

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019
7:00 p.m., City Hall
301 King Street, Room 2000
The Chet and Sabra Avery Room

Members Present

Danielle Beach
Damien Hammond, Sr.
Christopher Harris
Matt Harris, Chair
Michael Kreps
David Rigsby
Scott Schwartz
Jenny Wade

Guests:

Sarah Taylor, Legislative Director
Tyler Boos, DASH Driver
Chris Townsend, Citizens

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez

Excused Members

Amy Blackwood, Vice Chair
Francisco Duran, Vice Chair
Monika Jones
Susan Kellom

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair, Matt Harris

Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes of February

Upon a motion by Commissioner Christopher Harris, seconded by Commissioner Hammond, Sr., the Commission approved the minutes of the February meeting as amended. All Commissioners present voted aye and one abstained.

3. Guest: Sarah Taylor

Chair Harris welcomed Sarah Taylor, Legislative Director. Ms. Taylor gave an overview of the progress that was made on 2019 City Legislative Package and stated that she is already planning the 2020 Legislative Package. She said that the City had three top priorities:

1) State Funding for combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Project

She said that the City received \$25 Million dollars.

2) Funding for School Facility Renovations and New School construction

She said that this didn't happen but there was a very productive conversation about the need for more state funding for school's facility renovation and new construction.

3) Protection of Funding for Localities

She said that there is a lot of time where there is money that comes to localities for transportation transit, public safety or other things, where the General Assembly likes to either take that money

away or cut it. She said that they did a lot of work on that trying to fight back on them taking that money back.

Ms. Taylor stated that most of the issues that came out of the Human Rights Commission fell under the Inclusive City area. She stated that the City has a general ethic of opposing any legislation that will restrict Human Rights for workers, residents and visitors.

Ms. Taylor gave a brief overview of the progress made on each of the proposals proposed by the Human Rights Commission.

Access to Voting

She said that allowing for early voting and “no excuse” absentee voting was passed, but it will not be implemented for the 2019 elections, but it will be available for the 2020 general elections.

Redistricting Reform

She said that there was a resolution to do a constitutional amendment with regards to non-partisan Redistricting Commission. She said that because it is a constitutional amendment the same version of the resolution has to pass next session in order to be on the 2020 ballot in order to be approved in time for the work after the census, but it does create a non-partisan redistricting Commission, which will be split among legislators and citizen members who will be nominated, then there will be a panel of Judges who will chose folks, it will balance legislators and citizens; it will balance party affiliation. She said that it is not a pure citizen’s Commission, it is also not just legislators, it is one of those situations where nobody is really super thrilled about it, which probably means they got it to a good common ground.

Commissioner Schwartz asked what this Commission is charged to produce and were does it go. Ms. Taylor said that the Redistricting Commission is charged to create and approve the final maps and balancing all the legal requirements. She said that it goes on the ballot and it will be approved not by the people of the Commonwealth, so in the end it will come down to ensuring that the voters will believe that this process is fair and equitable and will end up with districts that are representative appropriately.

Equal Rights for Women

She said that this did not pass.

Living Wage

She said the minimum wage bill passed the Committee that would increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2021. The full state Senate voted to kill a bill that would have raised the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2021.

Affordable, Workforce Housing

She said that there was additional money for the affordable housing trust funds. She said that her argument about the affordable housing trust funds is that they have to go and beg the Governor every year for money in the budget for it. She said that affordable housing trust funds should have a permanent source of funding.

Evictions

She said that there is an evictions diversion pilot program that is being implemented in a number of places and said that Alexandria is not one of the pilot sites. It was a deal that was negotiated between the property owners, landlords, organizations, the Commission and the Virginia Housing Commission.

Ban the Box policy

She said that it is still going by executive order.

Criminal Background Questions in Professional Licensing

She said that they have been talking with Senator Jennifer McClellan, who run legislation, a couple years ago about this. Senator McClellan is working with the agencies that do the licensure to do it by rule as opposed to by legislation. Ms. Taylor said that by doing it by rule the process is so much simpler.

Driver's License for Undocumented Immigrants

She said that it made some progress this session, it didn't pass, but made some progress.

She said that the ICE bills all passed but got veto by the Governor today.

Family and Unisex Restrooms in Public Facilities

Ms. Taylor stated that the idea was to say that when public facilities, either newly built or significantly renovated facilities, should be required to put in ADA accessible unisex single-stall "family" type restrooms that will be useful to folks either with disabilities, families with small children or people with specific privacy needs. She said that what the City is now doing is that the City is having discussions about putting it in the City's rules that this is something the City is committed to. The City is working to discuss putting it into our own practice, when significantly renovating building facilities. The City is working on making it something that the City is setting a good example for other localities.

Ms. Taylor stated she is already planning for 2020 and said that if there are issues here that we were not able to pull off and want to figure out different ways to approach them, she would love to continue to have the conversation with the Commission about what they would like the City to champion and what they would like to ask the delegation to champion with us. Chair Harris thanked Sarah Taylor for her presentation.

4. Executive Committee Report

Chair Harris stated that the Executive Committee did not meet last week.

VAHR

Chair Harris stated that Commissioner Kellom and he were on a call with the VAHR members for an hour. He said that Commissioner Kellom wants to take an active role in the VAHR.

Chair Harris stated that the VAHR conference will be held on June 1-2, 2019.

April Meeting, Tour of Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center

Director Kelleher said that the Juvenile Detention Center tour can be scheduled for the Commission's regular meeting day and start a little early. The Commission agreed to do the Juvenile Detention Center tour at 6:00 p.m. on April 16, 2019.

Board & Committee Chair Training by the City Clerk, April 11

Director Kelleher stated that the City Clerk is having a Board and Commission Chair training. The idea is to have the Chair of each Board and Commission attend the training session and go and disseminate the information to all of the members.

5. Director's Report

Budget

Director Kelleher stated that the City is in budget season and said that she is part of the Safe Secure and Just focus area group. She said that they are having their meeting in early April.

Equity Initiative

Director Kelleher presented on the Equity Initiative that Department Heads launched and presented to City Council at the end of November. Director Kelleher stated that they are moving forward as a City on the Equity Initiative and the City has become a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). She stated that they are moving ahead into an implementation phase and said that the City Manager wants the Human Rights Commission to have oversight over this initiative as it moves forward. She also added that the City Manager has put in his budget a position for an Equity Officer who will be in the City Manager's Office.

She stated that they are taking an introspective look at City Departments and how the service delivery is being done, ultimately to look at data that they have that shows disproportionalities and disparities in the City to identify gaps and action plans for how they might close up some of those gaps. She said that they are anxious to get the City Public Schools involved and said that the Superintendent of the Schools has set a meeting for April 29, and has invited Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager, and all of the other staff who have been working on this initiative.

Virginia Tech Summer Interns

Director Kelleher stated that she has been asked by the Virginia Tech Washington Summer Session to take Summer interns this year and said that she is planning to take two interns. She is hoping to have them do some of the analysis on the appointments to Boards and Commissions.

6. Old or New Business

Chair Harris brought up the Resolution that Canek Aguirre had sent regarding citizenship question on 2020 census and that the Commission approved it as a group at the last meeting and said that there were some changes that were made to it.

Director Kelleher stated that IAOHRA is working on that fact that persons who are incarcerated are counted by the census for where they are incarcerated, not where they are originally from. The push is for them to be counted where they are from.

7. Liaison Reports

Commissioner Kreps stated that there has been a big dust-up over the expiration of pilot parking program. He said that older people on the Commission on Aging voted two months ago to encourage City Council to not let the old town pilot program expire. There was a discussion and the Commission on Aging made recommendations to consider parking waivers for older people.

Commissioner Hammond, Sr. stated that the HIV/AIDS Commission is working on conducting fund raising to conduct outreach.

Director Kelleher stated that she attended the ACPD meeting to answer questions. She said that one of the interesting issues that they are working on is the scooter pilot program and problems for access to persons with disabilities. Chair Harris stated that he will be attending a rally at the African American History Museum on Saturday, at 10:00 a.m.

Members of the Public

Chris Townsend and Tyler Boos, DASH Driver, came to talk to the Commission about the Union proposal to DASH, and the difficulties that they have gone through negotiating with DASH about becoming unionize.

8. Announcements /Adjournment

MOTION: adjourn the meeting.

Hammond, Jr. /Schwartz **PASSED** unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.