

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING
Meeting: Thursday, May 9, 2024, 4:00 p.m.

Del Pepper Community Resource Center, Room 9208

Draft Minutes

This meeting was recorded.

Present: Commissioners Participating in Person: Michael Schuster (Chairman), Ray Biegun, James Bruen, Barbara D'Agostino, Kathleen Demik, Alan Dinsmore, Marshall Hespe, Barbara Huelat, Jane King, Jessica Lefevre, James Lindsay, Tom Reeder, Victoria Rutson, Lois Steele, Jen Stowe, Gerri Wallace

Present: Members Participating by Videoconference with Permission from the Chair: David Kaplan, participated virtually (via Zoom) due to a personal matter; Barbara D'Agostino, participated virtually (via Zoom) due to a personal matter.

Members Absent with Permission from the Chair: Canek Aguirre, Enid Borden, Ana Rivas-Beck

Members Absent: Joy Kone

Liaisons Participating in Person: Bob Eifert, At Home Alexandria, Harold Little, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Liaisons and City Staff Participating by Videoconference: Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center, Ian Torrance, Police Department, Pam Guerra, Senior Center at Charles Houston, Chris Moore, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Darrell Wesley, Alexandria Adult Day Care Center, Gaynelle Diaz, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Blanca Cali, VHC Health, Sermaine McLean, Office of City Manager

City Staff Participating in Person: Ashley Johnson and Pamela Austin, Division of Aging and Adult Services

Members of the Public Participating by Videoconference: Cedar Dvorin

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

The draft minutes of the meeting of March 14, 2024, were unanimously approved.

In response to a question Sergeant Torrance of the Alexandria Police Department discussed rules for motorized bicycles in Old Town and the rest of Alexandria.

Liaison Reports:

Chris Moore announced that May is Older Americans Month. He also announced that the Division of Aging and Adult Services is promoting the Senior Farmers Market

voucher program for eligible seniors and assisting them with their applications. Vouchers can be used beginning on June 1.

Tom Reeder reported that the Human Rights Commission had authorized a letter to be sent to Council regarding the Israel-Gaza war, but that no one on the Council has responded. He also indicated that the rainbow crosswalks, which the Commission had long promoted, should be completed in time to be unveiled at the Pride Fair to occur at Market Square from 3-6 pm on June 1.

Bob Eiffert announced that At Home Alexandria would be celebrating its 13th anniversary on Wednesday, May 15, from 2-4.

Jane King reminded Commissioners that they could go to the AARP website to find out about AARP events or contact her directly. On May 20, there will be an event at VHC Health to discuss Medicare changes.

Michael Schuster announced that there would be a meeting of the Northern Virginia Aging Network on May 31 at 1:30-3:30.

Juanita Balenger provided a report on the past and upcoming events on the Saint Martins de Porres Senior Center. She indicated that there was an increase in seniors as well as volunteers at the Center.

Blanca Cali provided a report on upcoming events at VHC (formerly Virginia Health Center), including a webinar on Navigating Senior Living on May 17 and a Senior Housing Fair on June 28.

Jenn Stowe reported that the Commission on Women would host an event featuring Dimple Dhabalia on Wednesday, May 22 on Empowering Women to Serve.

Pam Guerra reported on the activities at the Charles Houston Senior Center, including a field trip to the Capitol and a Mother's Day event.

Marshall Hespe reported on behalf of Senior Services of Alexandria that there will be a Health and Fitness Fair on May 23 at 10 am at the Lee Center and a Senior Law Day event on June 8 from 9-12 am at the First Baptist Church on King Street. He also indicated that SSA was supporting continuing activity on Alexandria's Community Health Improvement Plan and that Mary Lee Anderson is on the Steering Committee.

There was an indication that the Commission on Aging will need someone to be liaison to the Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance.

For the Successful Aging Committee, Harold Little reminded the Commission the spring and summer program guide is available (download or paper copy) from the Department of Parks, Recreation, and reported that there were activities at all seven recreation centers. Pickle ball and table tennis are particularly popular. He also reported on the spring walk in Ben Brenman Park on May 8.

Darrell Wesley reported on the activities at the Lee Center and that they had a successful inspection by the Virginia Health Department.

Special Presentation:

Leslie Palucho, an Alexandria firefighter and Community Outreach Coordinator, presented an overview of fire safety focusing on issues of particular interest to older adults. She discussed smoke alarms, kitchen safety, issues with electrical outlets and candles, and a fire escape plan. Jeff Woolsey, the Alexandria EMS Outreach Coordinator and Community Paramedic, presented an overview of resources and protocols with respect to EMS services and answered questions from Commissioners. His remarks included a description of the Department's lift assist program and Smart 911.

Discussion/Action Items:

Jane King indicated that the final Age Friendly Report would be presented at the June 25 City Council Meeting.

Michael Schuster discussed the proposed Electronic Participation Policy (Attachment Number 1, attached), which had been circulated to Commissioners earlier. After a brief discussion, there was a motion and second to approve the policy and it was unanimously approved.

Pamela Austin announced that planning for the Excellence in Aging Award ceremony was complete and it will occur in City Hall on May 14 at 5:30 pm.

Chris Moore has nominated the Commission on Aging for the Commission of the Year Impact Award, and DCHS Director Kate Garvey has provided a letter in support of the nomination.

Alan Dinsmore and Michael Schuster reported on the comments from the Commission on Aging on the Pickett Street Improvement Project (Attachment Number 2, attached). These comments focus in particular on speeding and pedestrian safety. In accordance with the Commission's bylaws, the comments were approved by the Executive Committee and delivered due to time limitations, but would be subject to the Commission's approval at its June meeting.

Jessica Lefevre reported that the Nominations Committee had met and proposed the following individuals as officers for the 2024/25 year:

Michael Schuster – Chair
Barbara D'Agostino – Vice Chair
Ana Rivas-Beck – Secretary

There were no other nominations from the floor. Following a motion and second, the three nominees were elected unanimously. These officers will be installed as the last order of business of the June meeting, in accordance with the Commission's bylaws.

Committee Updates:

Michael Schuster and Lois Steele announced that the Housing Committee would have a work session on speakers.

On behalf of the Outreach Committee, Marshall Hespe announced that the rollout of the Mindfulness Project in April was a success and the Committee's meeting in June would focus on a debrief of the project and future projects.

Alan Dinsmore announced that the Transportation Committee would meet on May 15 at the Charles Houston Recreation Center at 4 pm. The meeting would feature a discussion with Martin Barna, the Director of Planning at DASH.

Jessica Lefevre reported that the Economic Security and Civic Engagement Committee met on May 2 and discussed a new project involving pop-up farmers markets.

Barbara Huelat reported that the Health/Dementia Friendly Committee met on April 18 and discussed how to get information out concerning hearing and dental issues and programs relevant to older citizens.

New Business:

There was a discussion of the opening of the Benchmark, Alexandria's newest senior living facility. The facility will have three auxiliary grant placements. Only models were open. There will be three levels of care at the facility.

The next Commission meeting will be Thursday, June 13, 2024, at 4:00 pm at 4850 Mark Center Drive. The next Executive Committee meeting will be held at 1:30 pm on June 3, 2024 at Goodwin House, Alexandria.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 pm.

City of Alexandria
Commission on Aging
Electronic Participation Policy for Remote Participation and All-Virtual Public Meetings

Approved on May 9, 2024

It is the policy of the Commission on Aging (“COA”) that members may participate in meetings of the COA, and its committees by electronic communication means as permitted by [§ 2.2-3708.3](#) of the Code of Virginia, as revised in 2024 by House Bills 894, and 1040, and Senate Bills 85 and 734, and approved by the governor on April 8, 2024, effective July 1, 2024

Remote Participation by Individual Members

Remote participation by individual members is allowed under the following circumstances:

1. A personal matter

- a. On or before the day of a meeting, the member shall notify the Chair that the member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter. The member must identify with specificity the nature of the personal matter.
- b. A quorum of the COA must be physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location.
- c. The Chair may approve or disapprove the request for electronic participation. If the absent member’s remote participation is disapproved because such participation would violate this policy, the basis for the disapproval shall be recorded in the COA’s minutes. The decision shall be based solely on the criteria in this policy, without regard to the identity of the member or matters that will be considered or voted on during the meeting.
- d. The COA shall record the specific nature of the personal matter and the remote location from which the absent member participated in the COA’s minutes.
- e. Participation by the absent member due to a personal matter shall be limited in each calendar year to: (i) two (2) meetings, or (ii) 25% of the meetings held rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, of the COA’s meetings.

2. A member’s temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition or a family member’s medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family members, thereby preventing the member’s physical attendance.

- a. a. On or before the day of a meeting, the member shall notify the Chair that the member is unable to attend the meeting due to temporary or permanent disability or other medical

condition that prevents his or her physical attendance or a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family members, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance.

- b. A quorum of the Commission must be physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location.
- c. For purposes of determining whether a quorum is physically assembled, an individual member of the Commission who is either a person with a disability as defined in the Code of Virginia, [§ 51.5-40.1](#), or is a caregiver for a person with a disability, and uses remote participation, counts towards the quorum as if that individual was physically present. (Revised on May 9, 2024.)
- d. A "caregiver" for purposes of this quorum exception, means an adult who provides care for a person with a disability as defined in the Code of Virginia [§51.5-40.1](#). A caregiver shall be either related by blood, marriage, or adoption to or the legally appointed guardian of the person with a disability for whom he or she is caring. (Revised on May 9, 2024.)
- e. The COA shall record the fact of the member's disability or other medical condition or a family member's medical condition that requires the member to provide care for such family members, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance, and the remote location from which the absent member participated in the COA minutes.

3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the meeting notice.

4. For any remote electronic participation, the COA shall make arrangements for the voice of the absent member or members to be heard by all persons in attendance at the meeting location.

All-Virtual Public Meetings

All-virtual meetings are permitted, other than for groups prohibited by Code of Virginia § 2.2-3708.3, when conducted in conformance with the following requirements:

- 1. The meeting notice shall indicate that the meeting will be all-virtual and a statement that the method by which the COA meets shall not be changed unless a new notice is advertised;
- 2. Public access to all-virtual public meetings is provided via electronic communication means;
- 3. The electronic communication means used allows the public to hear all members of the COA participating in the all-virtual public meeting and, when audio-visual technology is available, to see the members of the group as well;
- 4. A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the group if the audio or video transmission of the meeting fails. The COA shall monitor the means of communication during the meeting and recess until public access is restored if the transmission fails for the public;
- 5. A copy of the proposed agenda and all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of the COA for a meeting is made available to the public in electronic format at the same time that such materials are provided to members of the group;
- 6. The public is afforded the opportunity to comment through electronic means, including by way of written comments, at those public meetings when public comment is customarily received;
- 7. No more than two members of the COA are together in any one remote location unless that remote location is open to the public to physically access it;
- 8. If a closed session is held during an all-virtual public meeting, transmission of the meeting to the public resumes before the COA votes to certify the closed meeting as required by § 2.2-3712(D);

9. The COA shall not convene an all-virtual meeting more than (i) two (2) meetings or (ii) 50% of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. The COA shall not hold consecutive all-virtual meetings (revised on May 9, 2024); and

10. Minutes of all-virtual public meetings held by electronic communication means are taken as required by Code of Virginia § 2.2-3707 and include the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means and the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held. If a member's participation from a remote location is disapproved because such participation would violate this policy, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

This policy shall not govern an electronic meeting conducted to address a state of emergency declared by the Governor or the City Council. Any meeting conducted by electronic communication means under such circumstances shall be governed by the provisions of Code of Virginia § 2.2-3708.2.

Pickett Street Traffic Modifications Comments of the Alexandria Commission on Aging

The Commission on Aging's mission is to identify the needs of older adults, develop overall planning to meet these needs, evaluate serviced delivery plans as implemented and advocate on behalf of older persons.

The Commission is pleased to provide comments regarding proposed modifications to the Pickett Street corridor to enhance traffic and pedestrian safety.

These comments support the transportation goals in the Age Friendly Report 2019-2023 recently submitted to the City. One of the goals, very much in line with those of this project, is to assist the City to attain its Vision Zero goal of eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2028 through attainment of interim benchmarks. Chief among the interim benchmarks is pedestrian safety.

We note that respondents have identified a number of issues related to pedestrian safety in this corridor including too few pedestrian crossings, difficulty in crossing at signalized intersections, and speeding. These proposals can have a significant impact on the identified problems through implementation of the recommendations we reference.

The proposed modifications to the corridor provide for at least one pedestrian crossing refuge island, a leading pedestrian interval, and raised crosswalks.

Pedestrian automobile crashes and resulting injuries are serious for all pedestrians. These crashes are even more significant for older pedestrians

because serious often leads to permanent disability. For this reason the Commission supports the recommendations.

We have these specific implementation recommendations.

The PEDESTRIAN REFUGE ISLAND is especially important for older pedestrians who may need a safe spot to wait until they can complete the second phase of crossing. Islands should be illuminated or highlighted with streetlights, signs, and/or reflectors so that they are visible to motorists.

The LEADING PEDESTRIAN INTERVAL is a widely used pedestrian safety enhancement. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices offers guidance on signal timing when LPI is used. We urge the City to expand their use in this busy corridor. Older adults crossing intersections often walk more slowly than other pedestrians.

The RAISED CROSSWALK should be implemented with visibility enhancements including signage and lighting. Crossing at a grade with the sidewalk reduces the possibility of a fall. We recommend that this crosswalk be clearly marked with detectable warnings installed at the street edge for pedestrians with impaired vision.

Pedestrian improvements for safety are also needed in that DASH plans to increase frequency on Line 32 along Pickett Street. Transit riders need to safely access bus stops.

Finally, we firmly believe that police presence during the time of the route modifications will be very important for pedestrian safety. Specifically, we have observed that electric scooter riders routinely run traffic lights and stop signs and proceed at high speed on sidewalks.

We look forward to working to implement these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Schuster

Chair

Alexandria Commission on Aging