

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019
7:00 p.m., City Hall
301 King Street, Room 2000
The Chet and Sabra Avery Room

Members Present

Danielle Beach
Amy Blackwood, Vice Chair
Francisco Durán, Chair
Damien Hammond, Sr
Christopher Harris
Matt Harris, Vice Chair
Susan Kellom
David Rigsby

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez

Excused Members

Michael Kreps
Scott Schwartz

Guests:

Sarah Taylor, Legislative Director
Alex Howe, Landlord and Tenant Relations Board
Barbara Wilmer, Grassroots Alexandria
Jenny Wade, Former Commissioner
Monika Jones Chapman, Former Commissioner

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair, Francisco Durán

Chair Durán called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes of July Retreat Meeting

Upon a motion by Commissioner Vice Chair Harris, seconded by Commissioner Beach, the Commission approved the minutes of the July Retreat meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye and one abstained.

3. Guest: Legislative Director Sarah Taylor

Chair Durán welcome and introduce City Legislative Director Sarah Taylor. Ms. Taylor started her presentation by saying that her job is to advocate for the City's Legislative priorities in Richmond during the General Assembly Session and said that at the Federal level, she has done two full sessions and two special session since she has been with the City, which has been 18 months.

Ms. Taylor stated that this year is an election year, and all 140 legislator seats are up this session. She stated that she has started looking at the legislative package as she is crafting it as something that is broad and scalable. Ms. Taylor says that they are trying to keep the legislative package as it was drafted, but allowing for time to make changes or retarget it. She stated that she is trying to push the process by two weeks. Previously, the packet had been on the docket for the second legislative meeting in October, public hearing in November and then final approval the second meeting in November. She is trying to extend the time, so that the first meeting is in November, public hearing also in November, and final approval in December. This will give her more than

enough time to do everything that she needs to do. She said that this is not set in stone at this point, but this is what she is hoping to do as far as the schedule goes.

She stated that structurally they are working on making it even tighter and more focus than last year. She said that what they are working on is separating it in to three sessions: The first area is Statement of Legislative Principal, this will give her more flexibility when she is in Richmond to decide what falls under each of those categories and it would allow them to pick ten or twelve very specific things, that will then be the City's priorities. The sections she has right now for the City's priorities are investing in infrastructure, and she has defined infrastructure much more broadly. Infrastructure is not just roads, pipes and sewers, they include affordable housing, and school facilities. The second area will be Preservation and Expansion of Local Authority and Local Revenue authority, so that will be allowing locality to regulate guns in public buildings and public parks, additionally, the City wants local revenue authority to raise money for things that the City might need. The third area she has not figure it out yet, but right now it is Equality. Equity and Anti-discrimination access to criminal justice reform. She said that they are working on language to expand the definition of a family household member under the domestic violence definition. This is where they will put the equal rights amendment, this is where they will put increasing the fees that goes for the Law Library, which is a social justice issue. Director Kelleher stated that she would like to work on the Law Library issue with Ms. Taylor. Ms. Taylor stated that structurally, it will allow them to focus on the items that they need the delegation to focus on and to supplement the whole thing with the more specific information on each of the issue areas, sort of an appendix to the Statement of legislative Principal.

Ms. Taylor stated that one thing that she has been working on all summer is a definition of a dating relationship to include in the domestic violence statute. She also stated that there was an interim study done about paid family leave, and she said that there has been some work done in the area of zoning with making it easier for folks to open childcare facilities with additional zoning authority. She also stated that minimum wage will be a big one this session, depending on what happens in the November elections. She added that they have done some small things on affordable housing, such as coming up with a bunch of different options that will help across the board. She said that she would expect to see it address from different angles, from zoning, from developing and funding options.

Commissioner Kellom stated that one thing that people seemed to be concern about is not affordable housing, but about people in the middle being able to afford to stay in their homes, and asked if there is something that can be done about that. Ms. Taylor stated, I don't know about that, we have not figured out what we can do in that area yet. She said that she knows that Alexandria and Arlington are working collaboratively on this concern. Alex Howe asked if there have been more coordinator efforts toward the Amazon affordable housing issue, because it's all the Northern Virginia area. Ms. Taylor stated that they are all actively working together, but what is interesting is that Alexandria and Arlington are really the only two communities that have had a proactive approach to affordable housing. She said that Legislative Directors, planning and zoning, and housing are all working together. She added that Arlington/Alexandria have a joint meeting in October, to discuss affordable housing.

She stated that there is a provision in code that says that, if you have a housing authority and you are one of the enumerated localities, there is a pot of state tax credit money that developers can access if they include affordable housing in their plans. Alexandria is not one of them, but they are going to ask for Alexandria to be added to that list.

Ms. Taylor talked about the following proposal submitted by the Commission last year, "Ban the Box" Driver's License for Undocumented Immigrants and Immigration and Law Enforcement, she said that these are going to be kept on the legislative package. Director Kelleher stated that Commissioner Kreps wanted to put back in the body worn cameras for police officers. Ms. Taylor said that when you talked with the Police Chief, he had no opposition to body worn cameras, it is just the fiscal impact of the cameras and what is required in order to review it, and how many Commonwealth Attorneys it takes to review it or how many City Attorneys it takes to review it and then the storage issue as well. There is a significant fiscal impact that a lot of places that have roll them out, and a bunch of places have brought them back in, because the unintended fiscal impact has been so significant for them.

Ms. Taylor stated that the Conversion Therapy law is kind of a no brainer and said that one of her friends is running the 50 states project to get in the anti-conversion therapy laws. She will reach out to him to get some language on conversion therapy. She also talked about the issue of criminal justice reform and coming up with a definition of what criminal justice reform means to us, and what it means in our community is important. It will be much more meaningful and relevant if it is related to the issues that are being seen in the community that we need to solve. We need, additional funding for youth intervention programs, money for mental health dockets, and money for drug courts. What are the things that to us constitute criminal justice reform and access justice in our community? She said that as she is working on the language; it will be helpful to have input from a lot of different places in order to make a really good definition, that is our definition and that is meaningful to us and our community. Chair Durán thanked Legislative Director Sarah Taylor for her presentation.

Commissioner Monika Jones Chapman and Commissioner Jenny Wade

Chair and Commissioner recognized and complimented Commissioner Jones Chapman and Commissioner Wade for their hard work while serving on the Commission.

4. Executive Committee Report

Chair Durán stated that the Executive Committee met last Monday and brainstormed about some topics and who they would like to invite for each month this year. The following are the Topics and Upcoming Speakers for this year: The City Attorney in October; the new Equity Officer in November; the Police Chief in December; the Alexandria City Public Schools ent in January; the Black History Month program in February; the Alexandria Sheriff in March and a tour of the detention center; a panel discussion on Income Inequality/Immigration/Undocumented Persons/Housing (Amazon effect) in April; City Council will be invited for May; the Human Rights Campaign in June.

Director Kelleher stated that City Councilman Seifeldein had suggested having a resolution changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day, this is a prototype that has occurred across the country, so Deputy City Manager, Deborah Collins, the Head of History Alexandria and she

met with him early on. She said that they conducted some research and they found out that there is an Indigenous Peoples Day already in Virginia, it is the day before Thanksgiving. She stated that the Resolution Passed on September 10, recognizing that this is Indigenous Peoples Day in October in Alexandria instead of Columbus Day.

Director Kelleher stated that the Executive Committee talked about the fact that when significant cases come up, that Director Kelleher will provide updates to the Commission directly as she receives the information.

5. Equity Initiative Update and Next Steps

Director Kelleher stated that there is a briefing for City Council on September 24, 2019. She added that there are four test pilot departments, Police Department, Department of Community and Human Services, Court Services and Human Rights. She said that the City is now using the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) model. She said that as far as they know this is going forward as a Race and Social Justice equity initiative. The City is hiring an equity officer now, all the applications are in, and decision are being made as to whom to invite for an interview. She added that they hoping to have the school join with the City Government, the Superintendent certainly has been working on his initiative and the non-profits have been working on theirs; we all are sharing information; we are all meeting together, but we are really hoping that there will be some kind of joint Statement or Resolution from City Council.

Chair Durán stated that on September 24, he will attend a meeting to dialogue with City Council to find out what the Commission's role will be on the Equity Initiative. Director Kelleher stated that the Elected Officials certainly could change it, they could add different protected categories, but there are reasons as to why we think the focus should be on race.

Director Kelleher stated that more good news is that Alexandria was one of the leaders in the region and there is now a Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Cohort that is starting on September 26 and it will go until June of 2020. The Alexandria City Government and the ACPS have fourteen seats, eleven seats for City Government and three for the schools. She said that she is working with Deputy City Manager Collins on identifying some of the stars who have a passion for working on this equity initiative.

6. Old & New Business

Director Kelleher stated that last week there was a delegation from Japan and there are young people who are Government Leaders within their prefectures in Japan, so they could be local governments, they could be just even organizations, and they spend two years in the United States, based in New York. They have issues that they want to work on and one of them was disabilities; they wanted to know about hiring, retention of person with disabilities, accommodation issues, and accessibility issues. The City Manager asked Director Kelleher if she could put something together and of course she said yes. She stated that Mike Hatfield, the Program Manager in our office, Jeffrey Pool from the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities, Maurice Tomdio from the Department of Community and Human Services Workforce Development Center and she spent about two hours with those delegates.

Census 2020 Complete Count:

Director Kelleher they are working on census 2020 steering committee and partnership subcommittee, just building trusted messengers systems across Alexandria to be able to get the word out, why it is important to complete the census. Director Kelleher stated tonight many members of the committee are at Back-to-School Night in the Elementary schools giving out information on the census.

Director Kelleher stated that the office will be doing the EEOC contract closed out on September 30, 2019 and we are on track to meet our contract.

Equal Justice Initiative

Director Kelleher encouraged Commissioners to attend the first Public Meeting on September 21. She said that they will be making plans to go to Montgomery, Alabama, and bring back the replica pillar commemorating the two lynchings in Alexandria. She added that there will be a second Public Meeting in November and at that meeting they will be having a facilitator, because they expect some painful conversations.

Director Kelleher announced the outreach event on Saturday, September 28, with the Northern Virginia Community College, Police Department and other service providers. She asked Commissioners to volunteer and said that she has invited the EEOC as well. Director Kelleher will provide the time of the event to the Commissioners.

Director Kelleher stated that she will be following up on the recent police-involved shooting. APD will schedule a video screening of the last police-involved shooting for the Commission when the case is adjudicated. She also asked Commissioners if they are still interested in having a presentation on tasers, so she can schedule that as well.

Commissioner Harris stated that next month DASH is going to be realigning its routes through the City or taking recommendation from its consultants. He stated that some of the recommendation that DASH is planning to adapt are going to impact people of lower income. He said that DASH is going to be reaching out to the Community next month for citizens input.

7. Liaison Reports

Alex Howe from Landlord and Tenant Relations Board stated that at the last meeting they discussed things for the 2020-2021 budget. He said that one thing that was brought up was like the undocumented neighborhoods legal fund, that was part of the budget last year. He said that they brought the idea of doing something sort of similar for a tenant protection or eviction diversion for people who are being force out by their landlords, unsavory practices are being done to them, especially in places like Chirilagua (Arlandria) for example. He stated that things for the legislative package they didn't have any proposals of their own, but that they endorsed ones from the Arlington Landlord Tenant Commission. There are two things, one was tax credit program to incentivize Landlords to accept housing choice vouchers and the other one is a proposal to basically create a State-run rental assistant program to help low income households who are not receiving federal assistant. Because there is a big gap of people who are just outside eligibility or there is enough housing choice voucher or other types of subsidies for people needing rent assistance. He reported that one was brought up from Melodie Seau in the Office of Housing was a very specific one, there is an apartment building in Alexandria that to get around

rent increase laws, they are basically creating made up fees, that are trying to insert those into new contracts for people who are renewing or for new residents coming in. He said that Ms. Seau will contact Ms. Taylor about drafting legislation related to this issue.

He also stated that there is an Alexandria Housing summit being organize by the City coming up in January 2020. He stated that the Landlord and Tenant Relations Board will be looking at rent increase guidelines and they are looking at changing the process and want to make somewhat more administrative, where the Board will be reviewing it, but the City staff will finalize it.

Commissioner Hammond, Sr stated that the HIV/AIDS Commission is working on planning for the World HIV Day. He added that they had a presenter who was with the Ending Criminalization of HIV and Overincarceration in Virginia (ECHO VA) Coalition to talk about changing the HIV criminal Law in Virginia.

Vice Chair Blackwood stated that the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) met last week and said that the Vice Mayor attended the meeting. She added that they got a very thorough update from Jeff Poole on the scooter program and said that the pilot program has been extended through the end of the year. She stated they have had clarification on enforcement that was not happening, but is going to be happening as of January 2020. She stated that there are seven companies in Alexandria, there are 18,000 users and 100,000 trips across all apps. She added they are impounding scooters that have been left after two hours. She stated that tickets apparently are starting to be given primarily for running stop signs. Alexandria has also created parking corrals for the scooters, and they have 'geofenced' certain areas of the city such as Waterfront Park and the King Street and Braddock Road Metro Stations.

8. Announcements /Adjournment

MOTION: adjourn the meeting.
Kellom/Matt Harris **PASSED** unanimously
The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.