 8) can coordinate all of their health care needs (from routine and preventative care to urgent and specialty care to major treatments and operations) all closer to home. This public-private partnership will result in a new hospital, scheduled to open in 2023, to include approximately 100–125 inpatient beds, and include robust outpatient, specialty and urgent-care as part of the broader health complex that will be constructed onsite and in the surrounding area.

This Letter of Intent brings us one (big) step closer toward Mayor Bowser’s promise to bring a world-class, fully integrated medical center to the residents of Wards 7 and 8. [In an op-ed in this Sunday’s Washington Post](#), Mayor Bowser highlighted the important aspects of this new partnership and pointed to GW Hospital’s long history of serving residents in Wards 7 and 8.

The Mayor also made a clear that a new medical facility is just one piece of a larger health care puzzle, writing that “a new hospital east of the river will not single-handedly end the disparities that exist in our city or address all the social determinants that cause poor health outcomes,” and adding:

We’re not waiting until the new hospital is built to do the important work of transforming how health care in our city is accessed and delivered. In April, we launched [Right Care, Right Now](#), an innovative initiative that connects 911 callers with less serious and non-life-threatening injuries and conditions to primary-care providers near their homes. We also launched [My Health GPS](#), which helps residents with serious and persistent illnesses get the primary and specialty care they need.

The signing of the letter of intent kicks off a month’s long process between the DC Government and GW Hospital to develop a formal partnership agreement. We will also be engaging with community and healthcare stakeholder to update you on our progress and, most importantly, get your input and expertise about the specific healthcare services that are important to you.

Another exciting part of this project, which should not be overlooked, is the building of a brand new emergency and temporary housing to replace the aging 801 East Men’s Shelter. This new shelter will be

built near the existing shelter on St. Elizabeths campus and will provide a more dignified and program-rich environment for men experiencing homelessness to get the services, supports and stability they need and deserve to achieve better health, hope and permanent housing. The new shelter is scheduled to open in 2020 and is the next phase of our plan to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

You can learn more about this announcement and what comes next at newhospital.dc.gov.

Jay Melder is chief-of-staff for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: THE OVERHAUL OF HUMAN SERVICES IN WASHINGTON

STREET SENSE MEDIA

Michael Brice-Saddler

April 7, 2016

Mayor Muriel Bowser presented her Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal to District Councilmembers late last month. It includes an additional \$13.1 million toward homeless services and a \$10 million extension for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, among other investments.

Representatives from the mayor's office engaged with the public to gather input at a March 31 budget briefing organized by the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development. The so-called "Fair-shot" budget, which has been in development since last fall, is all about community priorities, said D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Director Polly Donaldson.

For more in-depth information about how resources will be allocated toward some of these priorities, *Street Sense* sat down with Jay Melder, chief of staff at the Department of Human Services.

What specific strategies are being implemented to prevent families from falling into homelessness, and how will the budget impact those efforts?

Melder: The \$13 million investment toward homeless services is a continuation of investments made in FY2016, which was the first time the District funded a homelessness prevention program specifically for families.

Last year, \$2 million was placed specifically into prevention programs and another \$1 million is being added to that this year.

"This prevention program is designed to catch families and keep them stable where they are, and really support them where they are. We want to make sure that the shelter doesn't become the front door for housing solutions."

Homeless prevention programs should give people the support they need to maintain stability, such as help with rent, utilities, bills and groceries.

"Sometimes just the small things can help a situation become a lot more tenable."

Thus far, the District's homeless prevention efforts have helped over 900 families stay out of homelessness. This new funding will continue those efforts.

Why was TANF extended again? Will it be extended another year for Fiscal Year 2018?

Melder: The reason for this extension—which provides an additional \$10 million to continue to assist families who have received TANF benefits for longer than the program’s 60-month limit — is different than the reason for last year’s TANF extension.

Last year, with the FY2016 budget, the Department of Human Services felt as though we had not held up our end of the bargain for families in the TANF program. There is a lot more to be done and this extension is primarily about allowing time for the community to talk about better solutions.

“We’re going to see a lot of policy about the TANF extension moving forward, and we’re going to have to work with the council, the community and our TANF experts in the D.C. government to shape a policy that’s going to work.”

I cannot be certain, but TANF probably will not be extended again for the 2018 fiscal year. “I think that this is about getting it done this year,”

At the March 31 budget briefing, Department of Human Services Director Laura Zeilinger said that the extension includes ongoing monthly benefits for families who would be ineligible under the current law. “We’re going to offer this extension one time,” Zeilinger said. “We’re going to improve the services we offer.”

What changes can we expect to see to Department of Human Services over the next year?

Melder: The Department of Human Services will continue to invest in the Interagency Council on Homelessness’ strategic plan to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. In order to do that, a \$13.1 million increase has been granted for proven solutions, such as permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing and targeted affordable housing.

Supplementing, bolstering and enhancing these solutions will be the most efficient way to end homelessness in the District. Furthermore, it is essential to create a balance between short-term solutions and long-term solutions.

“In years past there’s been less of a focus on how people get out of homelessness, but instead on how to manage it with a shelter system. We have to have a homelessness system that lifts people back up quickly, keeps people from falling into homelessness and makes sure that they stay out of it.”

Will any of this budget go toward the improvement of shelter conditions?

Melder: This new contract allows the Department of Human Services to look at methods to improve shelters using money that is already spent. The Pat Handy Place for Women, a brand-new shelter built as part of the DC General closure plan, is the vision for all future low-barrier shelters.

The District will also work directly with local communities to get input on what the design should be. However, for people in shelters and also those living in encampments, the solution is a permanent home or apartment of their own.

“We need to make low-barrier shelters more dignified, but we have to make sure we’re investing in housing solutions that work.”

Will the cost of encampment enclosures stay the same?

Melder: “I would imagine that [the cost of encampment closures] stays roughly the same”

Is there a plan for the new DC General replacement shelters once their leases are up?

Melder: “We’ll always need a crisis response system for families. We’re extremely confident in the District’s ability to renew those leases and negotiate what we need when we need it.”

What is the plan for families currently staying in hotels and motels as overflow shelters when the DC General replacement facilities open?

Melder: At the present, there are a little under 900 people in overflow locations. But they are not same people who were there last month.

“It’s not going to be the same families, these families are resilient folks going through a tough time, getting the resources they need to be out and back in the community. We’ll be supporting families going through the same things, but not the same people.”

THE REAL PRESIDENTIAL ISSUE

THE REVELLE, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Jay Melder
July 13, 2004

Of course looks matter.

I mean, who wants an ugly president? Not me.

It really comes down to "looking" like you know what you're talking about, rather than actually knowing what you're talking about.

That's why people have trouble believing Michael Moore. If it were that Dawson guy who made that movie, Bush's political credibility would up a creek.

My sister actually makes good money betting on "Monday Night Football."

She picks the winner based on the team colors and how cute the coach is, and she's yet to lose.

Still, if you're one of those people who likes to tell themselves that "it's what's on the inside that counts," please do me a favor and write in Janet Reno for your next president.

Any-who, what about this raise in out-of-state tuition?

I think it's great; I hate foreigners ... especially Texans.

Speaking of ugly, have you ever been to Texas?

"Everything is bigger in Texas." Damn right -- especially the women.

Oh come on, I'm just poking fun.

Don't wave that damn lone star in my face.

The whole tuition thing just pisses me off. Why try to attract kids from elsewhere to come here, and possibly work in this state?

Hey, we might actually fool them with a false sense of economy.

I mean, we ain't foolin' any locals.

Our fathers have been unemployed since we were in grade school, and our over-educated mothers are barely above the poverty line teaching Louisiana children how to read.

I don't understand.

Are we trying to hide our idiocy, or are we so damn proud of it that we don't want anyone else participating in the birthright of every Louisianian to get a crappy education?

"No, it's my useless schooling, you can't have it! Stay in your own state and get a good education -- poo-poo head!"

And what about our beloved foreign exchange students, what about them? Did you think about their well being?

Hell, did you think about our various engineering majors?

Without Asian exchange students, LSU engineering would just suck.

I don't normally stereotype, but come on, people ... you know it's true.

The bottom line is this: Louisiana students aren't smart enough to back a "Flagship" University.

Hey, it's not our fault.

We're not even sure what real school is ... most of us just think it's free hot lunches and textbooks (you the man, Huey P.).

I'm talking about a state who values education so much we voted for a University of Louisiana graduate for our governor over a someone who graduated with honors from Brown.

UL for God's sake! Renowned for their political science department.

Thank God we all look like we know what we're talking about.

I WAS ROBBED

THE REVELLE, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Jay Melder
July 2, 2004

What follows is directed to the son of a bitch who broke into my car Friday night: F--- you, you jack foo bastard, piece of crap ass crap.

Now, I understand the philosophy and social need for delinquencies such as theft, but the next time you pry the door of a Honda wagon open like a sardine, you can think about the inconvenience you are causing to the owner.

All you took was the change from my ashtray.

I don't even keep my quarters in there.

Do my a favor and break a f---ing window, and a small one at that. At least I can fix that in a day; relatively inexpensively as well.

And for the love of Christ, take something!

You left Al Green's greatest hits, along with 200 other quality CD's lying on the back seat, but you took the pens out of my book bag.

You suck as a thief.

Not only did you cost me like \$1,500 (do you know how much a car door costs?), but you insulted my taste in music.

Hey, beggars can't be choosers!

Ya know, you could have just knocked on my door and said, "Hey, I'm about to take this crowbar, tear the front passenger side door of your car and steal approximately \$1.76 worth of pennies and dimes. Do you have anything to say?"

And I would have said, "Yah, here's a twenty -- don't bother."

Oh, but thank God for the Baton Rouge Police Department, because I just don't think I could've handled myself without the comfort given to me by our men in blue.

I'm surprised you got out of the patrol car.

Oh, you can't dust for prints, because it's raining, and the inside has too much built up ... what? what? You don't even know how to dust for prints. Oh, you barely know how to work your siren, they don't pay you enough ... oh, I couldn't agree more.

(The preemptive response to the letter which will be written from a girl whose father is a police officer: I'm deeply sorry for my ignorant remarks. I am well aware and in deep appreciation of the dangers Baton Rouge's finest put their lives in to protect my own. My deepest regrets, **Jay Melder**. P.S.: Your father is an ignorant, arrogant ass. Have a great day.)

Anywho, I am a firm believer that karma is a bitch!

What goes around comes around, and all that.

Trust me, I got my car broken into.

JUSTICE MOORE SHOULD LOOK AT LAW, NOT GOD

THE REVELLE, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Jay Melder
September 5, 2003

So there is this whole big thing about the Ten Commandments Monument in the Alabama Supreme Court building ... and rightly so.

Starting with the facts, Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, aka the "Ten Commandments Judge" (as he called himself during his 2000 Supreme Court Justice campaign), placed a two-and-a-half ton granite monument displaying the Ten Commandments inside the rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Court Building after business hours on July 31, 2001.

Three Lawyers from Alabama took suit against the chief justice for ignoring the First Amendment.

Last year Federal District Judge Myron Thompson ruled that the monument did violate the separation of church and state outlined in the Constitution and ordered Moore to take it down.

Louisiana State U.

Moore appealed, and the monument sat still.

On Aug. 19 of this year, the 11th Federal District Court of Appeals in Atlanta ruled in favor of Thompson's prior ruling to remove the Ten Commandments from the rotunda.

Still the monument sat.

It wasn't until Moore's associate justices suspended him on ethics charges, that the massive rock was moved into a closet opposite an employee cafeteria last Wednesday.

Moore plans to take this to the U.S. Supreme Court, but for now the monument is under lock and key.

The 700 Club must eat this up!

This whole thing has turned into a debate over God, instead of just a question of law.

I am all for them taking that monument out of the rotunda of a judicial building. It belongs in a church, not in a courtroom.

Didn't we cover this about 200 years ago?

I just wonder what would have happened ... what would we have done if it was a statue of Buddha instead of the Ten Commandments?

First of all, Charlton Heston wouldn't have gotten any royalties, and secondly America would have panicked.

After all, America was founded on Christianity. Maybe so, but Nazi Germany comes to mind as well.

It is not a matter of shutting God out. It's just a matter of keeping God where he belongs -- in the hearts and homes of Christians, not the walls of government.

It's a tough pill to swallow so grab a glass of water.

What we don't always realize is that not everyone believes the same things as everyone else, and just as you wouldn't want someone rubbing their beliefs in your face, they don't want you to do it either.

True, that monument might not have been yelling "fornicator, you're going to hell" at everyone who passed by (most unlike the evangelist in Free Speech Alley), but it did shove the Ten Commandments in everyone's face ... about 5,400 pounds of Ten Commandments to be exact.

Also true, the Ten Commandments are some pretty good rules to follow, but the tablets are still undeniably Christian, which makes them religious in nature, which makes them constitutionally unfit for the rotunda of a government building.

So put down your candles, God didn't go anywhere.

He or she is not locked away in some broom closet -- that's a piece of granite, not the almighty.

Like smoking cigarettes in government buildings before it, this is just another victim of freedom.

Religious freedom isn't just the right to practice and believe any religion you want. It is also the right to be free from the practice of other religions.

It seems to me a state Supreme Court Chief Justice would understand that.

Then again it is Alabama, and they never have really been on the cutting edge.

But if you just can't handle the idea of God being locked in a closet, maybe they can wheel the stone out to the orange square of concrete in the back of the parking lot and give all us exiled smokers something to lean on.

You can make the hike as well, bum a smoke and join the rest of us who make personal concessions in the name of freedom.

(C) 2002 The Reveille via U-WIRE

CALIF. RACE BECOMING REALITY TV

THE REVELLE, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Jay Melder
August 29, 2003

Gary Coleman could be the next governor of California.

The above statement is all I need to say to describe the ridiculousness of the California recall.

It's like a mix between "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race."

It's "Celebrity Death Match" crossed with "Cross Fire."

Louisiana State U.

It's sick and disgusting, and I'm loving every minute of it.

Finally, some reality TV I can dig.

Who cares that democracy takes a back seat to entertainment?

After all, it's only California.

The cast ... I mean list of candidates, sounds like a bad night at "Hollywood Squares."

The question is, who will be in the center square?

Will it be GOP favorite and "T3" star Arnold Schwarzenegger?

Maybe famed pornographer Larry Flynt will be the one in the hot seat.

Adult movie star Mary Carey and comedian Gallagher are also in the running.

(Side note: Carey is famous for her enormous melons, and Gallagher is most notably recognized for smashing melons with a sledgehammer.)

"Diff'rent Strokes" star and my personal favorite, Gary Coleman, also has entered his name as one of 135 candidates.

Yeah, there are some other real politicians in the running such as California Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, state Sen. Tom McClintock and other boring suits.

And of course there's Gray Davis, current governor of the great over-taxed state of California, fighting to keep his now jeopardized office.

But unless he hits big on the "Daily Double," I fear this will be his "Final Jeopardy."

Let's face it.

People want to see him bite the dust.

Americans crave tragedies, and this one is a classic.

Man ascends to the highest position, man blamed for failing economy, man brought down by society.

It's textbook tragedy.

Ironically, he is brought down within the guidelines of the law he at the time governed.

It's brilliant!

I smell a mini-series.

Davis, along with fellow Democrats, blames the recall on a "right-wing power grab."

Thank you Captain Obvious.

Personally, I was hoping for a coup d'etat.

Something along the lines of the Terminator riding through the streets of Sacramento wrecking shop on all the liberals he could detect using his super smart eye computer thingy.

Maybe even Davis actually being a "T200" or something.

I don't know, I'm not an elections commissioner, but surely they could come up with something a little more exciting than a recall.

Anywho, "Ahhh-nald" might not have to terminate anyone to grab the top seat, as a poll put out Wednesday by KABC in Los Angeles suggests that out of the voters polled, 45 percent of them would vote for the GOP commando, while only 29 percent for leading Democrat Bustamante.

Who would have thought that name recognition and lots

of money would give a candidate an edge over other seemingly more qualified individuals.

That's a first!

The recall election will be held Oct. 7.

The ballot will have two parts: A "yes, no" vote on the recall of Gov. Gray "Oedipus Rex" Davis, and a vote out of 130 plus candidates to choose from on who should replace Davis should the recall pass.

Some producers are calling this a "tribal council" in which Davis could be voted off the "island" and asked to extinguish his torch.

Coincidentally, Oct. 7 is also the same day the Game Show Network plans to announce the winner of its show "Who Wants To Be The Next Governor Of California" to be aired Oct. 1.

Coleman and Carey have signed on as contestants, and both will outline their respective platforms on the program.

There is, however, some debate whether or not Coleman will be outlining his platform or standing on it.

(That was cheap and cheesy, I know, but I couldn't resist. I'm sorry.)

The winner of the show will receive a \$ 21,200 "campaign contribution" from GSN ... I love America!

However, as amusing and interesting as this event is, let's all hope it's not the new trend.

The last thing we need is for America to start recalling all of her public servants and replacing a (sometimes) honorable election system with a circus of headline-hungry candidates with bad agents.

The moment we begin to feel as though this nation's elections are arbitrary, and not as a means to pursue the betterment of life, is the moment this great nation will cease to be great.

Please, question your government and its policies, but do not abandon them.

Respect your nation's leaders, but expect and demand more from them than just the very best.

And if nothing else, VOTE!



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[Read Mayor Bowser's Presentation on DC's COVID-19 Situational Update: March 8](#)
[DC Entered Phase Two of Reopening on June 22. View the Guidance.](#)

Office of the City Administrator



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Internal Services

The Internal Services division of the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) will oversee those agencies that provide services directly to District government and will be led by a senior administration official. Agencies in this cluster will include: the [Department of General Services](#), the [Office of the Chief Technology Officer](#), the [Office of Contracting and Procurement](#), the [Department of Human Resources](#), the [Office of Risk Management](#), and the [Office of Disability Rights](#), and the [Office of Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining](#). The division is managed by the Assistant City Administrator also includes responsibility for the [OCA Grants Management](#) portfolio.

Leadership

Jay Melder
Assistant City Administrator

Jay Melder serves Assistant City Administrator for Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser. In this role, he is responsible for management of the Internal Services Cluster and specific functions of the Office of the City Administrator. Prior to joining OCA, Jay served as Chief of Staff for the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. In this role, Jay manages high-priority Mayoral health initiatives and oversees all health and human services outreach and community engagement. Prior to this role, he served as Deputy Director in the Mayor’s Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs, where he coordinated relationships with District of Columbia Council for Health and Human Services and Labor and Workforce Issues and as Chief of Staff at the DC Department of Human Services, where he managed over 1,000 full-time employees and a budget over one half billion.

Jay holds a Master of Fine Arts from American University and is a proud District resident.

Performance Management



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Jay Melder



Jay Melder serves as the Assistant City Administrator for Washington, DC for Mayor Muriel Bowser. In this role, he is responsible for management of the Internal Services Cluster, which consists of the Departments of General Services and Human Resources and the Offices of Risk Management, the Chief Technology Officer, Disability Rights, Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining, and Contracting and Procurement. Within Internal Services, Jay also oversees the City Administrator’s Project Management and Grants Management teams, which support implementation of key initiatives across the city.

Prior to serving as ACA, Jay held other leadership roles in the Bowser Administration, including at the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services the Department of Human Services, and the Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs.

Before joining the District Government, Jay served in the Obama Administration where he helped to coordinate the federal response to homelessness. Jay is a graduate of American University and Louisiana State University and is a proud District resident.

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Contact

www.linkedin.com/in/jay-melder-5422b32a (LinkedIn)

Top Skills

Editing

Blogging

Strategic Communications

Jay Melder

Assistant City Administrator, Washington DC
Washington

Experience

DC Government

6 years 1 month

Assistant City Administrator for Internal Services

March 2019 - Present (2 years 1 month)

Washington, District Of Columbia

Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

April 2017 - Present (4 years)

Washington, District Of Columbia

Chief of Staff to Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Executive Office of Mayor Muriel Bowser

Deputy Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, Executive Office of DC Mayor Muriel Bowser

October 2016 - Present (4 years 6 months)

Chief of Staff, The Department of Human Services

March 2015 - October 2016 (1 year 8 months)

Washington, District Of Columbia

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

2 years 10 months

Director of Communications and External Affairs

March 2014 - March 2015 (1 year 1 month)

Washington, District Of Columbia

Special Assistant to the Executive Director

June 2012 - March 2014 (1 year 10 months)

Washington D.C. Metro Area

National Endowment for the Arts

Consultant

March 2011 - March 2012 (1 year 1 month)

Washington D.C. Metro Area

Advising the Literature and Arts Education Directors in their efforts to provide national leadership and direction for local and state cultural agencies and non-government arts & cultural organizations. Providing senior staff with program data analysis and expertise.

Managing all program data, including grant application data, grant adjudication data, and grant allocation data for Literature and Arts Education programs. Creating all statistical reporting. Advising program directors on data reporting and communication strategy to stakeholders.

Assisting the Senior Advisor of Program Innovation in the implementation of Operation Homecoming, a partnership with the National Intrepid Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center dedicated to healing the invisible injuries of war through expressive therapy.

Leading all logistical and organizational efforts pertaining to the production of the Poetry Out Loud, a three-day, national press event.

Achievements include

- Designed and implemented a new grant-making process for the Creative Writing Fellowship Grant, reducing the cost of adjudicating the grant by 48%; enhanced the integrity and relevance of the award.
- Produced and analyzed all statistical and narrative reports for use by discipline Directors, Deputy Chairman for Programs & Partnerships, Senior Staff and the Chairman to engage their assistance in publicizing the work of the division.
- Coordinated all activities associated with Poetry Out Loud, including event logistics and data management.
- Collaborated with non-government groups and state and local arts agencies to engage their assistance in publicizing and organizing event activities.
- Analyzed grant application budgets, financial information, and source of funds. Resolved and/or obtained clarification on financial issues.
- Managed social media output via Twitter at nationally web-casted event.

National Endowment for the Arts

Graduate Intern

September 2009 - January 2011 (1 year 5 months)

Collaborated with Director and Program Officer in communications efforts to fund \$2 million to more than 100 individuals and projects in the discipline of literature.

Selected Achievements:

- Edited galley of Contemporary Afghan poetry: Modern Poetry of Pakistan (Dalkey Archive Press 2011).
- Managed content for the NEA Web site's "Writer's Corner," an on-line gallery of NEA Fellows.
- Assisted with planning and management of four NEA literature panel sessions: Access to Artist Excellence in Events and Organizations, Access to Artist Excellence in Publishing, Fellowships in Translation, and Fellowships in Poetry.

J.P. Morgan

Executive Assistant

September 2006 - August 2008 (2 years)

J.P. Morgan Securities, Inc. – New York, NY 2006—2008

Executive Assistant, Global Emerging Markets

A leading financial services company, offering solutions to clients in more than 100 countries with one of the most comprehensive global product platforms available.

Provided executive communication, project management, and administrative support to Chief Financial Officer, Executive Committee member, and Business Manager for global line of business during 2008 financial crisis and forced merger with Bear Stearns. Managed data collection and reporting.

Achievements include

- Collaborated with managers to communicate effectively the health of the Emerging Markets business to bank executives in the months during the sub-prime mortgage crisis through business data reporting and strategic communication planning.
- Managed administrative efforts in the migration of nine Bear Stearns employees to the Emerging Markets business at JPM. Helped to manage and migrate Bear Stearns data to JPM systems.

- Initiated the consolidation of contracted legal service data and reporting among the business lines for Emerging Markets Americas.
- Managed data collection and reporting for the New Business Pipeline, quarterly reports, and investor presentations.
- Created statistical and narrative reports designed to reflect trends, report strength, and highlight business stability.
- Managed and analyzed accounts payable approval and reporting for legal expenses associated with global Emerging Markets trading.
- Produced complex documents, including multiple addressee correspondence and statistical reports.

Education

American University

MFA, Creative Writing / Literature · (2008 - 2010)

Louisiana State University

BA, English · (2001 - 2006)

NCHS

Humanities Lab

A Research Center for the Humanities at American University

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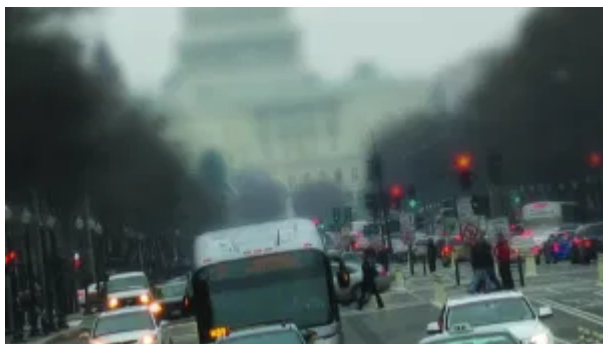
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RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS IN DC

In this presentation, [Jay Melder](#) discusses the challenges of responding to homelessness in DC, a city that has been radically transformed in recent years by new urban developments and changing demographics.

Responding to Homelessness in DC

Wednesday April 13, 2016, 1 pm, at 228 Battelle-Tompkins Hall



Jay Melder, Chief of Staff, DC Department of Human Services, discusses the challenge of homelessness for the future of DC. Our city has experienced incredible change and growth in the last decades, but still struggles with poverty, gentrification, the displacement of long-time residents, and urban homelessness. Find out more about how city agencies, organizations, and officials take on the challenges of chronic homelessness in this engaging and timely conversation.

About our speaker



Jay Melder is Chief of Staff of the District of Columbia Department of Human Services. He has served as Director of Communications and External Affairs on the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and has also worked for the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2010-2011 he was Poet in Residence at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from American University.

Jay Melder was part of a conversation on ending homelessness aired on NBC, February 19, 2016, hosted by Aaron Gilchrist. The guests — Jan-Michael Sacharko, director of Development of New Hope Housing; Renee Pope, assistant director, Community Services, Prince George's County Department of Social Services; and Jay Melder, chief of staff, DC Department of Human Services — offer different insights into homelessness in the Washington Metropolitan Region.

[Click on the image below to view this segment.](#)



[Find out more about these organizations:](#)

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

<https://www.usich.gov/>

District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness

<http://ich.dc.gov/>

DC Coalition for the Homeless

<http://www.dccfh.org/>

Find out more about recent developments in how the DC City Government responds to homelessness:

“D.C. Claims Huge Progress Moving Homeless Families Into Housing”

Washington City Paper, April 10, 2015

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2015/04/10/d-c-claims-huge-progress-moving-homeless-families-into-housing/>

“Mayor Bowser Releases Plan To Close D.C. General With Shelters In Each Ward”

DCist, February 9, 2016

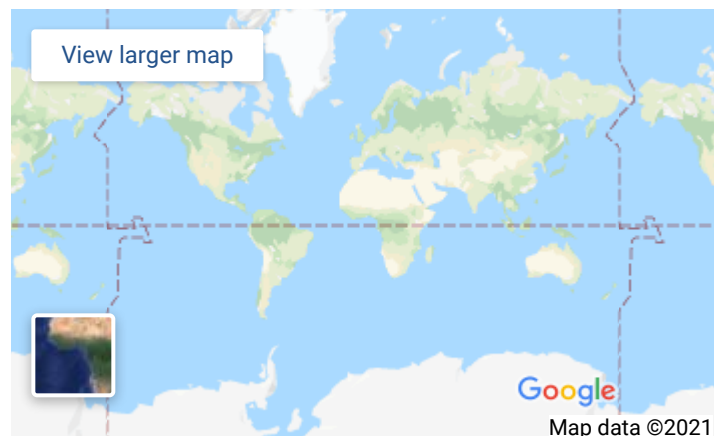
http://dcist.com/2016/02/mayor_bowser_releases_plan_to_close.php

CALENDAR

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HUMANITIES LAB | AMERICAN UNIVERSITY



228 Battelle-Tompkins Hall
American University

Washington DC Mayor Muriel Bowser Holds News Conference on the New Coronavirus

CQ Transcriptions

March 31, 2020 Tuesday

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Body

Washington Dc Mayor Muriel Bowser Holds News Conference On The New Coronavirus

March 31, 2020 11:00 A.M.

SPEAKERS:

WASHINGTON, D.C. MAYOR MURIEL BOWSER

WASHINGTON, D.C. ASSISTANT CITY ADMINISTRATOR **JAY MELDER**

WASHINGTON, D.C. PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE DEPUTY MAYOR KEVIN DONAHUE

[*]BOWSER: Good morning. I am Muriel Bowser, I am the mayor of Washington DC, and I am here to provide the district's briefing on our response to COVID-19, and then you will have time for a few questions.

Last night we reported 94 confirmed cases in Washington DC, bringing our total positive to 495. Each day you have heard a consistent message from me and everyone in district government, and that message is to stay home. Yesterday our entire region took an additional step to reinforce this message. DC, Maryland, and Virginia all issued stay home orders. The district's order goes into effect at midnight, and to be clear, there's no real difference between the directions we have already given residents to stay home.

Still I want to reinforce the only reasons you should be leaving your home are the following obtain medical care, food and essential household goods, perform an essential government function, work at an essential job, engage in essential travel, or to exercise according to guidelines. Many people want to know how they can help right now, and for most of us, the biggest way to help is to stay home. Later this week, we will share more information and details about new surge projections and when we expect to experience that surge here in DC in the capital region.

Today I can tell you we are pushing out a large supply of personal protective equipment to local healthcare providers. In just a moment, Assistant City Administrator **Jay Melder** will talk more about what we are delivering and our overall procurement process. Of course, all of this projections and procurement relies on having good data, and as you know, we have been sharing as much data as we can each day, and we plan to continue to do so. However, I want to tell you about a change we will be making.

Washington DC Mayor Muriel Bowser Holds News Conference on the New Coronavirus

If you are--if you have been tracking data, you know that we have been releasing it about 7 PM each night, but going forward, we will be sharing data in the morning so that we can provide a more complete picture of the previous day. The data that comes out in the morning will be sorted by age groups, sex, and ward. Again I want to finish by saying the best thing that we can all do to protect our health care workers and our city and to flatten the curve and to get back to life as we know it in DC is to stay at home. Be strategic about your trips to get essential items; do your part to keep everyone safe. So with that, I want to turn to Jay Melder for an update on our procurements.

MELDER: Thank you mayor. Good morning. Wanted to talk to you today about the three supplies we are building in the District of Columbia to support our local healthcare providers, to support our first responders and to support our essential government employees who are showing up every day to do essential duties.

You will see some examples of materials today that we will be sending out from our local strategic supply of PPE and medical equipment to our local health providers, those are hospitals, primary care providers, long-term care facilities, and home health aides among others. This is being delivered--more than 70 percent of our current stock will be delivered over today and tomorrow to those providers. We continue to source mostly from DC local procurement our three supplies.

We continue to seek assistance from the federal government both from FEMA and from the Department of Health and Human Services and their national strategic stockpile. As we move forward and continue to rely on data to understand our need and to understand what our burn rate for the PPE and our health equipment will be, we will continue to do everything we can to make sure that our health providers and our first responders and our essential employees are well-equipped for the mission.

UNKNOWN: I want to provide a readout of the front-line employees and first responders who have been impacted by COVID-19, and as the mayor stated, we are going to provide an update this evening of those who went through the high-volume testing site yesterday.

For fire/EMS, there are 14 individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and there is 172 individuals who are out for quarantine. For MPD, there are six individuals who tested positive for COVID-19, and there are 176 MPD personnel who are out as a result of quarantine or positive tests. For the department of corrections staffing there is one individual who has tested positive, and there is 103 individuals who are out right now for either quarantine or isolation.

And then for DOC those within their custody they have six individuals who have tested positive and there are 88 individuals who are in isolation or quarantine, and for our department of youth rehabilitation services, they have no staff who have tested positive but 40 that are under quarantine and DYRS has one youth within its custody who has tested positive and then eight that are either in quarantine or isolation. And this will be updated tonight based on the high-volume test done yesterday. Thank you.

BOWSER: And let me make clear a point that Kevin just emphasized. When I mentioned that we will be changing our reporting times, we will begin that tomorrow. We will have a report tonight, and that report will only be on first responder information, and then we will go to the entire sampling group tomorrow morning. Any questions? Yes?

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) officers and whoever else would be enforcing the stay at home now that they have at their disposal fines and jail penalties?

BOWSER: We don't expect that we will have to issue any fines and jail penalties because we expect the people of the District of Columbia to comply. We do, of course, have penalties at our disposal, but I don't expect that we will have to use them. That is certainly my hope.

We have, and I just got a recording from our MPD officers who have a script that they are using on their loudspeakers. They were just out at Lincoln Park this morning with that script, and it is urging people and reminding them of the--the--that they need to stay at home but if they are going to be out to practice social distancing.

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QUESTION: So--so mayor it will be a situation like they would go someplace, they would see a crown and--, and that is essentially what--what it means?

BOWSER: What what means?

QUESTION: Violating the distancing law, the point of this--this whole thing?

BOWSER: The point of the whole thing is for people to stay home and so they will be reminded to stay at home, and if they are outside exercising, they will be reminded of social distancing requirements.

QUESTION: You talked about basketball games one day last week would that be something that would cause the police to come and say you have got to move on?

BOWSER: Yes, it would. It violates the rules about exercising in groups.

QUESTION: In an individual case you could just say you were on your way to the store or you were you know I'm trying to think of a--

BOWSER: An individual case is not playing pickup basketball.

QUESTION: Right, I understand that but I'm trying (INAUDIBLE) a situation in which you could actually be arrested.

BOWSER: As I said again, Stan(SP), the point is not to arrest anybody. The point is for people to stay at home, and we are going to make all of the guidelines available and rely on people to do what is right for themselves, their families, for nurses, doctors, first responders, and our city.

QUESTION: I have a question about the DC Jail.

BOWSER: Yes.

QUESTION: The public defender's office and the ACLU filed a lawsuit against the city yesterday over conditions at the jail, and having looked at it, I mean a lot of it is the about having cleaning materials. Are you satisfied with the current situation there?

BOWSER: I haven't really had a chance to review the suit, but we--we will address the suit, and we have posted at all of our government buildings, and we will make sure that that has happened at the jail too all of the cleaning schedule, so anybody that has to go into those buildings understands the regular cleaning that is happening at those buildings.

QUESTION: I am talking about the people that are incarcerated that, according to the lawsuit, they are given a bar of soap when they get in there and then many times, that is all they get even when that is used up.

BOWSER: As I said I can't really comment on the lawsuit right now, Sam(SP). We--we will review it and refer it to our legal teams. Yes?

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser in other states there are--we are hearing about police officers pulling over people from out of state and asking them why they are there. Do you foresee that happening here in the city where DC police officers will pull over people say from New York and ask them why they are in the city?

BOWSER: We don't expect that to happen. We know that our borders are fluid, especially in the national capital region. There are people who live in Maryland that do essential work in DC and vice versa, so people are crossing our borders. We want to call everybody's attention however, to all of the essential things food, medicine, going to an essential job or essential travel that you have to do. We have notified everybody at DC government wherever they are in their region. I have employees that live all around this region to make sure that they have with them an ID that shows that they work for DC government, and they can demonstrate that they are on their way to essential work.

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QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) if I can follow up, has anyone or any nonessential business in the city continue to operate you are aware of has been fined?

BOWSER: Not that I am aware of. We do have the ability to fine. We also have the ability to revoke a business license for any business that is knowingly violating the order. Yes?

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser, you mentioned how you are not planning on just giving out fines willy-nilly to enforce the stay-at-home order, but is the city government doing anything different on going about it, enforcing it? Are police changing patrols or other people in DC government hitting the streets to make sure people are staying at home or practicing social distancing?

BOWSER: As you know, Fennet(SP) we started that process last week in--well, actually we started it longer than that to enforce social distancing around the tidal basin where we are using the Metropolitan Police Department and the National Guard. We also deployed, we changed the contract that we have with our school safety officers so that they could be deployed to parks and playgrounds and recreation spots where we saw people distancing. We have used police tape in some cases to indicate that the park or playground is closed. We have also--the police since last week have been encouraging people not to play pickup games all across the city. So all of those things continue to happen.

QUESTION: Does the city have any evidence that undocumented people aren't seeking care or if that might be an issue going forward with the coronavirus?

BOWSER: We always want to make it clear to people that immigration status doesn't matter when calling on the government for resources, especially medical resources.

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) that people aren't seeking that medical care?

BOWSER: We don't want to have that evidence, Fennet, so that's--that's the point. We yesterday gave part of our briefing yesterday was in Spanish to make clear to people to recognize what their systems--symptoms are and call their medical providers.

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) expecting a peak in medical surgeon early May. Does that mean that residents should expect all of these restrictions to continue into May?

BOWSER: Actually, what I said is that we would be providing a briefing on our expected surge later in the week. All of my orders are in place through April 24, which coincides with the approved emergency that I am operating under. It is likely that we will seek an extension of the public health emergency in the coming weeks.

QUESTION: Do we get racial data on the coronavirus cases, and we are seeing other jurisdictions start to release their push for that?

BOWSER: I told you what we are releasing age groups, gender, and ward. Yes? Yes?

QUESTION: The public defender service has submitted a motion to release all sentenced misdemeanants in the DC Jail; do you think in the or most or some misdemeanants(PH) serving sentences should be released (INAUDIBLE)

BOWSER: I am really not sure about that what--what they filed, and I would have to review it to--to make further comment.

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) general policy do you think misdemeanants serving sentences should be released from the jail?

BOWSER: I--I can't say that categorically. No, I can't say that. Yes?

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) what do you expect (INAUDIBLE) or is that data--

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BOWSER: Can I confirm with you what--what we have related to hospitalizations?

QUESTION: Sure. And then for the number of people who have recovered, the 121 are those folks still being advised to self-quarantine? What is the protocol there?

BOWSER: I--I will have to have Dr. Nesbitt(SP) confirm that with you as well. Yeah, let me get to someone who hasn't ask a question. Yes?

Mayor Bowser, you mentioned the--the high volume testing. When did that start? Was it--was it really yesterday that it started properly and are you expecting a surge in positive identifications increase in testing?

BOWSER: I don't know. Yesterday was the first day we headed for our first responders at fire, at DOC--for DOC and for NPD. So there were I think almost 80 people tested and I think that we will have their test results today.

QUESTION: How about the daily average of the high volume for the first responders? About 80 a day?

BOWSER: I don't know because I don't know how many will be referred. They're being referred by--by their providers. Yes?

QUESTION: Governor Hogan mentioned yesterday that his stay-at-home order, I mean, he didn't issue any sort of travel ban, but he encouraged Marylanders not to leave the state. Also, if they're coming in from other states to self-quarantine. Is that the same in DC, or how about a DC resident who has to, like, for an emergency reason to visit a parent across the state line and they have to come back? Would they so quarantine? Should they? With the guidance there?

BOWSER: I think that anybody who is visiting a high incident area which is a lot of areas in the United States right now, should follow that self-quarantining guidelines, absolutely. Yes?

QUESTION: Can you give us a view into your thinking about issuing the order? What was the tipping point?

BOWSER: I'm sorry.

QUESTION: What was the tipping point for issuing the order to stay home? Can you give us a view of your thinking?

BOWSER: As I've mentioned over several weeks, we've already closed in on the city in for--for many weeks and we've always wanted to be in lockstep with the region. So the regional message is the same. Yes? Yes?

QUESTION: Mayor, in Maryland, Maryland national capital-- national capital park and planning is actually taking down basketball hoops to prevent games from going on. Has parks and recreation here done the same?

BOWSER: I think we've had some instances of that, yes.

QUESTION: Do you--is it typically where there gathering or are you hearing from different places where there is gathering and then you're choosing places to take the hoops down?

BOWSER: Let me--I don't know if they've taken all the hoops down. I expect a yes or especially in areas where you can't shut down the park or you can't lock it or you can't cut it off. So that's another way to prevent the pickup games. Yes?

QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE) positive cases in homeless shelters and seeing a report out of Harriet Tubman.

BOWSER: Yes.

QUESTION: So is it just the one?

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BOWSER: I will--let me--let me have confirmation about the locations, but let me just say more generally, if we--we have a resident of a homeless shelter test positive, that resident is quarantined. Any close contacts follow the department of health guidelines. There is a cleaning protocol also put in place.

QUESTION: On some of the supplies, this date the district have--are you getting that sterilization kits for the N95 masks? And then also, what about the expedited testing kits that showed results much faster? Do you have (INAUDIBLE)?

BOWSER: I think we have one on order and we--will catch up to date on--I know the announcement about that sanitation--sanitation--sanitizing machine was made yesterday and we'll follow up with our FEMA contacts today. Yes?

QUESTION: Could be for you, could be for that deputy there. What was the script that you said that police officers are using in the loudspeakers, and is it going to be across the city for every officer or is it just select places that they're doing this?

BOWSER: My--I will be confirming that with the chief today and my expectation is that there's a general script that's used. Let's see if I can play it. And they'll--they'll tweak it as well. Give me a minute.

(BEGIN RECORDING)

UNKNOWN: Attention, everyone. Attention, everyone. We are currently in a public health emergency. Your gathering puts both you and others at unnecessary risk. We encourage you to use proper social distancing and refrain from gathering (INAUDIBLE) to do so will put you all at risk and could result in serious illnesses and death. Thank you for your cooperation.

(END RECORDING)

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser, could you tell us if you're receiving calls, social media or anything about people being confused about the state home order, the differences between the three states or just, you know, the difference between what was like a couple of days ago and the difference upon starting tomorrow?

BOWSER: I think the one--the social, some of the biggest questions I've seen are what is--what exercise is allowable. That's been one. We been pinged by some of our employees like canned--can they come to work, can they travel? What does that mean for them, especially folks that don't live in DC? So that--those are some of the ones that--that we've heard. And then, I've gotten people say why do you want to throw people in jail.

QUESTION: What do you say to that?

BOWSER: I--I answered saying at length.

QUESTION: Can I ask about DYRS numbers? Is that Hope Village?

BOWSER: No. DYRS is New Beginnings and YSC.

QUESTION: So you had been asked about Hope a few days ago and said you're going to send inspectors over there.

BOWSER: Yeah, we did.

QUESTION: Yeah, can you tell us--

BOWSER: --Kevin--

QUESTION: --Thank you very much

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DONAHUE: Hope Village is a--is a halfway house run by--run as a contract overseen by the Federal Bureau of Prisons houses about 200 adult individuals, DC residents who are transitioning from incarceration back into the community. There were allegations made last week notably about a lack of basic supplies around soap, sanitizer, and the condition of the facility.

The city has an independent office called the Corrections Information Counsel, or called CIC that has the jurisdiction of authority to do unprompted inspections of those facilities. They did that and found that there were adequate supplies in some cases perhaps even more than adequate supplies around toiletries, around cleaning supplies, and they were able to do that site inspection to have their inspectors view it, photograph it, and be able to report out on it as an independent assessment of conditions there.

BOWSER: Okay, a few more. Yes, Martin.

QUESTION: I know part of this involves national public--sorry, parks service because of that federal lands, but there's been calls by--from some people to close down more roads or kind of expand sidewalks into roadways to give people space to ride bikes and walk because it's a form of acceptable recreational activity. Any fact thought to that? Have you asked NPS to consider closing Beach Drive on a more permanent basis during the emergency?

BOWSER: I have not. We will continue to--we have established a regular call with them and we will continue to evaluate their properties. Yes?

QUESTION: What's the latest that Saint Elizabeth's?

BOWSER: In terms of what?

QUESTION: How--do you know how many people have tested positive if there's anyone under quarantine?

BOWSER: (INAUDIBLE) Okay, can I get back to you with those--with that number? Yes, sir.

QUESTION: I heard people who applied for unemployment benefits trying to adhere to the advice to answer honestly when asked about the searching for work requirement that they also get told from claims approvers to say yes, they're working--looking for work and they get emails from the government saying the same thing. So there's like, conflicting advice. I'm wondering if you could clarify what people are supposed to answer.

BOWSER: Yes, I asked the DOES director to issue clarification, so I want to just turn to her advice, Director Maurice Hughes, and we can provide you with all of the statements that she has made to be for perfectly clear. And let me say a little bit more about that because I think that you recognize that we made some changes to actually help people get benefits sooner, but those changes required a change to how our system works and we've been--the computer system, we've been working to get those changes made in the system.

We are hopeful that that will happen sooner rather than later. We think maybe by the end of the week, but by the beginning of the week to have those questions related to searching for work and wait period changed in the system. And we think that will prevent any confusing messages generated automatically by the system.

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser, I obviously first responders and whatnot are (INAUDIBLE) are you making any plans to find necessary supplies just for residents who are unable to find hand sanitizer or disinfectant or even toilet paper?

BOWSER: Our--we always are focused on the kind of supply of food and goods. You heard us talk at the beginning of our response about making sure that grocery stores were essential businesses, those businesses providing essential household items are also essential businesses. We are relying on that chain and we are grateful for all of those workers who are showing up who are loading trucks, stocking shelves, manning and womaning (SP) cash registers who are showing up to work to make sure that that vital supply is available.

What the district is doing is obviously procuring for our needs, for our medical needs, and for our first responders and frontline workers. We are also, as Jay mentioned, creating a stockpile that we can support our medical providers. And we are working, searching the entire globe to find those items. But we are asking our residents to

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use judiciously, not hoard, not go out every single day to--to take other household items at all the commercial markets and stores. Yes?

QUESTION: What's the guidance on homemade masks? I noticed civilians going around for essential business and I--people want to be wearing masks or they can purchase it because--or they shouldn't be purchasing it.

BOWSER: Right.

QUESTION: So I wonder what the guidance is around--

BOWSER: --Let--let us check with that what the CDC is saying about homemade items, and we'll posted on our website. Yes?

QUESTION: What's the situation with the SNAP program, food stamps? A lot of state governments have been appealing to USDA for blanket waivers or greater autonomy to expand their roles, to cut down paperwork, to--to deal with increased need for food assistance, for food stamp assistance. What's the--

BOWSER: --I don't think that we live anything different to report on snap. The one question has become early on we extended any recertification deadlines for people who are getting public benefits. And one question that I'll make sure that we confirm is that people who are newly applying with all the procedures are for them as well. But please go to our website, coronavirus.dc.gov, or just dc.gov and look under public benefits, and that will explain to everyone what they need to do, whether they've been automatically recertified or whether they are applying for the first time.

QUESTION: You've already done this from automatic renewal so people don't have to reapply?

BOWSER: We've already done that. We did that early on. Yes?

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser, normally, we would be in the budget season.

BOWSER: Yes.

QUESTION: Of course, we are in a public health emergency. Have you been talking with the DC Council in terms of when you possibly may present a budget?

BOWSER: In our--the emergency that the Council passed several weeks ago, we extended the submission timeline for the DC budget. I think the date--new date is May 6, and we'll be ready.

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser, what have you seen as far as DC employees, essential personnel who sought to go to work calling out and not showing up? Has there been data, any numbers? Has that been a problem at all?

BOWSER: We're certainly trying to--to manage that, Mark. Early on, we put in an extraordinary way more than 50 percent of our folks on telework and since that modified operations was announced, somebody remind me of the date, on March 16, we've added other people to teleworking. Most notably, we took all of our DMV operations virtual, so now there is no in person DMV service and we took all DC operations virtual and--and a number of other agencies after the first week we realize that more employees could be teleworking.

QUESTION: How about employment services? Have you come into a problem there?

BOWSER: We're certainly working to keep everybody at work at employment services. Yes?

QUESTION: Mayor Bowser, Department of Health often highlights racial disparities with infectious diseases and other health problems. Why not with coronavirus?

BOWSER: As a--as I said, Bennett (SP), we're--we're trying to get out as much accurate data as fast as possible and out reporting can evolve throughout the process, but this is where we are. Yes?

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QUESTION: Real quick, following up on what Mark was asking about with Mr. Ballantine's passing, you had mentioned last week that there was going to be contacted tracing. Has that been done? Has there any--is there a sense that there was any threat to anybody else that was essential to the government network around him?

BOWSER: I mentioned yesterday that five employees are so quarantining. Yes, sir?

QUESTION: For those of us who usually use the computer to apply for unemployment because all the computers--all the places we can go are shut down, how do we go about getting the application?

BOWSER: I need you to call employment services and we will get you a phone number. Yes, okay, last question.

QUESTION: I'm wondering about--DC for the last several years has had a--a spike in--in rats, direct population, which has been attributed to the growth in restaurants and economic activity. A, are the pest-control people working, and B, what's going to happen with that now that there's no restaurants? Are they all going to head to people's houses? I guess the question is are the pest-control people working?

BOWSER: The pest-control people are essential. Yes, they are working. Thank you, everybody.

Load-Date: April 6, 2020