

**Alexandria Commission for Women**  
**City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 2000**  
**December 8, 2020**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Shelley Brown; Lateisha Garrett; Julie Harbour; Marie Divine; Amanda Keiser; Ann Harbour; Yvette Jiang; Diana Karczmarczyk; Elizabeth “PJ” Palmer Johnson; Jodie Rubenstein; Uzma Quraishi; Katherine “Katie” Seifu and Gayle Terry

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** T. Nicole Hutchinson and Brian Morreale

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Debra Evans, DCHS, Domestic Violence Program/Sexual Assault Center (DV/SA) and LaTanya Chinagorom, DCHS, Center for Children and Families, DV/SA

**1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting of the Alexandria Commission for Women (ACFW) was called to order by Chair Harbour at 7:04 p.m. The notice for the City of Alexandria virtual requirements were read. The floor was opened for public comment and introductions.

**2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 2020 MINUTES**

Chair Harbour moved to review and approve the minutes and asked for any recommended changes. Review of the minutes for November 2020 took place. Second Vice Chair Seifu moved to approve the minutes as presented. First Vice Chair Karczmarczyk seconded. None opposed. Chair Harbour approved to accept the minutes.

**4. ROLE CALL/INTRODUCTIONS:** Role call and introductions took place for Commissioners and City staff.

**5. PLANNING FOR THE COMING YEAR**

The Commission’s Executive Committee reached out to Commissioners to receive feedback and expressed that continuous online communication is needed. It was suggested that Commissioners should get to know each other better.

The Commissions’ official mission is to advise City leaders and City Council on issues and policies impacting women. The Commission advocates not only for City Council, improving the lives of women in the community, but also advocating at the State and Federal level. The Commission also goes out into the community and builds partnerships with other groups. The Commission also wants to have meetings more

direct and focused. These were the common themes from the Commission members on how they see the Commissions' role is in advocating for women.

It was expressed that sharing things about their day during the Commission meetings would make meeting in the virtual platform more engaging. Commissioners agreed on the areas of improvement and is on one accord. Thanks were expressed for the Executive Committee doing a temperature check with the Commissioners.

Briefing slides were presented and ideas were shared in the chat about how to engage. It was shared that City Council asked what their most frequent request for support around COVID relief was, rather than just looking at their priorities. The Commissions' previous focus was on maternal health and mental health. A list of priorities for the Commission was presented to include: women's health; supporting survivors; impacts of COVID and economic issues. It was suggested that from the priorities that the Commission have a couple of focus areas and that this will help the Commission champion information through each City Council member more broadly. Other items that Commissioners want included were the following:

- Conversation centered around social determinants of health (areas of health, education, employment food access affording medications, and other different layers)
- Social conditions that women are negatively impacted, social detriment of health
- Negative effects in the doctor's office (early diagnostic screenings; delayed testing; poverty; social isolation and delayed testing)
- Opioid use (women are negatively impacted)

Commissioner Harbour sits on the Opioid Work Group in the City and she along with First Vice Chair Karczmarczyk and Commissioner Divine can inform the Commission on all the different elements. The Commission can advocate on key policy areas that interest and impact women's overall health and well-being. It was also expressed that the Commission needs a regional asset mapping program to review how many people are utilizing services across jurisdictions, identify silos in the City and support experts that speak on different areas in presenting to City Council.

The question was raised as to how Commissioners can best use their position to support existing issues. It was expressed how the Report was appreciated and how the Commission has identified issues and how they can identify gaps. *The Status on Women and Girls in Alexandria Report* needs to be updated when possible. It was suggested that links to various assets within the community where the Report can connect people to the sites be included. The Commission can use the Report as an asset clearinghouse. It was asked if the Commission is comfortable with being a clearinghouse as opposed to trying to fix issues and shift to a more

policy/advocacy track and connect the community to a particular area to meet their needs. It was suggested to widen the scope and look at policies that are out there. Places in the community have needs but have expressed that they do not have the time and skillset to go to City Council. It was suggested that the Commission help take the community's issue to City Council to assist in making policy changes to assist those groups. It was also suggested that the Commission can do their own mini asset mapping.

Commissioners were asked to bring their different standing relationships to the table. The Commission has to synthesize the information to give to the City Council to move forward on policy issues. The Executive Committee has to devise a way to scope and plan how the Commission will transition and may call members again to get thoughts on this direction, incorporate backgrounds, communicate and move forward.

The function of the Commission was reviewed. Onboarding process to include making the onboarding packet (will review and streamline), increase online presence (more consistency in posting and announcing); Zebra Press reserves 500 words for the Commission to place articles there. There will be a calendar on SharePoint that will have opportunities listed for the Commission to get involved in. Also, placing emphasis on inviting people to come to hear the speakers at meetings as a way to advertise.

It was suggested that at the next International Women's Day, the Commission could see if there are any women leaders that surfaced in this troubled time of COVID doing volunteer work and to include it in the Zebra Press as well as using Zebra Press to announce when City Council gives awards to the Commission or members for their contribution; using it to self-promote or to address an area of concern for newspaper presence. **Action Item: At the next retreat we will determine how we will go about dividing the priorities and next steps. We will come up with a timeline at the next meeting in January.**

## **6. Voting for Liaison HIV/AIDS Commission Member**

ACFW has three liaisons for different Commissions: Commission on Aging (current liaison is Second Vice Chair Seifu), Human Rights Commission (current liaison is Commissioner Palmer Johnson); Commission on HIV/AIDS (Chair Harbour resigned from in October). Commissioners Hutchinson and Terry are interested in serving as liaison for the Commission on HIV/AIDS. **Action Item: We will vote on a liaison for the Commission on HIV/AIDS once Commissioner Hutchinson and Commissioner Terry are present. The voting is tabled until January 2021.** The Commission on HIV/AIDS will do a memorial, LGBTQ month events, promote testing. It was suggested to remind the Commission on HIV/AIDS that there should be some attention on Women of Color living with HIV/AIDS.

## 7. Old/New Business

- Old Business: Friends of the Alexandria Commission for Women: Commissioner Garrett prepared a proposal package for the Women's Fund that she discussed during the November's meeting. The Commission is sending it through the City Attorney to ensure adherence to the policies. We would like to vote on creating a new organization that takes the place of Friends after hearing back from the City Attorney. **Action Item: Commissioners will vote on whether they will create a new organization that takes the place of Friends and then decide on the disposition of funds that remain with Friends.** The Commission wants to ensure it can fundraise and track the funds as well.
- New Business: Updates on Commissions from Liaisons: *Human Rights Commission:* Commissioner Palmer Johnson was asked to arrange for a speaker for November 17. Natalie Talis and Dr. Gaddy from the Health Department gave updates on COVID-19 for the City. They did not break the statistics down by gender. In Alexandria there were 4,698 cases, 341 hospitalizations and 76 deaths. Vaccines and how they will be allotted to the City was discussed. Pfizer is the company that the Health Department may choose to use. The expected number of vaccinations is 2K per day. They will follow the protocol from CDC and will provide vaccines to medical and front-line staff and elderly first. **Action Item: It was suggested to have Ms. Talis and Dr. Gaddy come to the Commission and bring COVID-19 statistics broken down by gender.**

The next Commission on Human Rights meeting will be on December 15. Jacinta Greene will speak about the School Resource Officers because there are concerns that Black and Brown students are more likely to be seen by the School Resource Officers.

*Commission on Aging:* Their next meeting is on December 10. During the November meeting, Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker was there and shared information about Together We Bake, a nonprofit organization that she is one of the Directors of. Together We Bake works with women and Workforce Development through culinary training. The Commission on Aging was very interested in learning how they could help. A new Executive Committee was installed last month.

*Other New Business:* Second Vice Chair Seifu announced potential changes to the bylaws, which will be adding language according to the City Attorney regarding electronic participation to the bylaws. The Commission will use next month to decide whether they accept the changes or not. The change is when a member of a public body is absent, it would have to be due to an emergency or personal

matter that would have to be disclosed and no more than two meetings (absences) per year. The language was approved by the City. **Action Item: Recommendations will be sent to Commissioners after the meeting by Debra Evans.**

Councilwoman Del Pepper announced that she will not run for City Council again. It was requested that the Commission consider preparing an acknowledgement of Councilwoman Pepper who served three terms as Vice Mayor and has been instrumental in everything women have done in Alexandria. **Action Item: Commissioners Palmer Johnson and Harbour will help in preparing to present Councilwoman Pepper to the City Hall of Fame.** The City Hall of Fame is a memorial of those who have done great things for the City.

The Governor of Virginia will give an update on COVID restrictions. All were encouraged to be safe/healthy and to pick up some meals (before the restriction) and to email a list of locations that they love (women and minority owned small businesses) that may be affected by the restrictions.

WMATA was talking about a proposed new budget; there are service cuts. They are talking about closing the Van Dorn and Eisenhower Metro stations. The District of Columbia City Council will limit the amount of parking available. It was suggested that the Commission may want to put or equity in transportation on the agenda.

First Vice Chair Karczmarczyk suggested the Commission have Jacqueline Tucker, City of Alexandria's Race and Social Equity Officer come in to speak on the race and equity framework during the February 2021 meeting. **Action Item: Commissioner Harbour will share the presentation Ms. Tucker previously presented to the Alexandria Chamber.**

## **Adjournment**

Chair Harbour moved to adjourn the meeting. First Vice Chair Karczmarczyk motioned to adjourn the meeting. Second Vice Chair Seifu seconded. The motion was so moved by Chair Harbour. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

## **Important Dates / Reminders / Announcements**

- ✓ **National Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month (January)**
- ✓ **National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month (TDVAM) (February)**
- ✓ **Salute to Women (March)**

- ✓ **TODSTWD (April 23)**
- ✓ **SAAM Events (April)**
- ✓ **Women's History Walk (May)**
- ✓ **Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October)**
- ✓ **Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October)**