

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING
Meeting: Thursday, March 14, 2024, 4:00 p.m.

Del Pepper Community Resource Center, Room 9208

Minutes

This meeting was recorded.

Commissioners Physically Present: Michael Schuster (Chairman) Canek Aguirre, Enid Borden, James Bruen, Barbara D'Agostino, Kathleen Demik, Alan Dinsmore, Marshall Hespe, Jessica Lefevre, Tom Reeder, Ana Rivas-Beck, Jeanette Shepherd, Lois Steele, Gerri Wallace, Jane King, Jenn Stowe, Ray Biegun, David Kaplan

Members Participating by Videoconference: Barbara Huelat, Jeanette Shepherd

Members Absent: Joy Kone, James Lindsay, Victoria Rutson, Ana Rivas-Beck

Liaisons Participating in Person: Bob Eifert, At Home Alexandria.

Liaisons and City Staff Participating by Videoconference: Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center, Ian Torrance, Police Department, Pam Guerra, Senior Center at Charles Houston, Jan Macidull, Housing Affordability Advisory Committee, Chris Moore, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Glynis Laborde, Community Health Director at Inova Health System

City Staff Present: Ashley Johnson and Pamela Austin, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Harold Little, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

The draft minutes of the meeting of February 8, 2024, were unanimously approved.

There were no questions for Sergeant Torrance, liaison for the Alexandria Police Department.

Liaison Reports:

Ashley Johnson reminded the Commission of the email to be used to send agendas and minutes of Commission and committee meetings.

Tom Reeder reported that the Human Rights Commission has been hearing testimony on both sides of the issue of whether to recommend that the City Council issue a proclamation calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

Jane King discussed AARP activities directed towards making people aware of scams directed at older person. She announced that AARP would be sponsoring Home Fit events in Northern Virginia and would be holding one in Alexandria in the future.

Chairman Schuster indicated that the Northern Virginia Aging Network would be meeting on March 19 affordable housing.

Juanita Balenger gave a report on past and planned activities of the St. Martins de Porres Senior Center, including dental clinics sponsored by the Fenwick Foundation, field trip to the Museum of African American History, ukelele lessons, a cherry blossom field trip, and the positive results of their recent survey of participants.

Jenn Stowe reported on behalf of the Commission on Women, focusing on March being Women's History Month, the Commission's activities, including a webinar on Black Maternal Health in Virginia on April 4, the support group for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, and Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day on March 25.

Pamela Guerra provided a written report of the activities of the Senior Center at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Marshall Hespe reported on the activities of Senior Services of Alexandria, including City Council proclamation regarding the Meals on Wheels program, their discussions with Melisa Jensen of the City of Alexandria regarding its recently issued Food Insecurity Report, a Ladrey focus group, and SSA Connection Live at Beth El Hebrew Congregation on March 21 at 10-11:30 a.m.

Harold Little reported on behalf of the Successful Aging Committee that the Valentine's Day Dance was very successful, with 140 participants and he announced the Dance for All Ages would be on April 19th. He also indicated that registration for spring and summer programs at Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities would open on March 20th and that the City is hiring a therapeutic recreation manager.

Jan Macidull reported that the Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee had drafted budget testimony for the City Council and that, although trust funds for affordable housing have been spoken for through 2028, they were exploring additional sources of funds.

Special Presentation:

Cele Garrett provided a comprehensive presentation to the Commission about the structure, activities, and membership of At Home Alexandria (<https://athomeinalexandria.org>), a nonprofit organization providing assistance through volunteers to members over 55 living at home. Following her presentation there was discussion about the geographical extent of the organization's regular membership and the availability of scholarship membership.

Discussion Items:

Chairman Schuster discussed the draft testimony regarding budget issues of interest to the Commission to be presented at upcoming Council meetings. The proposed testimony was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved by the Commission.

Jane King reported that evaluation of the Age Friendly Report has been completed and will be forwarded to Council for its approval. The Commission should work on a new four-year plan during the coming months. Ashley Johnson has pulled data from the Annual Needs Survey relevant to each standing committee for the purpose of formulating the plan.

The Chairman indicated that the two bills providing new Electronic Meeting rules passed and one of which has been signed by the Governor, effective July 1, 2024. Although the new rules will allow half of the Commission's meetings to be held virtually, there cannot be two consecutive virtual meetings, without following FOIA public notice rules. The Commission needs to review its Electric Meeting Policy and it will be discussed at the next Commission meeting.

The committee to propose nominations for the four Excellence in Aging awards will advertise the awards and will then meet to discuss nominations.

Committee Updates:

Lois Steele reported on behalf of the Housing Committee that they are focusing on the Ladrey redevelopment plan, in particular the temporary relocation of residents. They have communicated with the Office of Housing about addressing aging and housing with respect to federal grants and more relevant demographic information.

The Outreach Committee met on March 7th to discuss the upcoming mindfulness project.

Alan Dinsmore announced that the Transportation Committee would be meeting on March 20 at 4:00 at Charles Houston Recreation Center to further discuss the proposed entertainment center at Potomac Yard and the effect of the construction and incoming traffic.

On behalf of the Economic Security and Civic Engagement Committee, Jessica Lefevre reported that they are focusing on promoting the Senior Services Silver Card, the future of the small business "Shark Tank" program, coordination with the Alexandria Small Business Center, and a possible initiative to come up with branding for the City of Alexandria.

Barbara Huelat indicated that the next meeting of the Health/Dementia Friendly Committee will be on Thursday, March 21, at 3:30 at Goodwin House.

The meeting was adjourned 5:45.

The next meeting of the Commission will be on April 11, 2024, at 4 p.m. at the Del Pepper Community Resource Center and the next Executive Committee Meeting will be on Monday, April 1, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. at Goodwin House.