

Alexandria Commission for Women

Virtual Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

7:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rochelle Hall; Maxanne “Maxie” Witken; Sarah Porter; Anuja Miner; Diana Karczmarczyk; Shelley Brown; Yvette Jiang; Crystal Kramer; Jennifer Wetmore; Emily Eckert; Elizabeth “PJ” Palmer Johnson; Jennifer Stowe; Julie Harbour; Sarah Holley and T. Nicole Hutchinson

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Ann Harbour (1 absence)

OTHER ATTENDEES: Debra Evans, Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), Domestic Violence Program/Sexual Assault Center (DV/SA); LaTanya Chinagorom, DCHS, DV/SA

1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Alexandria Commission for Women (ACFW) was called to order by First Vice Chair Kramer 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. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2022 MINUTES

Review of the minutes for January 2022 took place. Two corrections were needed. Commissioner Miner motioned to approve the minutes with the edits; Commissioner Holley seconded. All were in favor.

3. LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY DAY

Legislators are very supportive for priority areas for sexual and domestic violence. Some bills that were approved were as follows:

- Budget Amendment for prevention funding increase by \$650K.
- Budget Amendment \$9M in ARPA appropriations. **Action Item: Debra Evans will email the report to Commissioner Palmer Johnson.**
- Virginia is asking for HOPE cards for final Protection Orders to be carried by victims instead of paper copies. HOPE cards are the size of a driver’s license and is more discreet when individuals need to show law enforcement.
- Senator Ebbin submitted a bill, which is a Constitutional Amendment that will give equal access and equal rights to LGBTQ.

Some bills DVP/SAC were not in support of such as follows:

- Bill on reciprocal no-contact protection orders. Abusers use this as a tool to threaten to have victims arrested. This can cause significant harm to victims of domestic and sexual abuse.
- Bill that increases access to firearms to abusers. If the bill passes, it will erase all the effort over the years to reduce abuser access to firearms.

Housing is a priority to the Commission for Women, and Commissioners highlighted their support for it with Delegate Bennett-Parker. **Action Item: Debra will provide a status update as the Action Alliance provides.**

4. PREPARATION DISCUSSION FOR MEETING WITH COUNCIL MEMBERS

First Vice Chair Kramer led the discussion on inviting City Council Members to attend a Commission meeting. It was suggested to first get on Council's agenda to schedule a meeting time in May 2022 to discuss how the Commission can better collaborate with Council. The goal is to have as close to 100% Commissioner attendance at the May meeting with Council as possible. **Action Item: A Doodle poll will be sent to Commissioners for their availability in May. Action Item: An email will be sent to City Council prior to the meeting in May with what the Commission's goal and purpose is for their meeting request.**

5. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT/AFFORDABLE HOUSING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The subcommittees discussed policy goals and information (may require a meeting outside of the main Commission meeting). **Action Item: Subcommittee chairs must inform Debra Evans of their meeting three days prior for posting on the public calendar.**

Action Item: New commissioners were invited to self-select as to which subcommittee to be part of.

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DV/SA) Subcommittee (Co-chairs Commissioners Hutchinson and Stowe) – Members: Former First Vice Chair Karczmarczyk, Commissioners Porter, Holley, Eckert, Miner and Witkin: The subcommittee co-chairs will meet within the next couple of weeks. A recap on the previous meeting was provided - the connection with affordable housing was realized, funding was noted as an important issue.

- Commissioners are not allowed to fundraise (can donate items) but worked previously with The Friends of the Alexandria Commission for Women before the relationship absolved.
- Pat Miller developed the non-profit *Alexandria Celebrates Women Now*. This organization raises funds for DV/SA clients (rental assistance) to support survivors. It was suggested to strengthen partnerships with the faith community. Prevention education is another component that needs funding. The DV/SA client targeted needs list link is routinely on the Commission agenda.

Action Item: Commissioners Eckert and Holley will prepare a draft one-pager. The DV/SA Subcommittee will meet again 7 p.m. – 8 p.m., Tuesday, March 1, 2022.

Affordable Housing (Chair: First Vice Chair Kramer) – Members: Second Vice Chair Brown, Commissioners (Commissioners Jiang, Hall, Wetmore, and Palmer Johnson): One of the goals before the next Commission for Women meeting is to look at some of the proposals by City Council. It was suggested to look at some of the proposals on affordable housing that Councilwoman Gaskins has and invite her to one of the Commission meetings. The affordable housing community meeting fall City Academy affordable housing slides would be a good break down of the affordable housing input. There was a bill that was put forward for the general assembly. There is an affordable housing and transportation group. DASH meetings take place quarterly that Commissioner Jiang attends. **Action Item: Commissioner Palmer Johnson volunteered to research the status of Ramsey Housing and will get a copy of the report on housing from the Commission on Human Rights when it is published.**

Action Item: All subcommittee members should research housing related issues and proposals before City Council (by the March 2022 Commission meeting) and report back.

Action Item: Commissioner Jiang will obtain information for transportation and affordable housing. She will put together background information on the transit landscape and provide feedback on the Metro SmarTrip card phase out. She will also provide feedback from their outreach.

Action Item: First Vice Chair Kramer will research housing overview (City Council and affordable housing).

Action item: Second Vice Chair Brown will review Community forums that have been held in other cities/neighboring towns to see their issues/overlap.

Action Item: Commissioner Hall suggested the subcommittee review the 2013 Housing Master Plan (gauge their progress and look at some of the outstanding issues). There is also a quarterly progress report posted since January 2022.

6. ELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Commission elections will take place May 2022 for the Executive Committee, which consists of Chair, First Vice Chair, and Second Vice Chair. A volunteer for the election committee was solicited; Commissioner Miner was nominated for the position and accepted. No one else volunteered for the position.

7. NEW AND ONGOING BUSINESS

- Commission Liaison Reports: Beginning February 1, 2022, Commission Liaisons are to send their reports to Debra Evans before the Commission for Women meetings.

Commission on Human Rights: Commissioner Palmer Johnson submitted the following report -
“The Alexandria Human Rights Commission met January 18, 2022, at 7pm via Zoom. Jean Kelleher recognized and thanked Patricia Ruble, Attorney/Investigator, for her outstanding service on her

retirement. Ms. Ruble has served with the Office of Human Rights in the City of Alexandria for several decades. The Commissioners who had served with her concurred.

The guest speaker (January 18, 2022) was former Delegate Mark Levine who discussed a plethora of bills and actions including transparency, redistricting, and minimum wage.

Senator Scott Surovell was also a guest speaker (Executive Meeting, February 7, 2022) and explained contributory negligence and how the AHRC could play a part. Commissioners Edwards and Palmer Johnson will draft a Resolution to be presented to the ADC recommending that Virginia examine its current laws.

The Rainbow Walk is still in limbo; AHRC will continue to pursue it.”

The guest speaker at the next meeting (February 16, 2022, 7 p.m.) will be Police Chief Hayes. The Commission for Women wants to bring the issue that there are few women and fewer minority women within the police department. **Action Item: It was asked that Commissioners attend the February 16, 2022, Human Rights Commission meeting or submit questions to Commissioner Palmer Johnson who will present them to the Chief. Commissioners can watch the recording to listen to Chief Hayes' answers.**

Commission on Aging: Commissioner Stowe reported on the Commission on Aging (COA) – the Commission met via Zoom on January 13, 2022. One presentation was on income guidelines regarding programs for elders and poverty guidelines set from the government, which led to affordable housing conversations. Gave number of COVID vaccine numbers and report out from liaisons.

Commission on HIV/AIDS: Commission Hutchinson reported – the Commission on HIV/AIDS met on January 24, 2022. They are preparing for an annual retreat on February 19, 2022. They discussed the webinar with a guest speaker that took place in December 2020 on Blacks/HIV. **Action Item: Commissioner Hutchinson will see if the retreat information will be available online and will present some of the domestic violence and housing issues that the Commission for Women addressed.**

DASH representative report out: Commissioner Jiang reported that DASH does not provide meeting minutes or record their meetings. The DASH Advisory Committee meets quarterly; the next meeting is in April. She provided the Duke Street In Motion Survey in the chat. This is a public document. Commissioner Witkin reviewed the job applications from DASH's website and found lifting requirements within the applications. She has submitted the concern to DASH leadership that this could block women from entering to work for DASH. **Action Item: Commissioner Jiang will ask if DASH could include gender data in future surveys.**

Commissioner Engagement: Commissioner Palmer Johnson found that the use of the Vola-Lawson Lobby is closed due to COVID-19. The use of the Lobby is free. The Commission is looking to use the Lobby to host an event to honor former Councilwoman Del Pepper. It was suggested to table this topic until further guidelines are provided for use of the Vola-Lawson Lobby.

Adjournment

First Vice Chair Kramer requested a motion to table the remaining topics on the agenda and to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Miner motioned. Commissioner Palmer Johnson seconded. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Important Dates / Reminders / Announcements

- ✓ **Women's History Month**
- ✓ **SAAM Events (April)**
- ✓ **Women's History Walk (May)**
- ✓ **Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October)**
- ✓ **Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October)**