

Alexandria Commission for Women

Virtual Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

7:00 pm

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elisabeth Palmer Johnson (3 excused absences); Emily Eckert; Maxanne “Maxie” Witkin (1 excused absence); Matthew Worner; Yvette Jiang; Crystal Kramer; Jennifer Stowe (2 excused absences); Anuja Miner (1 excused absence) and Jennifer Wetmore (3 excused absences)

MEMBERS PRESENT (Virtually): T. Nicole Hutchinson (1 excused absence/1 unexcused); Lexi White (1 excused absence)

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sarah Porter (1 excused absence); Lee Taylor-Penn (2 excused absences); Sarah Holley (3 excused absences); Charlotte Scherer (1 unexcused absence/1 excused absence) and Shelley Brown (1 excused absence)

OTHER ATTENDEES: Debra Evans, Domestic Violence Program/Sexual Assault Center (DVP/SAC), Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and LaTanya Chinagorom (DVP/SAC, DCHS); David Lanier, Assistant City Attorney, Alexandria, VA; Ms. Blanche Maness and Emily (last name unknown).

1. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER/PUBLIC COMMENT

The in-person meeting of the Alexandria Commission for Women (ACFW) was called to order by Chair Kramer at 7:12 p.m. A quorum had not been met at the beginning of the meeting. Commissioner Witkin and First Vice Chair Miner were attending the City Council meeting where the proclamation was being presented to the CFW at the City Council meeting during the first portion of the Commission for Women meeting. This meeting was held in person and via Zoom and was made open to the public and open for public comment after a quorum was met.

2. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 2023 MINUTES

The February 2023 minutes were shared with the Commissioners for review before the meeting and was also reviewed during the meeting. Corrections were noted. A motion was made by Commissioner Witkin to approve the minutes as amended; seconded by Commissioner Stowe. Commissioner Wetmore abstained. All were in favor. None opposed.

3. PRESENTATION ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY DAVID LANIER

City Attorney David Lanier provided the Laws and Rules for Boards and Commissions presentation. Topics provided included laws related to citizen access to public records and laws related to citizen access to meetings of public bodies. All are public records in written or recorded format. Public bodies are all boards, bureaus, subcommittees, commissions, etc. Records can come from personal email accounts. Once a quorum is established, the body can vote. More details are in the presentation that was forwarded to all the members of the Commission for Women. Some commissions have the authority to fundraise. Some commissions are state authorized. It was mentioned that a commission in the City of Alexandria receives funding from Federal resources. It was expressed that best practice is to create a separate email for the Commission to help keep their records all together. The City Attorney's Office is working with the Office on Communications on standard policies for public communications (speaking to journalists, Facebook, and other social media) and having a unified process that is central for the City. All can contact David.lanierjr@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.3750. **Action Item: Attorney Lanier will provide more information on how the Commission can budget and fundraise and in reference to expenditures.**

4. REPORT OUTS FROM SUBCOMMITTEES & COMMISSION LIAISONS

50th Anniversary Subcommittee: It was expressed that the Commission should do a 50 over 50 and 50 under 50 event with a nomination process under five categories and recognizing one Commissioner, recommend a woman from each decade, and to honor former Councilwoman Del Pepper. Get a list of former Commissioners and invite them and to do a hybrid event. The new DCHS building will have a ribbon cutting ceremony soon and the building is named after Del Pepper, entitled, "*The Redella "Del" Pepper Community Resource Center.*" Chair Kramer asked for a motion to approve the plans for the next event. Commissioner Stowe moved; seconded by Commissioner Wetmore. All were in favor. **Action Items: During the event, they will honor the first Commission for Women from 1974; have a Del Pepper award category, which will be one of the five awards presented.**

Action Item: Commissioner Witkin will send the document of the previous commissioners to First Vice Chair Miner. Julie Carey from NBC 4 News offered to host the 50th Anniversary event.

First Vice Chair Miner nominated Commissioner Witkin to be the chair of the 50th Anniversary subcommittee. Commissioner Witkin declined. It was suggested to have co-chairs and Commissioner Stowe offered to co-chair with Commissioner Witkin. Other Commissioners will be given the opportunity to nominate a co-chair for the subcommittee (all Commissioners were not present). All were asked to be

available to assist with the event and to mark calendars for September 24, 2024. **Action Item: The Commission will set up subcommittees at the next 50th Anniversary subcommittee meeting that will be held at 1225 First Street, 7pm, March 28, 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. It was suggested to hold the subcommittee meetings monthly on the 4th Tuesday.**

- *Affordable Housing & Transportation* –Josh Baker, CEO of DASH, will be joining the Commission’s April 2023 meeting along with Martin Barner, DASH Director of Marketing. Commissioner Jiang sent an email to Betsy Hier to see if there were any priorities that she had in mind.
- *Reproductive Rights* – City Council did not move forward with a proclamation for the Abortion Provider Appreciation Day. **All were asked to save the date of June 8, 2023, for a webinar on Reclaiming Reproductive Rights after Dobbs and the decision that overturned Roe v. Wade. The subcommittee is planning to reach out to other commissions for women in the surrounding counties. The letter is in Google Docs and is for the commissions asking if they are interested in cohosting the event – their names will be on the printed materials.**
- *DASH Representative Report Out* – No meeting was held.
- *Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking*: This subcommittee held the January Human Trafficking event and did not meet in February 2023. The question was posed from the audience at the event “What’s next?” It was discussed whether they will ask for funding, etc. **Action Item: Ideas will be shared by Commissioner Wetmore at a future date.**
- *Commissioner/City Council Engagement*: The proclamation was in honor of Women’s History Month. Commissioners Witkin and First Vice Chair Miner represented the Commission. Other groups were in attendance and a group picture was taken. The proclamation was read by Vice Mayor Amy Jackson and a copy was circulated to the Commissioners.
- *Human Rights (HR) Commission*: The Subcommittee of the Human Rights Commission met March 14, 2023. They wrote a letter to the City Council stating since the Alexandria Police Department Review Board is meeting sporadically, they asked if they could take over some of those duties and are awaiting a response. They reviewed the housing situation in Alexandria to include the increase in evictions, discrimination against refugees and the refusal to rent to voucher holders, utilities...etc. The next meeting is Tuesday, March 15, 2023, and will include Sheriff Sean Casey who will speak and provide the status on the incorporation with ICE status with two inmates who have died at the jail since 2021. They have been looking at unaccompanied minors working long hours and in bad conditions where may be human trafficking involved. Sheriff Casey was the liaison to the Commission on Aging.

- *Aging Commission* – The Commission met last Thursday, March 9, and received a presentation about human rights and evictions. Thursday, March 16, a volunteer fair for seniors will take place at 10 a.m. March 25, a gala will take place at the Mark Center Hilton, which will honor Kerry Donnelly.
- *HIV/AIDS Commission*: Five members remain in the commission with twenty-two vacancies. They are still rebranding themselves and hoping to attract more members. It was mentioned to add Hep B & C to this commission.
- *DVP/SAC Wishlist* - https://www.target.com/gift-registry/gift-giver?registryId=6bcf0c70-bc6c-11eb-9092-54ed1d7afa55&lnk=registry_custom_url&type=CHARITY

The subcommittee meetings were not held.

Next Steps/Adjournment

Chair Kramer requested a motion to adjourn the meeting all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Important Dates / Reminders / Announcements

- ✓ **Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April)**
- ✓ **Children’s Mental Health Awareness Month (May)**