

Alexandria Commission for Women

Virtual Meeting

October 12, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ann Harbour; Yvette Jiang; Jodie Rubenstein; Katherine “Katie” Seifu; Shelley Brown; T. Nicole Hutchinson; Crystal Kramer, Anuja Miner; Diana Karczmarczyk and Sarah Holley

MEMBERS EXCUSED: C. Elizabeth “PJ” Palmer Johnson, and Julie Harbour

OTHER ATTENDEES: Debra Evans, DCHS, Chief, Domestic Violence Program/Sexual Assault Center (DV/SAC); LaTanya Chinagorom, DCHS, Center for Children and Families, DV/SAC; Macee Parker (Social Work Intern, Friends of Guest House) and Noor Rahat (Social Work Intern, Guest House)

1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Alexandria Commission for Women (ACFW) was called to order by Chair Harbour at 7:03 p.m. The notice for the City of Alexandria virtual requirements were read. The floor was opened for public comment. No public comments were made.

2. WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions took place for Commissioners and guests.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE MAY AND JUNE 2021 MINUTES

The minutes for the May and June 2021 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made to approve the June 2021 minutes by First Chair Karczmarczyk and seconded by Second Vice Chair Brown. All were in favor. First Chair Karczmarczyk moved to approve the May 2021 minutes as presented. Commissioner Miner seconded. All were in favor.

4. MISSION STATEMENT/BYLAWS

First Chair Karczmarczyk led the discussion of the Commission for Women mission statement and bylaws. The Commission wants to ensure the mission statement is representative in the work they are doing and inclusive when it shares information about women. Erika Kleiner, LGBTQ Task Force, reviewed the Commission’s bylaws and made the following recommendations for the Commission to consider:

- The word choice has to advocate for the rights of anyone who identifies as a woman or is woman-identified to include transgender women.
- Include people who are non-binary or gender queer.

- Review the City's All-Alexandria wording. Debra Evans recommended comparing wording with this website.
- Articulating disparities.
- The Commission may add a statement or a phrase stating that they advocate for the rights of all women to include those who face discrimination and violence.

Verbiage in Article 3 was reviewed, and it was suggested to replace "he" or "she" with the term "Commissioner."

Debra recommended the Commission vote to make changes (the City does not have to approve it).

Chair Harbour recommended having a running list of key areas that the Commission will focus on.

Erika offered to assist the Commission with wording.

It was suggested to champion the effort of reconciling the Commissions in the City to follow suit and that adding the terms "discrimination" and "disparity" into the mission will be useful.

Action Item: Commissioners were encouraged to make suggestions for the mission statement and bylaws to ensure there is inclusive language.

Action Item: Chair Harbour suggested to take the feedback from this conversation in the meeting, make the suggested edits and have the Commission react to the final recommendations to the bylaws at the next meeting. The Commission for Women Executive Committee agreed to this.

5. BREAKOUT SESSIONS (RETREAT)

Commissioners previously identified which group they wanted to work from. The Commissioners met on how they want to frame their objectives for the year. The Commission desires to have practical policy, objectives, and goals. The subcommittees will look at how the Commission can make a measurable impact with the aim to ensure the City has the Commission's key elements. Commissioners watched the short video entitled, "[The 5 Why's](#)." The groups met until 8:40 p.m.

Domestic Violence (DV) Subcommittee: Chair Harbour facilitated the DV Subcommittee. Commissioner Seifu reported out to the group. The discussion included: The Commission's previous work in the DV area regarding funding; the work that was done in the past with Friends of the Alexandria Commission for Women; the funding that went towards emergency assistance; eviction prevention for survivors of DV, and the lack of funds. The issue was also raised as to the availability of affordable housing and future development and immediate and short-term items that the Commission could ask for.

Affordable Housing Subcommittee: Second Vice Chair Brown facilitated the Affordable Housing Subcommittee. She reported the following: The subcommittee wants to identify historical information as to what was done in the past; all the Commissioners in the Affordable Housing Subcommittee will look for

reports from the Metropolitan Health and Government Report, Landlord and Tenant Commission. They started the 5-Why's conversation about why housing is higher than incomes, gentrification, why is this happening (these were identified). They want to identify the disparity issue and discuss Incentives that are given to builders and developers to come in and remove public housing. **Action Item: Have a community engagement workshop to hear from the community that is affected most.**

Action Item: The Commission's Executive Committee will discuss the action items that were submitted by the subcommittees at their next meeting.

Action Item: The Commission will share the priorities from the retreat to inform City Council. The Legislative Priorities were due October 1, 2021. All agreed to Chair Harbour sending an email to the Sarah Taylor stating the Commission's two key priorities.

6. ONGOING BUSINESS

- Approval of the Electronic Participation Policy
 - The Commission did not meet quorum and were unable to vote on the policy. **Action Item: Commissioners were asked to provide feedback on the electronic policy that was presented. Debra will re-send the policy to Commissioners.**
- Commission Liaison Report Out
 - HIV/AIDS Commission: Commissioner Hutchinson will report out after attending the next meeting.
 - Human Rights Commission: Commissioner Palmer-Johnson, the Commission for Women Liaison for the Human Rights Commission, reported via email the following: (1) Library Fee/Fines as of July 1, 2021, the Library Board will no longer collect fines. (2) The Human Rights Office is beginning to track anything that is related to hate incidents. (3) Alexandria voted not to have Sunday voting; Commissioner Palmer Johnson volunteered to follow up with this issue. (See the [attached report](#)).
- Update from the Chair:
- DVP/SAC Update on Client Needs: DV client needs have been for food, rent, and utility assistance. There have been increased calls for assistance to work with social workers and advocates in Court, filing police reports and therapy. Interns are helping with therapy and court as well.
- Zebra Articles: Commissioner Palmer Johnson shared via email that the editor for Zebra apologized about the snafu regarding October's article; Zebra will run an edited version in November (2021). A calendar will be created for the Commission to use. Commissioner Jiang sent an article for the

September issue. **Action Item: Chair Harbour will place Commissioner Jiang's article into the queue.**

Action Item: Commissioner Kramer will choose which topic she wants to provide an article for.

- General Updates: *Evaluate policies on the electronic policy and our policy statement.*
 - DV/SAC Updates: October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month with activities taking place as follows: Route 1 has an announcement with the DV/SA Hotline numbers; purple lights will be displayed from dusk to dawn at the Alexandria Police Department and Masonic Memorial; magnets with DV/SA hotline numbers were placed on police cruisers; purple bandanas were given to the K-9 Unit for their dogs; information was passed out at the dog parks.

Thursday, October 21 is purple-out day to show support to DV. Social media activities via Facebook and Twitter. The candlelight vigil was not held this year due to COVID. **Action Item: Debra Evans will provide more info to Chair Harbour on social media activities.**

7. NEXT STEPS/ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Seifu made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Miner seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Important Dates / Reminders / Announcements

- ✓ **HIV/AIDS Awareness Month (December)**