

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2022
7:00 p.m., City Hall
301 King Street, Room 2000
The Chet and Sabra Avery Room

Members Present

Justin Beland
Lisl Brunner, Vice Chair
Michelle Cho
Matt Harris, Chair
Susan Kellom
Katherine O'Connell
William Tom Reeder
David Rigsby
Elizabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez, Adm. Support

Members Excused

Danielle Beach
Janeka Cogdell
Scott Schwartz

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair Harris

Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Introductions were made. Chair Harris welcomed new Commissioners Katherine O'Connell, liaison from the Landlord Tenant Relations Board, Justin Beland, liaison from the Commission on Persons with Disabilities, and William Tom Reeder, liaison from the Commission on Aging. Commissioner O'Connell stated that she has lived in Alexandria for about seven years, but has a lot of roots in Alexandria and is excited to be part of this Commission. Commissioner Beland stated that he is brand new to the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities and was eager to jump at the chance to be a liaison to the Human Rights Commission. He said that he has done disability policies work in Washington D.C. for 20 years now for many organizations. Commissioner Reeder stated that he just joined the Commission on Aging about two months ago. He stated that he has been a practicing attorney for many years and after that he was in policy work in the federal government with the Treasury Department, the IRS, U.S. Senate, and most recently, Director of the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation. He added that right now, he runs the community Tax clinic at DCHS. A quorum was established at 7:04 p.m.

2. Approval of March Minutes/Review of April Meeting Notes

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Brunner, seconded by Commissioner Rigsby the Commission approved the minutes of the March meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye.

3. Executive Committee /Upcoming Meetings

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

4. Appointment of Nominating Committee

Chair Harris asked for volunteers to serve on the nominating committee to get in contact with Commissioners and come up with a slate. Commissioner Kellom volunteered to serve on the nominating committee. Chair Harris volunteered Commissioner Beach and Commissioner Schwartz to serve on the nominating committee. Director Kelleher will be contacting Commissioner Schwartz and Commissioner Beach.

5. Adoption of Electronic Participation Policy

Chair Harris stated that Director Kelleher had emailed the City's electronic participation policy for Commissioners to reviewed to it. Upon a motion by Commissioner Rigsby, seconded by Commissioner Kellom the policy was adopted, motion passed unanimously.

6. Old and New Business

Rainbow Crosswalk lettering

Commissioners discussed the rainbow crosswalk proposal that was sent to City Council in early 2021. Chair Harris explained that the Commission has been trying to get rainbow crosswalk somewhere along King Street and said that a lot of cities around the country have these crosswalks and said that they want to include Black Lives Matter in the rainbow itself. Director Kelleher stated that the Commission received a response after a year-long request. Chair Harris stated that he does not agree with the response and said that Council members that he has spoken with are in support of the continuing effort to have the rainbow crosswalk put in somewhere. Director Kelleher stated that the T&ES Director had suggested other possibilities, like a park or a garage at Market Square, but said that he is supportive and the City Manager, in principle, is supportive too. Director Kelleher reported that she has asked the new office intern to research all the federal stuff and find the report that is supposed to be coming out. Chair Harris mentioned that it can be done at the lower area of King Street that is blocked to traffic.

Director Kelleher stated that the Pride flags are going up again at Market Square.

VAHR Conference

Director Kelleher announced that the Virginia Association for Human Rights (VAHR), which is an organization of Commissioners across the Commonwealth is planning to have a summer conference; it will be a combination of virtual and in person participation. The conference is schedule to be held on June 11th.

Summer Intern,

Director Kelleher announced that the office has a summer intern Alaina Browand who is halfway through college at Fordham University and her major is political science and sociology.

Naturalization Ceremony

Admin. Support Gutierrez announced that the Naturalization Ceremony with USCIS will be held on September 13, at 1:00 p.m. in Market Square. Director Kelleher encouraged Commissioners to attend the event and to help hand out programs. Director Kelleher stated that the Voter Registration Office and the Library are going to have a table with information for the new citizens.

ACPD Awards

Commissioner Beland announced that the Alexandria Commission on Person with Disabilities' award ceremony will be held on June 23rd, at the American Physical Therapy Association, at 5:30 p.m.

7. Liaison Report

Commissioner Palmer Johnson reported that the Commission for Women elected its new officers. She also stated that members of the Commission for Women are going to be meeting with members of the City Council to present their initial findings on affordable housing and sexual assault. She

announced that on June 4th, there will a pride event at the Charles Houston Recreation Center. She also announced that there is a vacancy on the Commission for Women in case anyone is interested.

Commissioner Reeder reported that Commission on Aging elected their officers this month and said that they are evaluating their Age Friendly Plan that they had in effect since 2019 and they are proposing a new one that they hope to submit to the AARP this fall.

Commissioner Beland invited everyone to the ACPD awards and stated that one of the things that they are working on is on forming a committee that will review businesses in Old Town Alexandria with regard to accessibility.

Commissioner O'Connell reported that they had Doctor Krystyn Moon, who presented her findings on racial segregation in Alexandria from 1930s-1960s. She added that they presented a resolution to City Council asking to acknowledge the harm done during that time period.

Commissioner Palmer Johnson stated that they had a wonderful speaker on climate change and suggested inviting them to the Human Rights Commission meeting. She stated that their issue is to get the passage of HR 2307, which puts a fee on carbon pollution fee.

Commissioner Rigsby suggested inviting someone from the Office of the Arts to come talk about the "I Love You" display that is being exhibited at the waterfront now and how they chose that artist and why.

Commissioner Palmer Johnson inquired about having Doctor Goodman. Director Kelleher stated that Dr. Goodman came to the last meeting and explained that the Office of Housing conducts fair housing testing every year. She reported that testing was done on basis of race and national origin this year, and it had to do with a pre-application phase in real estate sales. They found no evidence of discrimination.

Commissioner Cho suggested inviting someone to come talk about reproductive rights and can be coming in June. Commissioner Palmer Johnson stated that the Commission for Women was asked to sign onto a proclamation honoring abortion providers, and it was decided by their executive committee that they did not have enough information to do it, so they did not. She stated that the Commission wanted to write a resolution to City Council about women's reproductive rights, but they have had a great deal of division and they had to table it. Commissioner O'Connell stated that she can reach out to lawyers and abortion providers to come talk to the commission about that issue.

8. Announcements /Adjournment

MOTION: adjourn the meeting.

Palmer Edward/Rigsby **PASSED** unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.