

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING

Meeting: Thursday, January 11, 2024

Del Pepper Community Resource Center, Room 9208

Minutes

Commissioners Physically Present: Michael Schuster (Chair) Ana Rivas-Beck, Enid Borden, Alan Dinsmore, Jane King, Jessica Lefevre, Gerri Wallace, Tom Reeder, Kathleen Demik, Marshall Hespe, Barbara Huelat, Barbara D'Agostino, James Bruen, Canek Aguirre, Victoria Rutson, James Lindsay, David Kaplan

Members Participating by Videoconference: Jen Stowe, Lois Steele, Ray Biegun

Excused Absences: Jeanette Shepherd.

Unexcused Absences: Joy Kone.

Liaisons and City Staff Participating by Videoconference: Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center, Darrell Wesley, Adult Day Services Center, Ian Torrance, Police Department, Pam Guerra, Senior Center at Charles Houston, Glynis Laborde, Inova Community Health, Bill Campbell, Transportation Committee Chair.

City Staff Present: Ashley Johnson and Pamela Austin, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Harold Little, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.

Members of the Public Participating by Zoom: Sean Curry and Caren Forsten, Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington, Gaynelle Diaz, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:06

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

The draft minutes of the meeting of December 14, 2023, were unanimously approved with minor changes.

Sergeant Torrance was present as liaison for the Alexandria Police Department but there were no questions for him.

Sean Curry, the Programs Director of the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington, made a special presentation to the Commission about visual impairment, the invisible disability and most feared disorder for persons over 65. For more information, their website is youreyes.org, their hotline for questions about services is 301-951-4444, and their office number is 202-234-1010.

Chair Schuster reported that the Executive Committee discussed possible outreach strategies regarding the recently enacted Auxiliary Dwelling Unit ordinance, which the Commission supported earlier.

Kathleen Demik discussed the January 4 meeting of the Alexandria Planning Commission and their discussion of the Ladrey Redevelopment Plan. She noted that there were concerns from residents of the Annie B. Rose building.

Councilmember Aguirre administered the oath of office to three new and renewing members of the Commission on Aging: Victoria Rutson, Ana Rivas-Beck, and Barbara Huelat.

Jane King reported that the Draft Age Friendly Final Report was ready to be printed and will be forwarded to Council for its approval.

Vice Chairperson D'Agostino reported that the Excellence in Aging Awards will be on May 14, 2024, at 5:30 pm at City Hall. She indicated that volunteers will be needed to serve on the nominations committee in March. Jane King, Jim Lindsay, and David Kaplan volunteered. On behalf of the Outreach Committee, she also indicated that the Mindfulness Project is restarting, with the execution of a memorandum of understanding between the Division of Aging and Adult Services and the Alexandria Arts Alliance, a nonprofit organization of groups and individuals to advance the arts in Alexandria.

Ray Biegun reported on a potential Dementia Friends Information Session for the Commission on Aging. The specifics of such a session will be discussed by the Executive Committee.

On behalf of the Division on Aging and Adult Services, Chri Moore reported that the January 2, 2024 fire on a Wheeler Avenue building had a tremendous impact on the Meals-on-Wheels program, but thanks to extraordinary efforts by Ashley Johnson, Marshall Hespe, and Goodwin Living, the meals have continued to be delivered without significant interruption. He also indicated that there will be an Aging Summit in the fall, and that the Del Pepper Building will have increased activities during the renovation of City Hall in 2025.

Glynis Laborde reported from Inova Community Health.

Tom Reeder reported that the Human Rights Commission has been hearing from residents and discussing the effect of the Israel/Hamas war has been having on Alexandria residents.

Chairman Schuster reported on legislation activities in Richmond of interest to the Commission, for example measures concerning broadening the availability of electronic meetings of public commissions, prescription drug affordability, and eviction prevention.

Juanita Balenger reported on the numerous activities of the St. Martins de Porres Senior Center, including a visit by Sheriff Sean Casey, blood pressure checks, a holiday party, visits by school groups, and a field trip.

For the Commission for Women, Jenn Stowe reported that they would be recognizing Human Trafficking Awareness month in January and that wearing blue on Human Trafficking Awareness Day on January 11 would be a way that people could recognize the importance of the issue. The Commission for Women will be celebrating its 50th anniversary during 2024. She also noted that, in the past, there has been an increase in domestic violence.

On behalf of Senior Services of Alexandria, Marshall Hespe indicated that they were preparing for their annual "Empowering Caregivers" event on January 17, focusing on programs and services assisting caregivers, as well as Senior Ambassador training on January 12 and a proposed reach-out to the Ethiopian community. He also expressed his appreciation for everyone who came together to make sure that the Meals-on-Wheels program got back to normal.

Harold Little reported that the holiday party sponsored by the Successful Aging Committee and that there would be a Valentine's Day party at the Lee Center.

Darrell Wesley reported that the Alexandria Adult Day Services Center was benefiting from the nursing students in their work to prevent the spread of viruses.

Michael Schuster and Lois Steele reported that the Housing Committee would be following the Ladrey redevelopment. Lois Steele indicated that the group is examining the formation of a separate group focusing on long term care. The next meeting of the Housing Committee will be on January 22 at the Duncan Library.

Marshall Hespe reported that the Outreach Committee would be focusing on the mindfulness project and other outreach activities such as the publicizing of the Silver Service Card.

Alan Dinsmore reported that the Transportation Committee would be focusing on the effect of the proposed sports arena project on transportation in the City of Alexandria.

Jessica Lefevre reported that the Civic Engagement and Economic Security Committee would be focusing on food security, as well as ideas for pushing back on ageism in the workforce. Jim Bruen described an idea for a small business "Shark Tank" program to help with the development of small businesses in Alexandria.

Barbara Huelat reported that the Health/Dementia Friendly Committee is considering ideas to promote oral health and invited suggestions.

Chairman Schuster reported that the City's proposed budget would be released in the second half of February, which would require focus by the Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm.

The next meeting of the Commission (involving a discussion of the proposed sports arena) will be on February 8, 2024, at 4:00 pm at the Del Pepper Community Resource Center and the next Executive Committee Meeting will be on Monday, January 29, 2024 at 1:30 pm at Goodwin House.