

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Department of Community and Human Services
Social Service Advisory Board Meeting Notes
April 21, 2025

Present:, Abby Curran Horrell, Karen Carter (Vice Chair), , Ann O'Hanlon, Josh Barnathan (Chair), Lesa Gilbert (DCHS Staff), Jordan Nally, Maura Miller, Shawna Gary,

Absent: Allison Greenleaf, Ashley Caison, Richard Beauchamp, Angela Almonte (DCHS Staff)

Call to Order/Welcome:

The meeting was called to order by Josh Barnathan (Chair) at 7:10 p.m. and SSAB members were welcomed to the January meeting.

Guest Speaker: Volunteer Alexandria:

- Volunteer Alexandria is forty-five-year-old organization that provides volunteer support for City Agencies and other nonprofits. It serves as a database where organizations can pick and choose needs for their services.
- There is a program for youth and families that provides a way engages with youth residents.
 - Service-learning programming works with city agencies and non-profits. Serving middle and high school residents and based on their lived experience. The focus is on human service agencies and climate change organizations/services.
- The fifty-five and greater program is about creating social connection and doing something good.
- When volunteers are onboarded they are introduced to topics that include food insecurity, mental health and providing foundational education and information so that volunteers can choose their cause.
- Only direct service provided is through a food drive during the summer. There is a toy drive that happens in conjunction with the City Holiday Share program.
 - Snow buddy program is for homebound, disabled, or elderly to support their needs during the winter months. The participants are matched with someone who is a mile and a half away from the person. The volunteer salts around where the individual is to ensure safety.
- The organization additionally supports City emergencies or large recovery efforts. There is court referral program that helps people with community service hours. Lastly provides training to nonprofits to prepare to have volunteers.
- The current impact of executive orders has led the organization and others to organize community partners every two weeks on Friday in order to be able to share information and resources.
- There are several issues that are being forecasted due to the impact of the executive orders.
 - There will be a larger need for food distribution. However, people may be concerned about standing in line.
 - Increase in workforce development requests or increase in unemployment.
 - The City may have to decide what are essential services that should provide grants for and that could impact Volunteer Alexandria.

- Food prices have increased and that might impact the amount of food donations at shelters and that food banks receive. Funders may decide to use their gifts in supporting more of those efforts rather than volunteers.
- Others nonprofits that serve against climate change may lose grant money that impacts the local environment.
- Suggestion of inviting Community Trust Fund ACT as a guest speaker.
- About 130 new people sign up for Volunteer Alexandria every month, 250-300 sign up for volunteer opportunities every month,
 - The biggest need depends on the organization that you are speaking of.
- Could use support from the City with office space or make a volunteer center that can help with services that may help with the City Budget.

Approval of minutes: The minutes of the March meeting were approved with changes to reflect attendance by SSAB members.

SSAB Member Updates:

- **Town Hall updates:** People that participated were told to write their questions and it would be brought up to City Council. There will be more engagement opportunities such as a podcast, and Mayor Gaskins will be doing pop-ups at Beatley Library.
- **Vice Mayor Conversation Update:** Had brief discussion about flexibility in telework schedule to support the Employer of Choice City Council Priority. The Vice Mayor did not have many updates from City HR as she did not have the chance to meet with her. She will follow up after she is able to have the conversation with the HR director.
- **Staff appreciation efforts:** Forty gift cards and donuts were distributed to staff. Staff are grateful for the thank-you cards and are recognized for their work.
 - Follow-up on what was historically done in sending a letter to council to talk about the efforts of the SSAB board. Specifically, talking about efforts like staff appreciation to showcase how the board is supporting staff retention efforts.

Reminders of City Events:

- Job Fair for Federal Workers and Contractors on Sat, May 3, 2025, from 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM. It will be held at George Washington Middle School, 1005 Mount Vernon Ave.

Suggestions for future speakers:

- Noraine Buttar
- Speaker from the Energy Assistance Program

Meeting adjourned: 8:30pm