

Rethinking and Refreshing Alexandria’s Citizen Corps Council

Summary and Rationale

Alexandria’s Citizen Corps Council was formed in December 2003. FEMA’s Individual and Community Preparedness Division administers the Citizen Corps program nationally. “Citizen Corps’ mission is to strengthen the collaboration between government and community leaders from all sectors to encourage citizens’ preparedness through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to all hazards and all threats.” This is FEMA’s 2013 explanation of Citizen Corps.

After 20 years, it is appropriate to rethink how CCC may better serve the City of Alexandria and its residents with respect to emergency preparedness. Over the past 20 years, hazards and threats have evolved, as have the abilities and methods to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

This proposal preserves the two essential elements of the functions, powers, and duties in the City’s original enacting legislation: a) Community Preparedness and Resilience and b) Unified Emergency Services. In light of the second element, it is worthwhile to reconsider the membership of CCC as well as developing closer collaboration and alliances with other organizations, including City departments and boards and external entities.

It may also be sensible to rebrand CCC, selecting a name that more accurately conveys the updated role that CCC should have in the City. (Arlington County has twice renamed its Citizen Corps program. The current name is CARRT—Community Advancing Resilience and Readiness Together—and the group advises the County Manager.)

Suggestions for renaming:

- [TBD]

Recommended Revision to Code of General Ordinances

CCC asks the City Council members to present the following recommended revision to the code to the full council for approval and adoption. The first section identifies the proposed voting and non-voting membership and the second section on functions, powers and duties, streamlining and condensing two clauses from the original code to a single clause.

Alexandria's Code of General Ordinances, Title 2 Chapter 4
ARTICLE T [NEW NAME HERE]

Sec. 2-4-150 Creation, composition, organization and term.

- (a) The Citizen Corps Council was initially established on December 8, 2003, by ordinance and designated as a standing committee.
- (b) Since then, hazards and threats have evolved, as have the abilities and methods to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters affecting members of the community.
- (c) To reflect better the transformed state of affairs, membership of the Citizen Corps Council is hereby reconstituted and the committee is renamed as [NEW NAME].
- (d) The thirteen members of the committee shall be appointed by the City Council as follows:
 - (1) A representative of the Alexandria business community;
 - (2) A representative of Alexandria civic associations;
 - (3) A representative for residents with disabilities / access and functional needs;
 - (4) A representative for non-English speaking residents;
 - (5) A member of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program;
 - (6) A representative or member of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC);
 - (7) A representative or member of the Alexandria Radio Club (ARC);
 - (8) A representative or member of the Alexandria Animal Welfare League or its Community Animal Response Team;
 - (9) A representative from the Police Department's Community Relations Unit or Volunteer Office;
 - (10) A representative from the Fire Department's Community Risk Reduction programs;
 - (11) A representative from the Sheriff's Office Community and Safety programs;
 - (12) A representative from Volunteer Alexandria; and
 - (13) A representative of the American Red Cross.
- (e) Ex officio (non-voting) members shall be:
 - (1) Two members of City Council, appointed by the mayor;
 - (2) A representative of the Local Emergency Planning Committee;
 - (3) A representative of the Emergency Medical Services Council; and
 - (4) A representative of the Public Health Advisory Commission.
- (f) The members of the committee shall be appointed in the manner prescribed in title 2, chapter 4, article (a) of this code. The members shall serve for a term of three years, and such terms shall be staggered. (Ord. No. 4382, 3/12/05, Sec. 1; Ord. No. 5167, 11/17/18, Sec. 1)

Sec. 2-4-151 Functions, powers and duties; staff assistance.

- (a) The functions, powers and duties of the **committee** shall be to advise and support the city and the city council as to:
 - (1) evaluating, catalyzing, empowering and ensuring the whole of community— individuals and households, institutions, businesses and other organizations, and local government—prepare for, respond to, and be able to recover from natural, technological, and human-caused emergencies;
 - (2) working collaboratively on delivering unified emergency services that will provide essential support where needed in the city when emergencies occur;
 - (3) to do all things necessary or convenient to carry out the responsibilities expressly given in this subsection; and
 - (4) such other tasks as may be requested by the city council.
- (b) Except as expressly provided in this article, the **committee** may adopt rules and regulations in regard to procedure and other matters for the conduct of its business, so long as the same are not inconsistent with the city code, including, but not limited to, the establishment of sub-committees through which it may carry on its functions, duties and purpose.
- (c) Subject to the availability of funds and staff, the city manager is authorized to provide, through the Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management, and other departments, such staff or other assistance to the council as requested. (Ord. No. 4382, 3/12/05, Sec. 1)

Discussion of the Functions, Powers and Duties

To perform the functions, powers and duties effectively, the **committee** should undertake to

- Discuss and forward to City Council lessons learned from recent emergencies;
- Discuss and forward to City Council analysis of topics that may affect emergency services at the City level;
- Understand whole of community levels of preparedness and identify for City Council significant gaps and recommendations to mitigate the gaps; and
- **OTHER??**

Discussion of Unified Emergency Services

The **committee** should build and maintain communications and relationships with other organizations with a nexus to emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. This may be achieved in various ways. Representatives of such organizations may be invited to attend and offer presentations at **committee** meetings. And when appropriate, **committee** members and other organizations would benefit from not just knowing and talking to one another regularly but also from participating in each other’s meetings, trainings, and exercises, because when a disaster threatens or occurs, they may be working together.

Examples of City departments and others include:

- Fire
- Police
- Sheriff
- Alexandria City Public Schools, particularly school security
- Transportation & Environmental Services
- Code Administration
- Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- DASH
- ALIVE
- Islamic Relief
- Utilities, such as water and sewer, electricity, gas, telecom (including FirstNet), etc.
- Other lifelines / critical infrastructures, such as INOVA Hospital, Metro, etc.

Discussion of **Committee Meeting Structure**

Structuring the meetings to address the functions and relationship-building will be important. Representatives from City departments and other local organizations may have a standing invitation to the meetings. In addition, they should be invited to present on their role in City emergency operations and engage in a dialog.

Separately, the **committee** may consider establishing subcommittees, standing or ad hoc, to address topics such as the state of community preparedness and resilience, lessons learned, futures thinking for emergency services, collaboration among organizations providing emergency services, etc.

Revision of the Bylaws and Procedures

Once City Council revises Alexandria's Code of General Ordinances, Title 2 Chapter 4 Article T, the **committee** will need to revise its own bylaws and procedures.