New LISC CEO, Virginia Native

National LISC named Maurice Jones, Virginia’s commerce secretary and a former HUD official, as the new president and CEO of the organization, effective Sept. 6, 2016. Jones replaces Michael Rubinger, a community development pioneer, who will step down after 17 years as CEO of LISC.

“For me, this is a remarkable opportunity to lead one of the country’s outstanding change-agents,” Jones said this week. “LISC has staff all across the country who spend every day connecting with community leaders, policymakers, capital providers, and, of course, committed residents who together want to solve some of the nation’s toughest problems. I could not be more excited about this work.”

Virginia LISC staff and board members are also very pleased.

“While I have mixed feelings about losing his tremendous talent in Virginia, I am thrilled that he will be at the LISC helm,” said Virginia LISC’s Local Advisory Committee Chair Cindy Mims.

Jones, 51, has held numerous senior leadership jobs in state and federal government. He currently manages 13 state agencies focused on the economic needs in his native state of Virginia.

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In light of recent challenges facing cities and police departments around the country, community policing has never been more important. On Richmond’s Northside neighborhoods, a steering committee is working with police on a Criminal Safety Initiative to decrease crime in the area, while building strong relationships between police of sector 411 and residents.

“Our goal is for residents to feel safe and secure in their neighborhood and to go to the police with issues and concerns,” said Ebony Walden, a Program Officer at Virginia LISC who is heading the steering committee. “Safe neighborhoods are ones where the police and the residents work together to keep crime down.”

The steering committee developed as a result of key people in Northside coming together to submit a $1 million U.S. Department of Justice Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grant for the ongoing Community Safety Initiative in Highland Park. Although, the outcome of the grant application will not be known until September, Virginia LISC applied for and received two other grants through National LISC to move plans forward with the Community Safety Initiative.

One, a Community Policing through Environmental Design (CPTED) grant of $30,000, will go towards training residents and the steering committee on CPTED strategies. The steering committee plans to use the CPTED strategies to address two crime hot spots. One of these crime hot spots is in Gilpin Court and the other in Highland Park. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design. Strategies of CPTED can include anything from designing vegetation in certain urban environments to structuring an entire neighborhood strategically to have more eyes on the street.

The steering committee has not made any final decisions about how they will use the CPTED training on the two hot spots.

The other grant of $250,000 will go towards a safety and small business revitalization strategy along Highland Park’s Six Points commercial district. “It is important to keep the work moving forward on the safety initiative so as not to lose momentum or resident interest,” said Candice Streett, Executive Director of Virginia LISC.

In a meeting on Monday, July 18, steering committee members discussed the recent grants, designed questions for a survey for Highland Park residents about safety, and met Lt. Anthony Franklin, the new lieutenant of the 4th Precinct, which includes both the Gilpin Court and Highland Park neighborhoods.

“We’ve seen violent crime and property crime plummet, so that is very positive, and in Highland Terrace the burglaries are going down,” relayed Lt. Franklin.

Lt. Franklin also stressed that if any residents had any concerns about the neighborhood or illegal activity to let him know and he would take care of it.

The steering committee members also discussed how to get other neighbors involved in the community safety initiative, as well as plans for National Night Out on August 2, location to be decided.

“Positive messages go a long way,” said Highland Park resident Sunday Jones. “There is a lot of good in this neighborhood.”

Steering Committee members on July 18.

Construction of traffic circle at Six Points.

Thank You to Our Sponsors for a Great Start to 2016

The Cameron Foundation
The Cameron Foundation’s grant of $100,000 will be used to continue Virginia LISC’s revitalization efforts in Petersburg.

The Robins Foundation
The Robins Foundation granted Virginia LISC $50,000 in funding to support LISC’s FOCs in Richmond.

The Dominion Foundation
The Dominion Foundation’s $10,000 grant funds our neighborhood building work in the East End.

Fulton Bank
Fulton Bank gave Virginia LISC $5,000 for our neighborhood work in Richmond.

Our work is made possible by the support from our local community individuals, corporations and foundations. Virginia LISC helps neighbors build strong communities and we are excited to continue this mission in 2016.
Assessment of Church Hill Urges Business Attraction

Ask anyone in Church Hill what they would like to see come to the neighborhood, and the answer will almost always be, “a grocery store.”

Categorized as a food desert, Church Hill has lacked a full-service grocery store for years, but residents and business owners may finally be getting their wish where 25th Street and Nine Mile Road intersect. The location is not at all coincidental.

The outcomes of a recent assessment of Church Hill conducted by LISC MetroEdge, the economic development affiliate of LISC, emphasized that the grocery store will be most successful if surrounded by a thriving commercial district.

Nine Mile Road and 25th Street make up the main commercial district in the neighborhood, an eclectic mix of restaurants, stop-ins and empty windows.

“In order to sustain retail like a grocery store, we need to be sure it’s not isolated,” explained Helen Dunlap of LISC MetroEdge. “People need to feel safe and secure in the area, and they ideally need to have other services close by.”

The 25th Street and Nine Mile Corridor has been a focus of Bon Secours and Virginia LISC for the past five years. In 2011, the two organizations partnered to create SEED, a small business grant competition program designed to bring local business back to this specific corridor. SEED resulted in 25 businesses either starting or expanding along 25th Street and Nine Mile Road.

In fall of 2015, Virginia LISC and Bon Secours decided an assessment of the Church Hill corridor should be conducted to determine what other improvements could be made.

“The prospect of a grocery store on 25th Street and Nine Mile makes the revitalization of that business corridor all the more strategic,” said Candice Streett, Executive Director of Virginia LISC. “Having thriving businesses nearby is vital to ensuring that the grocery meets sales projections and is sustainable.”

Enter LISC MetroEdge, which offers technical assistance, market research and assessments that include on-the-ground surveys and collaboration to help clients develop strategies and plans to improve commercial areas.

“This assessment was unique in that it joined people from all different cultures that live in this neighborhood,” said Joel Bookman from LISC MetroEdge.

From October through May, Dunlap and Bookman collected market research and traveled numerous times to Richmond, interviewing more than 30 residents and Church Hill community members to identify key retail opportunities, define strategies to support existing businesses and outline approaches to attract commercial investment, goods and services, and jobs to the community. At the end of the assessment in late May, they presented a proposal, outlining action plans for the Church Hill neighborhood. Two major recommendations they had were to develop a commercial corridor steering committee team and to create a small business association to implement the early actions on the corridor. Both groups have formed and are working toward beautification improvements, promoting and marketing businesses on the corridor and building partnerships and resources for corridor development.

“The Steering Committee is here to connect and support the businesses that are already on the corridor and the owners of vacant buildings along the corridor,” said John Murden, a member of the steering committee. “The change is coming, and we want to make sure it happens with the neighborhood instead of to the neighborhood.”
FOCs: One Mom’s Story

“DF” came to the Northside Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) through a referral from Bellemeade Community Center. When FOC staff first met DF, she was living in a homeless shelter with her four-year-old daughter. DF was working part-time as a substitute teacher but could not afford to rent an apartment and was worried about losing the income supports that helped her to feed herself and her child. FOC staff listened to DF’s story and encouraged her to draw on her natural strengths to begin setting goals to move forward. With the help of FOC staff, DF brushed up her resume and began searching for a new job and an apartment. Within five weeks, DF found an apartment to rent with a friend, got a full-time job with full benefits, and watched her daughter graduate from preschool. DF continues to participate in FOC services to advance her career, strengthen her supports, and manage her finances through continuous goal-setting. The Northside FOC is operated by HumanKind. Visit the FOC at 800 W. Graham Road.

New LISC CEO, Continued

He previously served as Deputy Secretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) overseeing operations for the agency’s 8,900 staff. Prior to that he was Commissioner of Virginia’s Department of Social Services and Deputy Chief of Staff to former Virginia Gov. Mark Warner.

“Maurice Jones brings a wealth of knowledge in both community and economic development that will advance local neighborhood building programs around the country,” said Candice Streett, Executive Director at Virginia LISC.

Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, who is LISC’s long-time board chair, said Jones’ experience working in federal and state government as well as in the private sector align with LISC’s mission to rebuild America’s disinvested communities.

“Maurice is highly experienced as a manager and in addressing the challenges of community development,” Rubin said.

“He is also a policy expert with a strong strategic mindset, and has been a business builder. He understands the myriad difficulties facing low-income families. The board is excited to have such a compelling and talented leader.”

Trained as an attorney, Jones worked during the Clinton Administration on legal, policy and program issues at the Treasury Department, where he also helped manage a then-new initiative called the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) fund.

The CDFI fund is a federal program that has grown to be a critical supporter of nonprofits that leverage its capital to bolster their communities.

It was during his time at the CDFI fund that Jones said he first gained an enormous admiration for LISC’s commitment to tackling poverty and blight.

For more information about Maurice Jones and LISC, visit the national LISC website at www.lisc.org.

Local Advisory Committee

Chair: Cindy Mims, VP Community Development Specialist, BB&T
Vice Chair: Penny McPherson, VP & Senior Community Development Officer, Wells Fargo Bank
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Regina Chaney, Housing Education Specialist, H.O.M.E., Inc.
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