

Economic Opportunities Commission

**October 17th at 7:00 p.m.
2525 Mount Vernon Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22301**

In attendance:

Kelly Stone, Chair
Anne Sclater
Greg Parks
Hope Nelson
Canek Aguirre
Diane Charles, Hunger Free Alexandria
Genevive Fields
Sal Biberai

Excused:

Maani Stewart
Geof Caldwell
LaVon Curtis

Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:14pm.

Guest Speakers, Diane Charles and Matthew Gillette from Hunger Free Alexandria

Hunger Free Alexandria is a network of partners in providing food assistance in Alexandria. A study funded in part by Kaiser recommended the establishment of a coalition since there had previously been no organized space for coordination between the various providers. The faith community was particularly key in getting this started.

They have a listing of all of the food offerings in the city – from hot meals to delivered groceries – so that people know where to go or where to point people to. This list is updated every two months.

The network is loosely organized, but slowly coalescing more. Not a direct service organization themselves, but most of their members are direct service providers such as ALIVE. They are considering doing more advocacy in the future with the governments.

They reported that they are seeing the current political climate with regards to immigration impact peoples' willingness to ask for support. ALIVE last Saturday food distribution has been seeing a decrease at all three sites, concerned that it is in part because of that as it doesn't seem to be connected to a decrease in the need. They can't promise their clients that law enforcement won't be there, because they have no means of stopping them. They are working on how to get food to those that need it anyway. Food getting out in other ways though, because the amount of food being provided has not changed.

It is important to ensure that the food is culturally appropriate – they might not want to or know how to prepare all types of food. Also, the amount of food that families can store at one time is something to consider. Many of these kitchens are very small. They can't store large amounts of food from a once a month distribution.

Alive is looking at taking over a warehouse to be a central food distributor.

On the right to food versus food security: partners provide a full range. Organizations range from Bread for the world to small food pantries. Advocacy has mostly been at the local level.

They are also working on mapping where are services already, where is there the need, trying to bring in data from partners. Americorp volunteers are supporting them. Most service providers haven't historically captured much data. Challenges of capacity. There are about 30 service providers, including

Hard to say if there is more or less need. When money short, people flexing what they're shorting, sometimes food, sometimes rent etc.

On getting the nutritious food: its challenging to get produce in and out quickly enough without it going bad. Working a bit with Giant, some of the new community garden opportunities.

Its important to continue getting the word out that people in the community are hungry; its still shocking to people.

Budget letter

The EOC considered the draft budget letter prepared by Hope and the Chair. Edits were made, including to the section on the meals tax and to try to more closely align with the format requested by the City Manager. Greg motioned that the EOC empower Hope and the Chair to make the edits discussed by the EOC and send the letter. Sal seconded. The motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

CSBG 4th Quarter Report

As usual, there was a small decrease in people served in the 4th quarter. Often the case, as people get tax refunds and its summer. With school starting, usually the first quarter people need more assistance. Reminder the services provided covers all of the services, not just those funded by CSBG.

There was a brief discussion about the difference between Rent Relief, which is a program for elderly and/or disabled individuals that provides monthly assistance to offset high rent to income ratios, and rental assistance, which is short term emergency assistance with rent to help resolve a crisis or stabilize housing.

Still looking to get a physical presence over at Southern Tower, EOS-21, St. James Plaza for targeted outreach.

Canek motion to accept the CSBG and Sal seconded. The motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

Membership

The EOC discussed a new applicant, but since the application has so little information required, decided to wait on voting for him after we heard a report back from the applicant's conversations with Jessica.

Needs Assessment

Please send Geof any data you have on places you collected surveys. We are aiming for a first draft in December.

Announcements

- Nov 3rd community health assessment GW middle school
 - Free breakfast! Talk about community healthy needs.
- Online auction from Carpenter's Shelter
- October 24th at 7pm TC Williams Minnie Howard campus school board debate

Adjournment

Greg motioned the EOC adjourn. Sal seconded. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:40 pm

Next Informal Meeting – November 14th, 2018
2525 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA (Atrium Room!)
7:00 p.m. – General Meeting