



## Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia

March 10, 2021

Dear Members of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia,

**Zoom Meeting, March 26, 2021.** The first-ever virtual meeting of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia will be held on Friday, March 26, 2021, at one o'clock in the afternoon. We will meet remotely, by Zoom. An invitation to the meeting, including instructions, will be sent to all AOI members who have email. Information regarding the Zoom meeting can be found on page 4.

**Results of the Questionnaire on the Future of AOI.** The results of AOI's first-ever member survey have been received and analyzed by the Board of Directors. They are very encouraging. They demonstrate the affection and loyalty so many members have for the association, and they reveal an encouraging willingness by many to take a more active part in the work of AOI. If we, today's members, can transform these encouraging intentions into action, then we can build a foundation for the next generation of "oldest inhabitants" to guide the association through the second half of its second century and into the future.

Let me begin with two prefatory notes: one of thanks, and one of assurance.

**AOI is Fortunate to Have Such Loyal Members.** First, thanks to our members for responding so generously to the survey; a total of 139 replied—a very respectable 42% of the members. Having read every response to the survey, let me also say I was moved by the loyalty and support of members who are unable to attend in-person activities for various reasons—health, age, having moved away from Washington—but who maintain their memberships, and look forward to AOI's newsletters to keep in touch. This group comprised 38% of our respondents.

**AOI is in Sound Financial Condition.** Second, several of our respondents were concerned that the survey suggested AOI was in financial difficulties. While it's true that many social, cultural, and civic associations are experiencing hard times, this is most assuredly not the case with the Association of Oldest Inhabitants. Treasurer Hulit Pressley Taylor reports that our investment account stands well into six figures, with substantial growth in 2020. AOI of DC is in very sound financial condition.

**Zoom Meetings and Programs?** Moving on to a summary of the survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents are willing to participate in programs presented on Zoom. Who knew that AOI members are so technically adept? In addition a majority of members indicated they would also attend in-person meetings when these can be safely resumed.

**A Return to the Capitol Skyline?** The status of a return to the Capital Skyline Hotel, our meeting venue since 2014, remains in doubt for the foreseeable future, but a solid majority of members would return, and be willing to pay a higher price for their luncheons, to help reduce or eliminate the association's current \$8.00 per meal subsidy. A willingness to return did not, however, preclude a healthy expression of opinion as to the quality and selection of Capitol Skyline's cuisine.

If a seated luncheon is not possible, roughly the same majority would be willing to do "brown bag" events, again, with the proviso that health precautions would need to be observed. Some respondents suggested alternative locations, such as the Women's National Democratic Club, DACOR-Bacon House, The National Press Club, or the D.C. History Center, a.k.a. the Historical Society of Washington D.C.

**Raising Dues and Hiring a Part Time Administrator.** Moving on to future prospects for the association, the questionnaire polled members' attitude toward increased membership dues and the possibility that with increased dues, AOI would be able to consider hiring a part-time administrator, who would take over many of the routine management activities now performed by officers. Two thirds of respondents were willing to pay increased dues to cover part of the cost of a part time administrator. There was a consensus that \$50 per year would be an appropriate maximum for dues.

**Advocacy.** The Association of Oldest Inhabitants has a tradition of advocacy for the best of Washington's heritage, including preservation of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans; preservation of the District of Columbia's historic records; support for the D.C. History Center; preservation of the Civil War fortifications; and preservation of the District's memorials. About one third of respondents expressed a willingness to engage in advocacy, including drafting letters expressing their opinion, or that of the association, on issues in which AOI has taken a position, while some brave souls were willing to testify in person.

**Would You be Willing to Help with AOI Programs?** A number of members said yes, and expressed interest in tech issues (Webmaster of AOI's excellent website), help with the newsletter, work to increase membership and arrange speakers, or who would be willing to serve on the board of directors.

**Options from the Original Letter.** Two additional options for the future did not appear on the survey, but they did evince comments from members. There were 11 responses on Option #4, which proposed to divest the Association's investment account, distribute the proceeds to like-minded organizations, and continue meetings as an historical society. Five of these were in favor, and six were opposed. Option #5, which proposed to distribute the assets and dissolve the corporation, received six responses that were favorable or partly favorable, and 12 that opposed dissolution of the association.

**Other comments and Suggestions.** A wide range of comments and suggestions, some quite lively and candid, was offered by participants in the survey:

- Develop a strategic plan.
- Partner with or join like-minded organizations, especially for programs.
- Meet less often—four times per year; do both in-person and Zoom meetings; open Zoom meetings to non-members.
- Offer “junior” and “lifetime” memberships.
- Actively solicit more members.
- Elect younger directors; reduce the size of the Board.

The Board of Directors hopes that the most members possible will attend the association's first Zoom meeting, perhaps the first of many, which will be held on Friday, March 26, at 1 pm in the afternoon, in the comfort of your own home. Please plan to attend, and come armed with cogent arguments, trenchant comments, and fresh, new ideas for the District of Columbia's oldest civic association.

With the cordial regards of the Board of Directors, I am, most sincerely yours,

**Thomas H. Neale**

President

**AOI of DC is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.**

**Topic: AOI of DC Members Meeting**

**Time: Mar 26, 2021 01:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time (US and Canada)**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84483017896>

**Meeting ID:** 844 8301 7896

**One tap mobile**

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+13126266799,,84483017896# US (Chicago)

**Dial by your location**

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+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

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**Meeting ID:** 844 8301 7896

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84483017896>