

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2024
7:00 p.m.,
Alexandria Black History Museum
902 Wythe Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Members Present

Marc Bendick
Lisl Brunner, Chair
April Breslaw
Iulia Fratila
Matt Harris
Elisabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson, Vice Chair
Megan Prince
David Rigsby, Vice Chair
Jon Thompson

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director
Anna McClure, Investigator/Acting Director
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez, Adm. Support

Members Excused

Manisha Maniyar
Tom Reeder, Jr.
Conrad Sylvanus

Guests

Darrlynn Franklin, President, Alexandria NAACP

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair Lisl Brunner

Chair Brunner called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Introductions were made.

Chair Brunner said the Commission is excited to meet at the Black History Museum on the eve of Juneteenth, close to the 70th anniversary of Brown v. Board and 60th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement and Civil Rights Act. She said many neighborhoods in Northern Virginia are more racially segregated today than they were 50 years ago because of housing and other policies, and that voting rights are still an issue for Black Americans in several states.

Director Kelleher announced she is retiring at the end of June, and she thanked the Commission.

2. Approval of Minutes of the May Meeting

Upon a motion by Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Thompson, the Commission approved the minutes of the May meeting. All Commissioners present voting aye.

3. Guests- Darrlynn Franklin, President, Alexandria NAACP

Ms. Franklin said voting rights and democracy could take a turn based on the presidential election. She said NAACP is working to pass laws to restore voting rights, especially for ex-felons. She said NAACP is suing the Youngkin administration, because he has not been restoring voting rights of previously incarcerated people, as his predecessors did. She said they are also suing him, under FOIA, because he has refused to release voting rights restoration data, which prior administrations did release.

Ms. Franklin said they are working on affordable housing and have attended planning meetings to ask that at least 10% of the units in newly built communities be made affordable. She said they have not

gotten responses. She said they are working on healthcare for African American women, especially reproductive rights and defunding of Planned Parenthood, because many minority women cannot afford to go to the doctor and rely heavily on Planned Parenthood for birth control and healthcare.

She said NAACP is working on lowering the African American unemployment rate. She said they teamed with Alfred Street Baptist Church to run an expungement clinic - 30 people came and about 25 cases were expunged. She would like to do the clinic quarterly and invite surrounding jurisdictions. Commissioner Bendick said the expungement clinics sound wonderful, but it would be better to solve the problem by making the process automatic. Ms. Franklin suggested the Commission include it in their legislative package. Ms. Franklin talked about SROs and said they are re-establishing the NAACP Youth Council at ACHS. Ms. Franklin will send their legislative agenda to the Commission.

Chair Brunner asked if NAACP receives discrimination complaints. Ms. Franklin said most complaints come from people who get fired. Chair Brunner expressed interest in helping with expungement clinics. Ms. Franklin said she is on the Community Policing Review Board, which is still waiting on the MOU from the Police Department. She recommended commissioners attend ICPRB meetings.

4. Executive Committee Meeting

Acting Director McClure said the Charlottesville Human Rights Commission wants to collaborate with other local human rights commissions, to find opportunities to support the same legislative priorities. There is a virtual meeting, on July 18th at 6:30 p.m., and they asked at least one commissioner to attend.

5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Commissioner Harris presented the following slate: Commissioner Thompson for Chair, Commissioner Bendick for internal Vice Chair, and Vice Chair Palmer Johnson for external Vice Chair. Commissioner Harris asked for nominations from the floor; no nomination came forward from the floor, and Commissioner Harris closed nominations. Upon a motion by Commissioner Prince, seconded by Commissioner Rigsby, the slate was accepted as presented. All Commissioners present voted aye.

6. Old/New Business

Acting Director McClure said there is no plan for the office yet, so she and Acting Director Miller will continue for now. She said the City Manager's Office is working on the Director position description.

Chair Brunner said several commissioners attended the Pride celebration and rainbow crosswalk unveiling. She said it was a beautiful event, but there was no mention of the Commission. Commissioner Harris said there is a request for a rainbow crosswalk in Del Ray. Commissioner Thompson suggested asking City Council now because of pushback from organizations that do not support LGBTQ+ rights. Chair Brunner said the stakeholder/liaison list was distributed.

Commissioner Harris said he met with Interim Police Chief Pedroso, who has issues with the ICPRB ordinance, especially subpoenaing of records for individual police officers.

7 Liaison Reports

Commissioner Prince reported that the ACPD did not meet because of the ACPD Awards. Vice Chair Palmer Johnson reported that the Commission for Women moved their meeting to tonight.

8. Public Comment – There were no public comments.

9. Announcements /Adjournment

Commissioner Fratila volunteered for the ALIVE! Food Hub. Commissioner Breslaw will ask the Del Ray Food Hub. Acting Director McClure said the ACPD awards are on June 26th.

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Prince/Commissioner Thompson **PASSED** unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.