

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021
7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Danielle Beach
Lisl Brunner, Vice Chair
Michelle Cho
Lynette Foster
Chris Harris
Matt Harris, Chair
Katherine Lloyd
Elizabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson
David Rigsby
Scott Schwartz

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director (participated via phone)
David Miller, Investigator
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez

Members Not Excused

Janeka Cogdell

Members Excused

Kevin Edwards, Vice Chair
Susan Kellom

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

Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of June Minutes

Upon a motion by Commissioner Schwartz, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Commission approved the minutes of the June meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye; motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of all Minutes Taken During Pandemic Emergency

Upon a motion by Commissioner Schwartz, seconded by Commissioner Palmer Johnson, the Commission approved the minutes from September 2020 through June 15, 2021 meetings. All Commissioners present voted aye; motion passed unanimously.

4. Adoption of Policy on Electronic Meeting Participation

Upon a motion by Commissioner Schwartz, seconded by Commissioner Palmer Johnson the Human Rights Commission adopted policy on electronic meeting participation. All Commissioners present voted aye; motion passed unanimously.

5. - "Avery Amendment"

Chair Harris stated that former Commissioner Chet Avery every year proposed that the Commission does not meet in August because he went to Maine in August so, the Commission calls it the Avery Amendment. Chair Harris stated that in honor of Chet Avery the Commission will not meet in August.

6. Executive Committee /Upcoming Meetings

Chair Harris stated that the Executive Committee met via Zoom last Monday and said that they wanted to get a sense of the priorities that the Commission will be undertaking for the next year.

Commissioners wrote their priorities on a piece of paper; Investigator Miller collected them and read them. The Commissioners' priorities are as follow:

- Fair and affordable housing especially Southern Towers and including taxes on elderly homeowners in Alexandria
- Fair policing including transferring funds from police to Mental Health programs, police training on Mental Health issues
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Implementation of Citizen Policing Review Board
- Immigration and citizenship
- Racial, gender, and religious equity
- Education and meeting and impact of Covid-19 on equitable education.
- Fully funded K-12 programs
- Meet with the Alexandria School superintendent
- School Resource Officer Program
- Voting rights
- Meet with new City leaderships, City Department Heads and other officials regarding public safety, diversity, equity, and accessibility
- Better understanding complaints handle by the Office of Human Rights and making in it easier for people to know how to submit their complaints. Data review to better understand where systemic inequality in Alexandria stands.
- Technology and its impact on human rights.

Guest Invitations

Chair Harris also reported that there was a discussion on who will their guests be for the upcoming year and said that traditionally, it has been the Police Chief, and also mentioned that there will be a new Police Chief. He also stated that the Commission also invites the Superintendent of Schools. Additionally, there will be a new Sheriff and a new City Manager.

Vice Chair Brunner stated that she is interested in learning more about the extent to which the City uses technology to make decisions about people that impact their rights and extent of which that technology is audited, or impact assessment take place to detect bias that can be written into the algorithms. She was thinking chronologically, the next step might be the Pretrial Trial Risk Assessment Instrument.

Director Kelleher stated that she has invited Doctor Krystyn Moon, a Professor at Mary Washington University. Director Kelleher stated that Doctor Moon is an expert on African American History.

Training Requests

Director Kelleher asked Commissioners if there is a training that they would like to have such as FOIA training from the City Attorney. Chair Harris asked if the Commission can get the materials from them, so that the Commission can review. Vice Chair Brunner asked if it will be useful for the Commission to have a mediation or conflict resolution training. Director Kelleher reported that the City is developing a new City of Alexandria Mediation Program (CAMP) for City employees and to resolve problems between neighbors.

Legislative Proposals

Director Kelleher stated that Ms. Sarah Taylor would like to receive the proposals from the Commission by September. She also added that she would like to put something forward that would give the Commission more power to recommend and award damages.

7. Old and New Business

Attendance Report & Annual Report

Chair Harris stated that he has already sign the attendance report and asked for the format for the annual report.

Rainbow Crosswalk letter

Chair Harris stated that the rainbow crosswalk letter is in a holding pattern. Director Kelleher stated that she had reached out Yon Lambert from T&ES, who at the City Manager's request prepared a report and said that he has not heard back on specific directions, but he will be happy to meet, so that they can talk about this.

Library Fee/Fines

Director Kelleher reported that as of July 1, 2021 the Library Board is no longer going to be collecting fines. She also added that the Office of Management and Budget will be involved on the library fines issue.

Chair Harris asked Director Kelleher if she has heard anything about the hate crime incident in Old Town. Director Kelleher stated that she was interviewed by Alexandria Times Newspaper on Monday and said that they were interested in the process on reporting hate crime incidents. Director Kelleher said that she explained to him the distinction between hate crime and hate incidents. She also reported that the complainant had contacted the Office and talked to an investigator. She also stated the office is beginning to track anything that is related to hate incidents and also the office advice people to call the police department if it is a criminal matter. She stated that a dispute between neighbors does not fall within the office of human rights jurisdiction, because it is not an employment matter. She stated that this incident is being handle by the Alexandria Police Department and the Commonwealth Attorney's office.

Director Kelleher also reported that Attorney General Mark Herring has a mitigate Virginia focus on hate. She also reported that the Acting U. S. Attorney has established a Civil Rights team for the criminal division in his office, specially looking at hate incident and hate crime that might fall under the federal law. Director Kelleher stated that this office wants to conduct outreach and suggested that this is a perfect opportunity for the Commission to invite the Acting U. S. Attorney to talk about outreach possibilities.

8. Liaison Reports

Commissioner Palmer Johnson reported that the Commission for women did not meet.

Commissioner Lloyd reported that she did not have internet connections and was not able to attend the ACPD meeting

Commissioner Foster reported that Commission on Aging is off for the summer.

9. Announcements /Adjournment

Commissioner Palmer Johnson announced that Alexandria voted not to have Sunday voting.

MOTION: adjourn the meeting.

Palmer Johnson /Harris **PASSED** unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.