

COMMISSION ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Meeting minutes – April 2024

Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 7 pm.

Location: City Hall, 301 King Street, Chet & Sabra Avery Room 2000

Members present: Jeff Pool, Alex Radt, Megan Prince, Rachel Dixon, Kristen Creighton, Michael Kamin, Anna Forster (Huayra), Lawrence Lewis, Caitlin Fitzsimmons, and Robbie Woodson.

Members excused: Tom Valluzzi, Alex Sprague.

Members absent: Justin Beland, Robert Ludke.

City Staff: Miladis Martinez Gutierrez, (OHR).

Guest speakers: Avani Hariprashad, Program Coordinator – Office of Population Health, and Martine Hippolyte, Health Equity Program Manager (AHD).

Call to Order by Chair Poole: Chair Pool called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Introductions were made. Chair Pool welcomed newly sworn commissioner Caitlin Fitzsimmons.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons introduced herself and said that she is a social worker by training and currently works at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). She said that her work has been with children and families with their needs.

Approval of Agenda: Commissioner Woodson made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Kamin, and approved by the Commission body.

Approval of March Minutes: Commissioner Kamin made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Woodson, and the March minutes were approved as amended.

Public comment: Doris Ray gave an update on the ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia (ECNV) and said that they are providing new training, workshops, and webinars, including some programs for youth transitioning from secondary school. She mentioned that this Fair Housing month and said that there are several free training courses on Fair Housing Training Act provisions; she also said that there will be a training sponsored by the NAACP of the Arlington over to next year; it was not specific to the building code, but rather to the affordable dwelling unit program. She also reported that the Attorney General of the United States has approved a final rule under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure the accessibility of web content and mobile applications (apps) for people with disabilities. She reported that it appears that Virginia is going to be providing money for the budget shortfall for WAMATA. She encouraged the Commission to ask the Delegate to do a substitute Bill that would require State Building code officials to amend the building code to require 10% of all units in any multifamily newly built buildings or substantially renovated building to increase the affordable dwelling unit program to 10%.

Guest Presentation: Avani Hariprashad and Martine Hippolyte introduced themselves and reported that they had conducted a survey of 900 Alexandria residents about home health issues and reported that the four top health home issues are: pests, smoke, mold, and clutter. Martine and Avani conducted an activity with the Commission. The Commission had the opportunity to vote on one of the four topics that most affect Alexandria residents and the Commission decided that it was cluttered. The Commission had the opportunity to identify the signs of clutter and what causes people to collect stuff. Some of the ideas the Commission came up with are: Mental health effects, falling or hurting themselves, not having company over, and limited walking spaces, and it causes mold and pests. The Commission came up with the following solutions: symptoms of protection, emotional comfort, finding a cleaner to help them clean, addressing mental health issues, and providing gift cards as an incentive to help them declutter. Chair Poole thanked Avani Hariprashad and Martine Hippolyte for being here tonight.

Chair's report: Chair Pool encouraged commissioners to continue to share the ACPD awards nomination and application information. He reported that the Commission had received a proclamation recognizing April as Autism Acceptance Month. He also talked about a book that he had purchased on Disability Pride and suggested to the commissioners to buy it.

Committee reports:

- **Executive Committee** – Chair Pool reported that the Executive Committee had not met.
- **Legislative Committee:** Commissioner Sprague was not present.
- **Housing committee:** Commissioner Creighton reported that regarding the budget; there is a lot of advocacy work going on from different groups trying to get different parts of the City's budget fully funded. She also reported that the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance has sent talking points to the City Council in conjunction with a lot of other groups and there are things like funding the housing trust funds, which is to be able to meet the affordable housing target that they do have and they are advocating for adding the \$12 million dollars for the Housing Trust Fund. She also reported that different organizations advocating at City Council meetings to add \$10 million to create a voucher program for families earning less than 40% of AMI. Commissioner Creighton suggested if Commissioners want to speak at City Council Public hearings and advocate for some of these things. Chair Pool encouraged Commissioners to attend the public hearings and give their testimony. Commissioner Creighton will draft talking points and send them to Namood Khan to be forwarded to the Commission so that they can take it and read the public hearings when they go.

Commissioner Creighton shared the idea of having a book fair for people with disabilities for Disabilities Pride month. Commissioner Radt stated that in DC the Martin Luther King Library the Center for Disability and a bunch of disability programming are great, but in the City of Alexandria there is not. Commissioner Creighton suggested recommending that the libraries and bookstores do a display and maybe have a list of suggested books. Commissioner Forster suggested having a podcast list as part of the library catalog. Commissioner Radt suggested reaching out to the libraries and asking what books they have for disability pride. After an extensive discussion, the following Commissioners will be working on preparing a list of books and contacting the libraries:

Commissioner Dixon, Commissioner Radt, and Vice Chair Prince (Action item). Vice Chair Prince suggested adding it to the agenda for next month's meeting.

- **Accessible business committee:** Commissioner Woodson reported that the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce is interested in trying to do something like that.
- **ACPD Awards Committee:** Vice-Chair Prince shared that she has been distributing flyers and the committee has contacted newspapers too. Chair Pool said that it was published in the Zebra newspaper.

Liaison Reports:

- **Human Rights Commission:** Vice Chair Prince provided a brief report from the Commission's meeting and reported that the Commission had approved a recommendation to the City Council. She reported that the Commission is trying to follow up with the Principal at Alexandria High School to figure out a potential solution to gender neutral bathroom issue.
- **AHAAC:** Commissioner Sprague was not present.

Members report:

- Commissioner Radt reported that she drafted a proclamation on Disability Pride Month using the template that the City has. and a display of flags in July.
- Chair Pool would read the proclamation that Commissioner Radt wrote.
- Upon a motion by Commissioner Creighton, seconded by Vice Chair Prince the Commission approved and will submit a proclamation recognizing July as the Disability Pride Month. The motion passed unanimously.
- Vice Chair Prince suggested tabling at the Pride Month celebration at Market Square.
- **Adjournment:** Motion: Upon a motion by Vice Chair Prince, seconded by Commissioner Creighton and approved unanimously by the Commission.

The meeting concluded at 9:06 pm.