

**City of Alexandria, Virginia**  
**Department of Community and Human Services**  
**Social Service Advisory Board Meeting Notes**  
**November 18, 2024**

**Present:** Ashley Caison, Abby Curran Horrell (Chair), Ann O’Hanlon, Maura Miller, Allison Greenleaf, Josh Barnathan, Shawna Gary, Michael de La Guardia, Jordan Nally, Angela Almonte (DCHS Staff), Lesa Gilbert (DCHS Staff)

**Absent:** Samantha Pedrosa (Vice Chair)

**Call to Order/Welcome:**

The meeting was called to order by Abby Horrell (Chair) at 7:00 p.m. and SSAB members were welcomed to the November meeting. The meeting was held via Zoom.

**Approval of minutes:** The minutes of the October meeting were approved with changes by SSAB members. Motion to be approved by Shawna Gary and seconded by Ann O’Hanlon

**Review of Holiday Sharing collection and gift card:**

- Seven hundred dollars were collected by SSAB member Ann O’Hanlon and used to purchase fifty-dollar gift cards for Giant and Aldi. Fourteen gift cards were delivered to Christine Levine for Holiday Sharing.
- There are still opportunities to volunteer as part of the distribution. SSAB members can contact Christine Levine for more information.
  - Volunteers during that time focus on various tasks such as gift wrapping, bike assembly, or supporting logistics of the distribution.

**ARISE project update presentation:**

- The ARISE project update presentation will be held on Wednesday, November 20th, at 6 p.m. This event will be in-person with dinner served, and will focus on sharing with community members the first-year research results of the pilot program

**Discussion of letter to City Council regarding DCHS employee compensation, hiring, and retention**

- SSAB board member Ann O’Hanlon shared a draft letter with SSAB members to review prior to submission to the City Council.

***Suggestions included:***

- Highlighting the City’s vision of being the employer of choice can be achieved by adopting a similar telework policy to Prince William County. The flexibility in telework options will offer an opportunity to stay competitive within the public service sector.
- Including language around the need to fill critical positions within the Department of Community and Human Services that are critical for child welfare, including well-being and access to benefits.
- SSAB board member Ann O’Hanlon will share the revised draft with SSAB members. SSAB members will submit any changes by Wednesday, November 20th. The revised

letter will be on SSAB letterhead and submitted to Council members by Friday, November 22nd.

**Discussion about guests for future meetings:**

- SSAB board members discussed the opportunity of engaging with the incoming City Council administration. SSAB board members decided to extend an invitation to Vice Mayor-Elect Sarah Bagley

**Discussion of SSAB elections and positions**

- Board elections happen every year, and the election for Chair and Vice-Chair will be held during the December meeting.
  - Requirements for Chair and Vice Chair positions include a meeting with Lesa Gilbert (DCHS Staff) to prepare the agenda and write letters to the City Manager or leadership on behalf of the SSAB.
    - Agenda preparation meeting happens monthly for about 15 minutes via Teams.
  - The Chair prepares the annual report and attends quarterly boards and commissions Chairs meetings. During this meeting, the SSAB Chair learns about the work other boards and commissions are doing and, at times, provides updates on behalf of the SSAB.
  - Previous members who served in Chair and Vice Chair positions had not served an extended period on the SSAB prior to their election.

**Upcoming meeting dates**

- Monday, December 16
- Monday, January 20 (Reschedule for January 27<sup>th</sup>)
- Monday, February 17 (Reschedule for February 24<sup>th</sup>)

***The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.***