

Alexandria Economic Opportunities Commission
June 21, 2017
2525 Mount Vernon Ave
Alexandria, VA 22314

In Attendance

Canek Aguirre, Vice Chair
Kirk McPike, Chair
Maani Stewart
Gila Harris
Kelly Stone, Secretary
June Shih
LaDonna Sanders
Jessica Lurz
Hope Nelson
Thomas Gibson
Sal Biberat
Geoff Caldwell
LaVon Curtis

Excused

Fara Islam
Racquel Williams-Jones
Salina Greene
Samantha Pitts-Kiefer
Lesa Gilbert

Unexcused

Andrew Strickland
Greg Parks

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:21pm.

Review and Approval of Previous Minutes

Minor changes were made to the minutes for the May meeting including striking paragraphs that were accidentally copied from the April minutes.

Kelly motions to approve minutes the May minutes with Geoff seconding the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Canek motions to approve the April minutes with the amendments made in the May meeting. Maani seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Update on Human Rights Commission Representative

LaDonna will be the Commission's representative for the Human Rights Commission. Apologies concerning the technology issues with the e-mail that went out.

Linden Services Letter of Support

Linden Services is a non-profit organization that is partnering with Arlington and Alexandria Job Services to apply for a State grant. They have been providing vocational services in the community for several years. They have already applied, but the RFA recommended that they seek support from local groups. They are just letting us know now. We can send a letter to support.

EOC members were interested in Linden's record of success. There was clarification from Jessica that no one else in Alexandria was applying for this grant.

Sal motioned the Commission send the letter in support of the application and Thomas seconded. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Needs Assessment Update

The Community Needs Assessment is a process used to determine the un-met needs of low income individuals, families and communities. There are two levels of assessment. CSBG funding is requiring that we begin our own data collection instead of continuing to rely on secondary sources.

Ten members of the EOC have volunteered for a small group to discuss the how and why more in-depth and the actual plan for gathering the data. Jessica proposed that the small group begin in early August.

Legislative Packet

Jessica and the Chair reminded EOC members of the process for the legislative packet. Every Commission puts forward a legislative packet. Bernie then works with the City Council and the City Council sets the final packet that goes to Richmond. November 11th is the City Council's meeting to finalize the city's packet. We need to submit our suggestions to Bernie by the beginning of September. Our next formal meeting is after we need to submit the legislative packet, but we can discuss this at our informal August meeting.

Last year's legislative packet was included in the packet of papers shared before the meeting.

Several EOC members offered new ideas for the legislative packet. Inclusionary zoning would allow high density area of the city requires a certain percentage of the units must be affordable but there was some uncertainty as to whether this is a state issue or a city issue. Does the city have the authority it needs to do this or does the State need to provide additional authority? Jessica will check with her office.

A future advocacy opportunity related to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) was also discussed. Lots of Virginia affordable housing rely on this tax credit and co-locating service providers and non-profits in the same building has benefits. Perhaps we can encourage that by offering points for it in the scoring process.

Maani asked if we wanted to put forward a proposal on 21st Century policing. LaDonna said she had been thinking about what the burden of proof is to quantify or capture when officer feels their life was threatened and then relies on that justification for violent actions. She is looking into previous case law on the issue, but it is possible it is determined state by state. Could we ask the state to create a Commission as a first step to look into best practices? Maani will work on that with Canek and others who are interested.

Kirk will also update the minimum wage page, looking at recent campaigns (Fight for \$15 etc) and the most recent house bill (House bill 1444).

Kirk is also interested in the possibility of an open retirement program that is supported by the State. Generally it is set up as a sister to the State employee retirement programs. Questions were raised about the fees, but since these programs are usually the same place as state employees, the fees aren't as bad as they are for most non-employer retirement plans.

June asked about adding tampons, pads and sanitary products to the tax-free list. LaDonna shared that the Women's Commission is working on this.

June also raised the question about Airbnb and the impact that they have on affordable housing. Again the question was raised on if the City had needed additional authority from the State to regulate Airbnb.

Please submit ideas by July 15th for the packet if there are any others.

Annual Report

We need to submit a report for this fiscal year about what we have done. If we can collect the letters we have signed onto this year and then update the report to reflect this year's accomplishments.

Thomas motioned that the current Chair and the incoming Chair draft the report together after the letters are gathered. Maani seconded. The motion carried on a voice vote.

2017-2018 Officer Elections

Canek's term on the EOC is ending but he is interested and willing to serve another term. Sal motioned that Canek serve for another term on the EOC and Thomas seconded. Carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Sal and LaDonna reported back from the nominations committee. Canek is running for chair. Raquel Jones is running for Vice Chair. Kelly agreed to run for Secretary.

June motioned to move forward to the elections. Thomas seconded and the Motion carried unanimously. Realizing there were nominations for positions from the floor, June motioned that the floor for nominations be reopened. Sal seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Sal nominated June for the vice chair position.

LaDonna announced that the nominations are Canek Aguirre for Chair, Raquel Williams-Jones and June Shih for Vice Chair, and Kelly Stone for Secretary.

LaDonna motioned that the floor for nominations be closed and that the EOC vote. Hope seconded and the motion carried unanimously

A paper ballot vote was held all three positions. Canek was unanimously elected as Chair for the coming year. June was elected to the position of Vice Chair with 11 votes (with 1 vote for Racquel). Kelly was elected Secretary unanimously.

Announcements

The Human Rights Commission discussed school suspensions for kindergarteners and preschoolers. They are shockingly high and the Commission is looking into a legislative initiative to prohibit suspensions. The Executive Committee met with Chief Brown to discuss the advisory council he is putting together. There will be an open retreat in July.

Jessica announced that a request for proposals was released in March for the community shelter and the winter shelter for Alexandria and the City has selected proposals for both. Carpenter's Shelter will remain the city's Winter Shelter. The new contractor for the community shelter is Volunteers of America--Chesapeake.

Youth Leadership –Adolescent Campaign on pregnancy. A flyer was circulated.

There are lots of events this Saturday. WellRay is taking place as is the Youth Arts Festival from 1-5pm at Mt. Vernon Rec. Additionally, Alfred Street Baptist Church is having a panel on policing from 1-3:30pm.

Oakland Baptist Church is having a volunteer day to pack food for a program feeding kids over the summer on June 27th at 5pm at the Church.

Housing: The conversation around Resolution 830 (city commitment to 1 to 1 replacement for voucher and section 8 housing units) is ongoing. There are discussions of updating, revising or leaving it alone. A working group is being put together and they are looking to start having meetings in September. There will be 4-6 meetings with a report out to council. It would be good if we had an official presence there, enabling us to speak at the meetings.

Andrew Adkins proposal has been released and there are concerns. This afternoon Canek attended a meeting on the proposal. Michelle Krockner is putting together a firmly worded letter raising several concerns housing advocates have with the proposal. Only 60 of the 90 units would be replaced. 500 units in the two towers would be above AMI and the 60 affordable units would be in a separate building. Only 20% would be under 30% AMI. The others would be 30-80% of AMI. The 60 units would not have the same amenities as the market rate apartments. And there is concern about how they are rerouting the traffic which puts more traffic by the 60 units.

Thomas shared that some of problems in the tax credit structure that the federal rules prevent the developers from putting retail space on the main floor when they use certain tax credits, which makes it difficult to mix market rate and affordable units. Part of the reason behind the drop to 60 units was based on input from community input. Design will be discussed from today until January 2018, when ARHA needs to finalize the design to apply for next year's LIHTC. ARHA did receive a density bonus to support affordable housing, but they are not using it to increase affordable housing.

The healthcare vote in the Senate next week is critical. Cutting Medicaid and Medicare will be really challenging for communities across the country including ours.

Adjournment

Canek motioned to adjourn and Thomas seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:59pm.