

# **ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING AGENDA**

## **Minutes**

Meeting: Thursday, December 12, 2024, 4:00 PM – 6 PM

### **VIRTUAL**

Members Attending Remotely: Chair, Michael Schuster, Vice Chair, Barbara D'Agostino, Secretary, Ana Rivas Alan Dinsmore, Barbara Huelat, Canek Aguirre, David Kaplan, DT Oliver, Gerri Wallace, James Bruen, Jane M. King, Jennifer Stowe, Jessica Lefevre, Jim Lindsay, Joy Kone, Kathleen Demik, Ray Biegun, Victoria Rutson, William Thomas Reeder

Members Excused: Marshall Hesper

Members Unexcused: None

Liaisons Present: Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center; Darrell Wesley, Adult Day Services Center; Ian Torrance, Police Department

Guests Present: Bob Eiffert, Housing Committee; Jan Macidull, Housing Committee; Cedar Dvorin; Tori Steele, Habitat DC NOVA; Lauren Freen; Lois Steele; Robert Hahn, Birmingham Green Chief Advancement Officer

Staff Members Present: Chris Moore, Ashley Johnson, Pam Austin, Jackie Lainez, Division of Aging and Adult Services

**Call to Order** by Chair, Michael Schuster– 4:33pm

**Approval of Agenda** – Approved, with addition of City Council Testimony for December 14, 2024.

**Approval of Thursday, November 14, 2024, Minutes** – Approved

### **Alexandria Police Department Liaison Report – Sgt. Ian Torrance**

No reports just checking on questions and concerns. Sgt. Torrance gave an update on the faulty street lights on Beauregard, between West Braddock and Fillmore, near the Northern Virginia Community College campus. Since they are controlled by Dominion Energy, they were notified of the problem.

### **Liaison Reports**

#### **Division of Aging and Adult Services – Chris Moore**

The Division will hire two new drivers by the end of the year. This increase in drivers should help transport older Alexandrians to St. Martin de Porres, which has seen a significant increase in

participation at their center. Chris also noted that the Division will have a state audit on January 28<sup>th</sup>, so they are preparing for that.

### **INOVA Alexandria Hospital -**

No attendance.

### **Human Rights Commission – Tom Reeder**

Tom said the HRC had a presentation from Noah Klose, the Community Outreach Director from at Homes Not Borders, which was created in 2022. They work to resettle refugees from around the world. About 60% of those resettled in this area are from Afghanistan. The HRC is involved in monitoring the startup of the Alexandria Independent Community Policing Review Board, which is not operational yet. The City Council will discuss the Board in a January public meeting.

### **AHA – Bob Eiffert**

The AHA had a wonderful showing for the Scottish Christmas Walk last Saturday – with 25 or so walkers and 6 cars, including a 1921 touring car.

### **AARP – Jane King**

AARP is sponsoring a movie night with the showing of *The Hidden Power of Purpose*, designed to improve mental and physical health, and narrated by Debbie Allen. It includes both inspirational stories of resilience and commentary from national mental health and brain health experts such as Deepak Chopra and CCN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta. Jane also mention something called Tuesday Explores that examines current interest topics – at this point the program is specializing on African American history and culture.

### **NVAN – Michael Schuster**

Michael said that some NVAN members recently met with Delegate Adele McClure's chief of staff, Madison McCabe to discuss the NVAN legislative platform. Madison said that the Democratic leadership is discouraging members from introducing bills in 2025 that were vetoes in 2024.

### **St. Martins de Porres Senior Center – Juanita Balenger**

Juanita said the Center has been busy in December. Forty-five members will be attending the holiday fest tomorrow at the Lee Center. They have several field trips planned, including to a movie at the University Mall (GMU), and to the Dutch Amish market. She mentioned that their next dental clinic organized by the Fenwick Foundation is scheduled at the Center for January 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **VHC Health (formerly, Virginia Hospital Center) – Kate Chutuape/Blanca Cali**

No one attended.

### **Commission for Women – Jenn Stowe**

Jenn said the Commission had a presentation by Monica Chapman, Councilmember John Chapman's wife, who spoke about the Viola Lawson Fund, especially as it relates to breast cancer for the women of Alexandria. The Commission has adopted a family for the holidays, and the children's holiday party as part of the Domestic Violence Program is tonight. Jenn said the Commission will liaison with Councilmembers, especially the new members. Finally, the Commission will be updating its report that is posted on the City's webpage.

### **Economic Opportunities Commission – DT Oliver**

DT could not attend the Commission's last meeting, but noted the Commission has been involved in Community Health Improvement Plan, and has a debriefing on the Basic Guaranteed Income project - ARISE. He also alerted the COA of the point in time homelessness survey coming up in January 2025.

### **Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria**

No one attended.

### **Public Health Advisory Commission**

No one attended.

### **Commission on Persons with Disabilities**

No one attended.

### **Senior Center @ Charles Houston**

No one attended.

### **Senior Services of Alexandria – Marshall Hesse**

No one attended

### **Alexandria Commission on Employment, ACE**

No one attended.

### **Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance, NVFPA – Marshall Hesse**

Only meet quarterly so nothing to report.

### **Arlington Legislative Committee – Michael Schuster**

The ALC met with Delegate Adele McClure's Chief of Staff to review the NVAN legislative platform.

## **Arlington Commission on Aging – Linc Cummings**

No one attended.

## **Successful Aging Committee – Harold Little**

**Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities – Harold Little**

**Alexandria Adult Day Services Center, ADSC – Darrell Wesley**

The Center has been busy in December. Center participants went to a movie at University Mall (GMU), attended a U.S. Army Band concert at Constitution Hall, invited exercise instructors and music entertainers to the Center; and participants are learning chess. The Center is accepting applications for two open positions.

## **Housing Affordability Advisory Committee, AHAAC – Jan Macidull**

AHAAC spent most of its last meeting discussing the Housing Master Plan with staff from the Office of Housing. Members discussed new approaches to expand the supply of affordable housing. The Office of Housing has seen out a community survey for more input on Housing 2040 – its initiative for the new Master Housing Plan.

## **Special Presentation: Robert Hahn, Birmingham Green – Chief Advancement Officer**

Robert started his presentation by giving an overview of Birmingham Green, which provides nursing home, independent living and assisted living care in Manassas Virginia. They have about 300 residents, of which 17 are from Alexandria. They are mostly on Medicare and Medicaid. Birmingham Green has been around for 97 years. In 2004, it created the Birmingham Green Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charity, in order to raise funds. It serves 5 jurisdictions – Loudoun, Fauquier, Prince William and Fairfax counties, and the City of Alexandria. Alexandria contributed \$595,000 last year, or \$34,000 per Alexandrian in Birmingham Green. These funds supplement what Medicare and Medicaid pays. Birmingham has 54 “pristine” acres, of which 40 are undeveloped.

Birmingham Green has a free Certified Nurse’s Assistant (CNA) program. Participants do not have to pay for their books; they just come to class, pass it, and then they can do their clinical work at Birmingham Green for about \$17.50 per hour, and then 60 days or so later they can become certified. They can then make up to \$50,000 a year, and work towards an LPN or RN degree. Robert said their CNA program is a gateway to more lucrative positions in the healthcare field.

They partner with local high schools and George Mason University. Birmingham Green is looking to expand into other clinical services, such as dialysis, dental and podiatry services. Robert has been spending a lot of his time engaging the community about Birmingham Green and how they can partner to make living there a positive and healthy experience for all of the residents.

Chris mentioned that Newsweek Magazine ranked Birmingham Green the number one nursing home in Northern Virginia.

## **Executive Committee Report**

### **Approval of City Council Testimony for December 15, 2024**

The COA unanimously approved the draft testimony for the City Council's meeting on the City Legislative Package on December 14, 2025, which requests that the NVAN legislative platform be incorporated into the City's Legislative Package.

### **Age Friendly Plan – Next Steps – Jane King and DAAS Staff**

Chris said that DAAS has sent out a flyer – in two parts, one for the community survey and one for the January Kick-Off meeting. They already gotten 93 responses. They have printed copies for adult day centers, and will have them available at the Lee Center holiday party tomorrow. The January meeting will be at the Lee Center on January 17<sup>th</sup>, so we can accommodate more participants than we could at Beatley Central Library. Senior Services of Alexandria has been doing a lot of publicity for the event. Michael asked the Commission members to consider volunteering for the table discussions at the Kick-Off.

### **Future Speakers**

There were several suggestions on future speakers: someone from INOVA to discuss issues around discharge planning; someone from the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services; some to discuss dementia issues; someone from the Commonwealth to discuss new regulations that impact our work and aging services; and someone familiar with patient and resident advocacy/rights.

### **Farewell to David Kaplan**

After over a decade on the COA, David decided not to renew his member when his term ends on December 31, 2024. David has been a stellar advocate for free ridership on DASH. As a board member of DASH, he wondered how to make's DASH's marketing plan to increase older adult ridership more effective – originally it only basically said, "Seniors will ride on DASH because they drive less, and they'll be our customers." David thought, "no, we need to talk about what those needs are, what barriers are and how they use it." So, David looked for a group that worked on aging issues to engage it on DASH and older Alexandrian ridership issues – and discovered the Commission on Aging. He was taken by how engaged the Commission was with older Alexandrians as well as how effective the COA was in its advocacy. David originally applied for membership in 2013. He considered himself lucky to serve under strong aging chairs, such as Jane King, Carol Downs, Bob Eiffert, and Babs Waters. David was instrumental in developing and implementing the Transportation portion of the Age Friendly Plan (2018-2024). In its gratitude for David's extraordinary service, the Commission issued, virtually, a certificate of appreciation. (A copy will be mailed to him separately.)

## **Committee Updates**

### **Economic Security and Civic Engagement – Chair, Jessica Lefevre**

Alexandria's Work Force Development Center has hired a new employee as the coordinator for the 50 plus employment program. The Committee discussed how to improve marketing of this program. Jessica picked up on the Robert Hahn's discussion of Birmingham Green's CAN program, she queried why not open the program to older adults. With the demographics moving toward older persons, she said we need to be thinking about an opportunity to develop different programs and attitudes toward work for older persons, and ways to change work requirements, ways to make the workplace friendlier to older workers, so that individuals who are able to continue working, and need to earn more money or want to continue working, have those opportunities.

Jessica said that WDC has exhausted its funding for work-based learning that provides case management resources, job fairs, access to computers, and support with preparations for interviews. She asserted this a program that needs additional funding. Ashley had mentioned that the Walmart grant of \$100,000 will allow DAAS to hire someone to help expand SNAP outreach.

### **Housing Committee - Co-Chairs, Michael Schuster and Lois Steele**

Lois reported that the Committee discussed the Silverado Planning Commission public meeting, the update on Ladrey redevelopment, and the Housing 2040 initiative.

### **Outreach Committee – Co-Chairs, Marshall Hesse & Barbara D'Agostino**

No updates.

### **Transportation – Chair, Alan Dinsmore**

Alan said the next Transportation meeting will be on December 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:00. Alan mentioned coordinating with the Economic Security Committee on data collection issues.

### **Health /Dementia Friendly Committee – Chair, Barbara Huelat**

Did not meet this month and will meet in January before the COA meeting. They are waiting for a report to determine their issues and initiatives

### **Other Business -**

Bob Eiffert said he had a wonderful meeting with Bill Harris at Chesterbrook Residences recently. Bill was the author of the concept paper for mixed income affordable assisted living, and a former member of the COA's Housing Committee. He is 95 years old and doing well. He

and his wife will be celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in December. Bob has his mailing address for those who wish to send him congratulations.

**New Business NO**

**Public comments – please limit your comments to 3 minutes NO**

**Adjournment – at 6:00 pm**

**Next Commission Meeting: Thursday, February 13, 2025 – 4 PM, VIRTUAL**  
**Executive Committee Meeting: February 3, 2025– 1:30 p.m. VIRTUAL**

**NVAN Meetings: January 21<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 – Virtual – Host, Prince William County COA**

**COMMISSION OFFICERS:** Michael Schuster, Chair  
Barbara D’Agostino, Vice Chair  
Ana Rivas Beck, Secretary