

May 28, 2015

Seniors voice concerns on Transportation, Employment and Affordable Housing at Older Americans Month Symposium

More than 200 senior adults from senior multipurpose facilities and neighborhood senior centers packed the Fulton County Assembly Hall for the first ever Fulton County Senior Symposium. The event, part of the Senior Expo at the Fulton County Government Center, featured expert panelists in three areas of priority interest to Fulton County's senior adults: transportation, senior employment and affordable housing.

On transportation, seniors heard from representatives of MARTA, the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), the Atlanta Regional Commission and Common Courtesy, a nonprofit group that provides courtesy rides to seniors. Eligible seniors for MARTA's reduced-fare should present a photo I.D. at either the Five Points Transit Station downtown or at the Lindbergh Transit Station. The reduced rate is \$1 (one dollar).

The Senior Employment panel included Fulton County Personnel Director Kenneth Hermon; Sonia Wilson, Program Director, Fulton County Office of Workforce Development; and Charima Young, Associate State Director of Community Outreach, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). When asked how many seniors were interested in, or looking for work, nearly half the seniors in the audience raised their hands and many asked questions.

Ronnie Hill, a participant at the Harriett G. Darnell Senior Multipurpose Facility raised a question on the minds of many: "Can seniors earn as much as they want if they are on disability?"



ABOVE: Seniors applaud during the Senior Symposium in Assembly Hall.



ABOVE LEFT: Affordable Housing Panel makes its presentation.



ABOVE RIGHT: Toni Buxton asks a question on job training for seniors.

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Seniors voice concerns at Symposium

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Toni Buxton, also from the Darnell Facility, inquired about training for seniors irrespective of their income level. Others asked about the likelihood of getting a “fair shake” at a job in spite of their senior status and age.

“Age discrimination is against the law,” stated Commissioner Emma I. Darnell in adding to the discussion. “A manager does not have the discretion as to whether they will or will not consider age. It’s the law and we do intend to enforce it,” said Darnell.

The Affordable Housing panel included the executive director from the Housing Authority of Fulton County, the president of the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP) and the deputy director of the County’s Department of Housing and Community Development.

Senior Dorothy Benson, 93, the namesake of the Benson Senior Multipurpose Facility, asked for help in getting more affordable housing in the northern part of the county. She said there is a need, and it is falling on deaf ears with the local governments in charge of approving the zonings for affordable housing development projects.

Senior Lottie Merriweather urged the panelists to help with the rehabilitation of dilapidated housing stock.

“The symposium was an opportunity to bring together seniors from all across Fulton County to not only voice concerns, but share common interests,” said Darnell, who delivered the opening remarks.

“Fulton continues to be responsive to the needs of seniors, not just during Older Americans Month, but every month of the year,” she said.

The Senior Expo, held in the Atrium adjacent to the Assembly Hall, featured approximately 40 exhibitors in the areas of transportation, senior employment, senior housing and kinship care. There were free health screenings, live entertainment, cooking demonstrations and lunch for each participant.



Commissioner Darnell shares a Mighty Moment at the Senior Expo with participants from the New Horizons Neighborhood Senior Center. From left: Anne Foster, Center Manager; Alma Shepherd; Darnell and Jackylan Giles.

Public Works sets Summer Litter Pick-Up Plan

The Public Works Department, Construction Division has released the "Litter Pick-Up Plan," for the summer starting June 15 through August 30. [Click here for more details.](#)

"I appreciate the support we have received from the Public Works Department staff and employees," Commissioner Darnell stated. "Working together—with neighborhoods—I am confident we will reduce visual pollution and restore this community to one of the most beautiful natural environments in Fulton County."

BOC approves street sweeper purchase for SSD

At its May 20 Regular Meeting, the Board of Commissioners approved the (lease) purchase of a Street Sweeper for the (exclusive) use of the Fulton County Department of Public Works Special Services District (SSD). The SSD covers all of unincorporated Fulton County.

Based on an amendment to an existing capital equipment lease in the amount of \$200,000, the contract corrects a re-programming error related to an earlier approval of the Street Sweeper Contract by the BOC.