

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Thursday, March 13, 2025, 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Mark Center

**- Del Pepper Community Center, 4850 Mark Center Drive – Alexandria VA 22311
9th Floor**

Members Present:

Chair, Michael Schuster, Vice Chair, Barbara D'Agostino, Secretary, Ana Rivas, Alan Dinsmore, Barbara Huelat, DT Oliver, Jane M. King, Jim Lindsay, Kathleen Demik, Kimberly Koch, Michele McLaughlin, Ray Biegum, Victoria Rutson, William Thomas Reeder, Jessica Lefevre

Members Excused:

Jennifer Stowe, Marshal Hespe

Members Unexcused:

None

Members Appearing Remotely:

Jenn Stowe

James Bruen

Canek Aguirre

Liaisons Present:

Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center

Guests Present:

Bob Eiffert, Housing Committee; Jan Macidull, Housing Committee; Lois Steele, Espirita, Bullard

Staff Members Present:

Chris Moore, Ashley Johnson, Pam Austin, Espirita Bullard

Call to Order – 4:32 pm.

Approval of Agenda – Change in Agenda by Michael Schuster to include Espirita in the conversation with the Economic Security and Civic Engagement Subcommittee, after it was approved

Approval of Thursday, February 13, 2025, Minutes – Approved

Alexandria Police Department Liaison Report – Sgt. Ian Torrance

Kathleen Demik brought up to the increase in crime in the City to the police department. Sgt Torrance stated that the department is under-staffed and he will send the commission a report on the recruiting plans for the city which includes signing bonuses, interviewing at colleges and universities and job fairs. Also, the employment process is very rigorous with background checks and other exams which disqualify many candidates.

Special Presentation: Esperita Bullard, M.S., PMP, Division Chief, Customer Relations/Center for Economic Support: “SNAP and Medicaid”

- She was introduced by Ashley Johnson.
- She has been with the department for over 25 years and provided a Power Point Presentation.
- She reviewed the DCHS Leadership Team.
- Aging Division is part of the Center for Adult Services.
- Programs include infancy development and spans through to end-of-life stages.
- Espirita is part of the Center for Economic Support and it administers public benefits such as Medicaid and SNAP, rental and utilities services, employment training for 50+ years.
- She described the other programs as well.
- Her division also deals with Customer Relations which provides guidance on public benefits applications and access to programs for Food Security such as SNAP and SNAP Outreach, Farmer’s Market, Food Distribution, and determines the gaps in the city for food security. Currently they are hiring a coordinator for Food Security Coordination and the big focus is on reaching 60+ individuals to get access to these programs; it’s a group that is underserved and in need. It also provides access to dental, vision and hearing programs and programs for households that don’t qualify for other types of health insurance (i.e., Medicaid, etc.).
- She provided the specific qualifications for individuals to get benefits for SNAP and Medicaid benefits which include – income and resources, HH composition, Citizen and Immigration status, living expenses, medical bills; SNAP also requires an interview. She discussed the timelines for processing the applications – from 30 to 45 days. There is a 7-day expedited SNAP application.
- She discussed the Federal Spending. SNAP is 100% federally funded. Also Medicaid is 50% federally funded and 50% state funded. She discussed the negative impact of cuts that may occur at the Federal level. It will impact our community, specifically from the Medicaid expansion pool. Michael Schuster provided more details specifically to the funding from the state and the fall out if the federal funding for Medicaid expansion happens. Espirita did mention that if the cuts to Medicaid Expansion happens, then the Virginia’s General Assembly will meet to address the cuts and what will need to be done in the state.
- Barbara who heads the Aging Commission’s Outreach Committee said that they could assist the City and Senior Services of Alexandria in the outreach for Food Security. Espirita will want to make those connections.
- A Commission member asked specific questions about eligibility to Medicaid and Medicaid Expansion and Michael Schuster provided an explanation as to Medicaid received by individuals between ages 18 to 65. In Alexandria, it will impact around 1200 individuals.
- Jessica LeFevre talked about the proposed Committee on Food Security and Civic Engagement and how the committee wants to increase the reach to get fresh produce to older adults. Espirita talked about within the department a closet with food, but she was talking about non-perishable foods. Michael asked if Alexandria has what Arlington has

which is a center to pick up fresh foods that are provided by restaurants and other distribution sources, and Espirita did not know of any program like that in Alexandria.

- Jan Macidull asked a questions on how to navigate the City government center when someone is seeking public assistance or any kind of assistance. Ashley said the reception at the lobby should assist but it is common for folks to go to the wrong floor, however the employees are there to help and she apologized for any bad experience. Jan also asked if there were alternative approaches to apply and not just online applications, since some residents may not have the equipment to apply online. For example, a lot of older adults do not have computers to apply online. Espirita stated that it is not fully automated and there are paper applications. She also said they are doing surveys to collect data on how to best serve the community. The state wants everything to be automatic, but it is important that we, at the city level, to explain that all online and automatic approach may not work for the older adult community
- Ana also made a comment about the Alexandria resident seeking services for a family member moving to Virginia from Florida. Ashley explained that the Florida older person was not eligible for the program because of lack of established residency. You need to live here for 90 days in Virginia before you receive services.
- Jessica expressed that understanding how the programs works and the way the federal and state program work together to provide services is difficult. Therefore, determining the gap for services is difficult to determine.
- Espirita provided a booklet with all the SNAP program information.

Liaison Reports –

Division of Aging and Adult Services – Chris Moore

- Mentioned that we got funding for Caregiver programs for all groups and it will be launched soon. Staffer for Bernie Sander staffer is looking for seniors who get services to chat with them.
- Ashley discussed a Goodwin House Foundation project that is to put nightlights at Annie B. Rose House to help prevent falls for the building residents. The lights are magnetic and motion sensor.
- National Health Care Decisions Day is April 16th to assist on selecting health care proxies and to encourage people to begin conversations about their wishes for care through the end of life.
- March is natural nutrition month and Aging Services is providing treats.

Human Rights Commission – Tom Reeder

- The Commission discussed that the city should still use the DEI terminology despite Federal efforts to eliminate the terminology and the federal DEI programs.
- Heard testimony to encourage the City from divesting from certain investment.

AHA – Bob Eiffert

- Saturday Happy Hour at ALATE housing for seniors to tour resident units located at 1112 First Street.

AARP – Jane King

- She announced the several AARP programming events for the month.

NVAN – Michael Schuster

- Holding a meeting on March 18th to talk about the budget and what will move on the legislature in 2026.
- Legislative Breakfast meeting will be October 3rd and Lois will be on the committee to represent the Commission.
- April will begin brainstorming for Richmond for FY 2027.
- Important to watch what is going on and to get ready for the upcoming year.
- The federal cuts mean the gaps will have to be filled at the state level.
- He encourages members of the commission to participate in the March 18th meeting or in April for the legislative brainstorming meeting.

St. Martins de Porres Senior Center – Juanita Balenger

- Discussed all the events, specifically Bingocize (it incorporates exercise with bingo and prevents falls)
- Lee Center activities
- Representatives from the Duke Street Corridor specifically near Interstate 395 will report to the seniors.
- High school students are volunteering a lot to meet service hours which offers inter-generational activities.
- Age Friend Presentation will also happen.
- Dental and eye health programs will happen.
- Also mentioned the funeral of a member of the center.

VHC Health (formerly, Virginia Hospital Center) – Cathy Turner

- Not present

Commission for Women – Jenn Stowe

- Not Present

Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria

- New rep stated that that their winter update for their plan for 2025 that she will share with Ashley to share with the commission.

Public Health Advisory Commission

- Not present

Commission on Persons with Disabilities –

- Not present

Senior Center @ Charles Houston –

- Hired a new manager and it is Pam Guerra, who is back to take on the same position.
- Described all the activities and women's month

Senior Services of Alexandria – Marshall Hespe

- Not present

Alexandria Commission on Employment, ACE –

- Not present

Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance, NVFPA – Marshall Hespe

- Not present

Arlington Legislative Committee – Michael Schuster

- No report

Arlington Commission on Aging –

- No report

Successful Aging Committee –

- No report

Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities –

- No report

Alexandria Adult Day Services Center, ADSC – Darrell Wesley

- Hired new therapeutic leader and they are hiring another staff person.
- The community seniors are participating in Irish Step dance event and police department is providing education on scams.

Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee, AHAAC – Jan Macidull

- There were no agenda items that impacted older Alexandrians.
- Discussed affordable housing plan at the medical center on Beauregard.
- Good Shepherd Housing are looking to do more work in the City of Alexandria and looking to renovate one unit in a condo to assist an older person, but it was not classified as a senior issue.
- Housing 2040 Public input will be coming up.

Executive Committee Report**2. Discussion / Action Items****Age Friendly Plan – Update**

- Had mini session at the different housing buildings and feedback is different from the different locations.
- Collecting the data and give to DT
- The survey collection will end at the end of March.
- The information will be disseminated to committees and give recommendations to share with Jane.
- There will be overlap with the information and we need to work across committees.

Special Workgroup on food security for older Alexandrians

- Jessica said that topics were covered with Espirita.

Briefing on March 10th Public Hearing on the City's proposed FY 26 Budget

- Jessica participated and presented. No questions were asked at the hearing.

Approval of final budget testimony – initially approved in October 2024.

- Michael asked if anyone had any questions about the testimony.
- Ashley mentioned that a testimonial was provided by an older adult that stated the stigma in getting employment as an older adult.
- Final approved was made for the testimony

Excellence in Aging Awards – May 13, 2025 – City Hall

- Barbara presented that nominations are due on the 28th.
- It is being advertised through print media and social media.

Future Speakers

- Demographer for the City
- Alan Dinsmore suggested a staffer from the Transportation Department. Michael said May or June would be available.

Committee Updates

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

- Barbara discussed the new facility that is being developed near Goodwin House. It will be similar to Goodwin House. It is called The View Alexandria and it will include skilled nursing care and memory care. It will be open around 2029, but no talk about real affordable housing. It will be more like discounted services.
- They also discussed other senior housing that are projected to open in the area.

Outreach Committee – Co-Chairs, Marshall Hespe & Barbara D'Agostino

- Meeting scheduled on March 20th

Transportation – Chair, Alan Dinsmore

- Need more participation from other members and are meeting next week.

Economic Security and Civic Engagement – Chair, Jessica Lefevre

- Met last Thursday and Jim is working forward with Entrepreneur program for older workers beginning on April 19th and the Shark Tank will begin in June. Since so many folks were let go from federal government, then this is getting a lot of interest in Fairfax County and City of Alexandria.
- DT working on program on how to coordinate SNAP and getting access to grocery stores that accept it and connecting with DASH services to make it easy for older recipients to reach these locations.

Health /Dementia Friendly Committee – Chair, Barbara Huelat

- Meeting on April 10th and virtual right before the virtual COA meeting

Other Business

- April will begin to form nomination committee and then we need the nominations.
- Michael is looking for volunteers for the nomination committee to make it work smoothly
- Tom Reeder stated that the Senior Services of Alexandria Gala is on March 29th and Jane King will be honored.

New Business

Public comments – no Comments.

Adjournment – 6:30 PM

Next Commission Meeting: Thursday, April 10, 2025 – 4 PM, VIRTUAL

Executive Committee Meeting: March 31, 2025– 1:30 p.m. VIRTUAL

NVAN Meetings: April 15, 2025 9:30 – Virtual – Host: Legislative Brainstorming

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