

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, May 21, 2024  
7:00 p.m., City Hall  
301 King Street, Room 1101  
Sister City Conference Room

Members Present

Lisl Brunner, Chair  
April Breslaw  
Iulia Fratila  
Matt Harris  
Elisabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson, Vice Chair  
Tom Reeder, Jr.  
David Rigsby, Vice Chair  
Jon Thompson

Staff Present

Anna McClure  
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez, Adm. Support

Members Excused

Marc Bendick  
Manisha Maniyar  
Megan Prince  
Conrad Sylvanus

Guests

Raul Pedroso, Interim Chief of Police  
Jamie Bridgeman, Acting Assistant Chief of Police  
Loren King, Sergeant, Office of Professional Responsibility  
Nathan Stancil, Sergeant, Office of Professional Responsibility

**1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair Lisl Brunner**

Chair Brunner called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Introductions were made.

**2. Approval of Minutes of the April Meeting**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Breslaw, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Commission approved the minutes of the April meeting. All Commissioners present voting aye.

**3. Guests- Raul Pedroso, Interim Chief of Police; Jamie Bridgeman, Acting Assistant Chief of Police**

Chair Brunner welcomed Interim Chief Pedroso and his staff. She expressed that, prior to the creation of the Community Policing Review Board, the Human Rights Commission and the Police Department had a long-standing relationship and discussions similar to those the Department now has with the Board. She also stated that the Commission would like to receive updates on the status of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the Board and hopes that there is room for communication and occasional meetings between the Human Rights Commission and the Police Department.

Interim Police Chief Pedroso remarked that he appreciated the invitation and said that he welcomes the involvement and participation of the Commission. He introduced Acting Assistant Chief of Police Jamie Bridgeman. He stated that, since Chief Hayes retired, he became the Interim Chief of Police and will be until the City selects a new Chief; he said that he will be applying for the position. He introduced Sergeant Nathan Stancil and Sergeant Loren King, who conducted a presentation for the Commission.

Interim Police Chief Pedroso stated that he has acquired a lot of information from businesspeople, residents, and young people, and what was evident to him was that the Police Department was not physically present and engaged within the community. He talked about the priorities and initiatives planned for this summer, all of which will be in place by August 1:

1. Starting in July, a new patrol schedule patrol that provides more consistency in standard coverage around the clock. He mentioned that they have hired 40 police officers in the last year and will have all of their supervisory positions filled as of June 8, 2024.
2. Starting in summer, a new Neighborhood Resource Unit will be launched.
3. There will be a neighborhood initiatives team.
4. There will be a Youth Resource Unit, who will be engaging with kids that are not in school. Officers will develop relationships with these kids to help keep them on the right path. They will partners with schools and non-profits that deliver services to young people.
5. There will more staffing and resources for recruitment and hiring of police officers, and leadership will be very involved in the hiring process. He said that, currently, not enough people are involved in that process.
6. More officers will be assigned to be detectives.

Sargeant Stancil conducted a presentation about the 2023 use of force directives. He also talked about the Police Department's sworn officer demographics. Sargeant Stancil talked about the use of force investigations for FY 2020-2023, broken down by the type of weapon and how many times it was used.

Sergeant Stancil reported on the breakdown of the race and gender of the citizens where force was used and gave the breakdown of the race and gender of the officers who used force. He reported that there were four complaints of excessive force - one was exonerated, two were unfounded, and one was sustained. He also reported on the number of dispatched calls for FY 2023.

Commissoners asked if the Community Policing Review Board reviews the uses of force investigations. Sergeant Stancil stated that they had not gotten to that point yet. Commissioner Harris expressed concern that there is a gap because the Community Policing Review Board is not reviewing the investigations. He said the Commission used to receive quarterly reports on use of force incidents from the Police Department, but no longer does. Sergeant King stated there is no MOU with the Community Policing Review Board, but they are working on it, and there is no MOU with the Human Commission. Sargeant King said that if the Chief asks him to report to the Commission, he will be happy to do it.

Chief Pedroso said it would be helpful to get a better understanding of what was previously presented, what the involvement of the Commission was, and what he Commission is looking for. He would like to make sure that they are in conflict with Council's intent for the Community Policing Review Board. Commissioner Harris asked Chief Pedroso to meet with him to go over the history of what the Commission did and what they would like to see.

Vice Chair Thompson asked for a demographic breakdown of patrol officers. Chief Pedroso stated that Alexandria has a very diverse police force. He said he would get an answer to the Commission.

Commissioner Harris asked how individuals know to report allegations of excessive use of force. Chief Pedroso stated that it happens in many ways. When an officer uses force, they have to report it by

policy; the individual against whom force was used can call and make a complaint. He said that they put out information about making complaints, which is also available on the website. Commissioner Breslaw asked what the result was of the one complaint that was sustained. Sergeant King stated that there was discipline issued, and it is still in the City's grievance process.

Chair Brunner asked how internal investigations work and about biased policing allegations. Sergeant King explained the investigation process when a use of force complaint comes in. He reported that they do not receive a lot of biased policing complaints; only one in the last year, which was unfounded.

Vice Chair Rigsby asked if body-worn cameras have made a difference in their investigations. Sergeant King stated that it prolongs the investigation, because there is a lot of footage to go through. He added that body-worn cameras are beneficial, because when people know that they are being recorded, they tend to act differently. Commissioner Harris asked if the State Police are still asked to conduct internal investigations. Chief Pedrosa stated that when there is a use of deadly force or in-custody death, Northern Virginia law enforcement agencies and an outside team would conduct the investigation.

Assistant Chief Bridgeman gave an overview of School Resource Officers (SROs). In May 2021, Council pulled SROs out of schools. In Fall 2021, they put them back. There are five SRO's: two at Alexandria City High School, one at Hammond, one at Minnie Howard, and one at GW Middle School. A Supervisor and Lieutenant oversee the SROs, and Acting Chief Bridgeman he oversees all of them.

He explained that SROs receive specialized training before they can be in schools. He reported on the number of calls for service at each school. He reported that officers are involved in community outreach, mentorship, and school programs. They also conduct threat assessments and special event investigations. The most common calls for service at the schools are assault, trespassing, and drugs. He said the Department has an interest in adding another officer to Minnie Howard in the new school year.

Chair Brunner asked what kind of communication he has with the parents, what kind of oversight he has over the SRO program, and how are complaints or incidents with students handled. Assistant Chief Bridgeman stated that officers cannot interview a student inside the school, unless they get the parent's permission. He added that school resource officers are not there to be aggressive; their role is to be part of the community, help, mentor, and make the school safer. Chair Brunner asked if there is any data regarding SROs. Assistant Chief stated that the schools provide that information, and they do quarterly statistics, which are provided to School Board members. Chief Pedrosa added that there is a very strong relationship between the Police and School administrations. He said they have not had an issue with SROs. Assistant Chief Bridgeman said there is an MOU between the Department and ACPS.

Chief Pedrosa said that Alexandria has a strong Police Department. He stated that Alexandria has great Police Officers that are doing incredible work. He added that they are training and supporting the young officers being promoted right now, so that they can do their jobs effectively.

Chief Pedrosa also talked about the Independent Policing Auditor Kim Neal and said that she plays a critical role and has access to everything that the Police Department does. She meets with him weekly. He added that Ms. Neal and the Board would be the investigating body once the MOU is in place.

The Commission had a brief discussion about having an MOU with the Police Department.

Commissioner Thompson asked if there is an agreement that the Commission can update and send to the

City Council for approval. Acting Director McClure stated that there is a draft of an agreement that can be updated. Commissioner Harris will meet with Chief Pedroso about the Commission's past role.

#### 4. **Executive Committee Meeting**

Commissioner Harris reported on the nominating committee - Commissioner Thompson expressed interest in being Chair and Vice Chair Palmer Johnson and Commissioner Bendick in being Vice Chairs.

#### 5. **Old & New Business**

##### Discussion of Electronic Participation Policy

Commissioner Reeder reported that the Commission on Aging had adopted an electronic meeting participation policy, incorporating the new statutory provisions. Acting Director McClure said there will be guidance from the City Attorney's office about electronic participation.

##### City Pride Celebration & Crosswalk unveiling

Acting Director McClure stated that the Pride Celebration is on June 1, 2024, at Market Square, at which the Office has a table. There will be an unveiling of the Rainbow Crosswalks, at which the Mayor will read the Pride Month proclamation and a rainbow-wrapped DASH bus will drive through the ribbon.

#### 6. **Liaison Reports**

Vice Chair Rigsby reported that he attended the Chairs of Boards and Commission meeting, at which new Assistant City Manager, Alethea Predeoux, was introduced. He added that they went over the budget highlights and priorities. He said there is a \$5,000 stipend for younger adults and youth members to serve on Boards and Commissions. He said they talked about what to do when the City Council does not respond to Commission recommendations.

Vice Chair Palmer Johnson reported that the Commission for Women will have a guest speaker, presenting on empowering women to serve. She also reported that Helen McIlvaine, Director of Housing came to follow up on the question, "can I afford to live in Alexandria," and the answer was still no.

Commissioner Reeder reported that there will be a Senior Health and Fitness Fair at the Lee Center and there will be Senior Law Day.

7. **Public Comment** – There were no public comments.

#### 8. **Announcements /Adjournment**

Commissioner Breslaw she was introduced to the Director of the Legal Aid Justice Center, who would like to present to the Commission, in late summer or fall to talk, about what she is doing.

Acting Director McClure announced that the June meeting will be at the Black History Museum and that the ACPD awards are going to be held on June 26.

Commissioners congratulated Commissioner Reeder for receiving the Lois Van Valkenburgh Excellence in Aging Award.

**MOTION:** Adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chair Palmer Johnson/Commissioner Harris **PASSED** unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.