

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES

Meeting: Thursday, April 10, 2025, 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Virtual

Members Attending Virtually:

Chair, Michael Schuster, Vice Chair, Barbara D’Agostino, Secretary, Ana Rivas, Alan Dinsmore, Barbara Huelat, Canek Aguirre, DT Oliver, Gerri Wallace, James Bruen, Jane M. King, Jennifer Stowe, Jim Lindsay, Kathleen Demik, Kimberly Koch, Marshall Hespe, Michele McLaughlin, Ray Biegum, Victoria Rutson, William Thomas Reeder

Members Excused:

Jessica Lefevre

Members Unexcused:

Joy Kone

Liaisons Present:

Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center; Darrell Wesley, Adult Day Services Center; Cynthia Hurley, Police Department; Pamela Guerra & Gaynelle Diaz, Senior Center @ Charles Houston

Guests Present:

Jan Macidull, AHAAC; Jean Ann Mayhan, Public Health Advisory Commission; Tori Steele; Robert Stackhouse and Katherine Clardy Key, Office of Performance Analytics

Staff Members Present:

Chris Moore, Ashley Johnson, Pam Austin, Jackie Lainez, Division of Aging and Adult Services

Call to Order – 4:00 pm

Approval of Agenda – added the Proclamation for Older Americans Month (OAM) and also have a response to the Federal changes that will impact the state programs such as Medicaid, SNAP and other programs. **Approved:** the changes to the Agenda.

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

Special Presentation: Alexandria City Demographer and Age Friendly Survey Results

The Presentation was provided with slides by Robert Stackhouse and Katherine Clardy Key – Performance Analysts with the City of Alexandria, Office of Performance Analytics; and separately, DT Oliver, Commission with the Commission on Aging.

Chris Moore introduced Robert and Kathryn. They did a report on the 2024 Resident Survey with a “Aging Deep Dive” presentation. This is important with the Age Friendly Survey being revised.

Robert introduced himself and stated that this survey is completed every two years to see how Alexandria residents are doing and looking at what the city is doing holistically. Topics covered are

police services, public information services, street cleaning and recreational opportunities. Survey is conducted by an external vendor to get a representative sample of the entire city. See, https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-11/2024alexandria_findingsreport_final_1.pdf.

Data was gathered through a 1 to 5 scale with 5 being very satisfied and 1 being no satisfied. They also gathered the age of survey takers to better understand the survey results.

He provided a very thorough slide presentation with the data. These minutes will reflect the big takeaways.

Citywide Results – Overwhelmingly positive

90% of residents said they are satisfied with Alexandria as a place to live

77% residents are satisfied with the sense of safety in Alexandria overall

3 out of 4 residents expect to stay in Alexandria in 5 years.

Other Notable Positive Results –

85% satisfied with public library services

79% satisfied with Trash/garbage collection services

77% satisfied with Museums/Historical sites

75% satisfied with Alexandria parks, open space or greenspace

75% satisfied with city sponsored events

67% satisfied with opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities

Residents were concerned with the following:

16% satisfied with cost of living

23% satisfied with affordable housing

29% satisfied with managing growth and development

31% satisfied with stormwater management and flood control

Aging Population Results:

Highest Satisfaction Rates for older adults -

Overall, households with older adults report 5% higher satisfaction with overall customer service by the City.

Oldest residents (65+) have double the satisfaction with cost of living and affordable housing

Resident over 55+ have 10% higher satisfaction with retiring in the city

91% of residents (65+) satisfied with 911 response

92% of residents (65+) satisfied with trash and garbage collection

Residents 55+ more satisfied with childcare and school than city averages

Lower Satisfaction Rates for older adults –

43% of residents 65+ satisfied with condition of sidewalks

Younger population more satisfied than older population with safety related services

13% dissatisfaction with parks and open spaces

14% dissatisfied with overall natural environment – all other age groups rated higher
Fewer than 1 in 4 respondents over 65+ were satisfied with the city's management and plan for growth.
39% of residents 65+ report contact with elected officials
This group is the least likely to use Alex311 to reach city government with concerns and questions

Comparing older adults' activity with the rest of the Alexandria population, both groups are very involved. Except older adults are less likely to use park, participate in city organized events, and use Alex311 services

Also interesting that over 40% of the respondents were 55+.

Mr. Stackhouse took questions from the Commission.

Questions from the Commission Members included positive remarks about the information and members would like a copy of the slides.

Mr. Stackhouse said he can breakdown the data to follow the categories in the Age Friendly Plan. He also explained he did not use ethnic and race breakdown, because it increased the margin of error. But he said if the Commission has a specific question based on race and ethnicity, they can look into that information to determine if there are disparities between different racial and ethnic groups.

Mr. Stackhouse stated that the data did differentiate between homeowners and renters. He showed the breakdown and 66% were homeowners and 33% were renters who responded to the survey. Found that residents who lived here for 5 years or less, were more satisfied in living in the community.

Mr. Stackhouse said that the last time they did the survey was before Covid in 2019. Since then the survey has changed to more actionable questions and also the vendor is different. To compare the data would be difficult because there are few questions that they can compare directly. But generally everything is about the same, but very hard to do a rigorous comparison. But in the future we expect to do be able to compare to previous years.

Stackhouse reported that older adult household income compared to rest of the population will be information he will need to analyze.

DT reported on the data collected from the Age Friendly Plan Survey to this City Survey. This was represented as a slide presentation and stated it is still in draft form. The Age Friendly Plan didn't have as many questions but it's good to look at the side by side with the information collected by Stackhouse.

Overall Finding from the 277 respondents to the Age Friendly Survey. Plan –
Majority of respondents were in Zip Codes 22314 and 22304

Topics with positive responses – accessibilities to grocery stores, pharmacy, essential services, safety in neighborhoods, accessibility to parks and public spaces and quality of health care resources.

Topics with dissatisfaction – participation in social/recreational activities, safety in neighborhood at nighttime, affordability in housing, work opportunities for older adults, ease of finding information on community resources.

22305 Arlandria – had less respondents and had more negative respondents but only 19 residents who took the survey. We need more information from that area.

Officer Hurley reported for Sgt Iran Torrance –

Violent Crime is down, but they are seeing an up-tick in retail theft, but they are coming up with a plan to actively work on that.

Kathleen Demik commented on the larceny problem in the city and called it “horrific” but did not want to disparage the police department because they are understaffed. She gave example about female employee from CVS who was assaulted behind Firehook Bakery on Washington Street but she said alleged attacker was not prosecuted. This was a second attack and Ms. Demik believes the problem is with the City Attorney. City Councilmember Canek Aguirre stated that violent crime is down and larceny is up. He corrected Ms. Demik and said it is the Commonwealth Attorney who prosecutes crimes in the City, not the City Attorney’s Office. Canek asked that Officer Hurley reach out to the Manager of the CVS to discuss what happened with CVS employee who was allegedly attacked twice in the last six months.

Liaison Reports

Division of Aging and Adult Services – Chris Moore announced that the federal Administration for Community Living which administers the Older American’s Act programs was dissolved. Therefore, the folks that provide the Area Agencies on Aging, like DAAS, technical support and ensure that funding is received from the Federal government were let go. So they are assessing the impact. As for Virginia’s General Assembly, the budget had allocated \$750K to all area agencies on aging across the state. The Governor had removed that in his budget amendments but the General Assembly put it back it. The Governor has until May 2, 2025 to decide whether to accept the General Assembly’s changes.

Ashley reported that on April 16th - National Healthcare Decision Day, the city will hold their first recognition and outreach effort to educate everyday individuals on advanced directives and health care proxies. Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV) will be there to answer questions about wills. Information will be provided in several languages.

April 29th – Arlington-Alexandria No Wrong Door will meet and provide legislative updates. Flyer was sent out to the Commission with more details.

Age Friendly Plan – All the mini sessions were completed, and on April 16th we have a virtual meeting scheduled that will be an open forum for all.

INOVA Alexandria Hospital – not present

Human Rights Commission – Tom Reeder

Focusing on potential threats and intimidation of Alexandria residents by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers. There have been “know your rights” training. There is a rapid response hotline. If you see Immigration Enforcement interaction not going the way you think it should to contact the hotline. Also meeting with the Mayor to discuss the issues and asked if we have any questions about Human Rights and aging. Any concerns please bring it up to Tom

AHA – Bob Eiffert - not present

AARP – Jane King – AARP holding events on Scams, Pet Adoption event

NVAN – Michael Schuster

Brainstorming meeting on April 15th – looking for recommendation for NVAN Budget Platform. In May the ideas will be put in a format and then a vote will take place. The NVAN Legislative Breakfast is on October 3rd.

St. Martins de Porres Senior Center – Juanita Balenger

Report was sent to the Commission. Described the activities with high school students, and other activities. Will be closed for Easter holiday, but will get out meal boxes for those days.

VHC Health (formerly, Virginia Hospital Center) – No representative

Commission for Women – Jenn Stowe - Had to leave early. Had no updates

Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria - No representative -

Public Health Advisory Commission - No representative

Commission on Persons with Disabilities – We have a volunteer as a liaison – Vicky Rutson

Senior Center @ Charles Houston – Pam Guerra – Talked about celebration for Mardi Gras, Saint Patrick’s, presentations were held and museum trips and a dance for older adults.

Senior Services of Alexandria – Marshall Hespe

Delivering Meals on Wheels with the City Council and other folks. Had a lot of visibility. Gala was held. Spring to Action was this week. Have told all recipients that they don’t plan to be affected by the Federal changes. They don’t want to create too much fear among their clients. Also increasing their

clientele with lower income and more immigrant population. Working new partnership with Alive and Capital Food Bank – and to work with 50 older adults. Will offer meals from Capital Food Bank. Once it formally starts, he will share the information with the Commission.

Alexandria Commission on Employment, ACE – No update.

Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance, NVFPA – Marshall Hespe – National Fall Prevention Alliance is doing a lot of training this month. And the head of that program would like to speak to our Commission.

Arlington Legislative Committee – Michael Schuster – no update

Arlington Commission on Aging – no update

Successful Aging Committee – no update

Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities – no update

Alexandria Adult Day Services Center, ADSC – Darrell Wesley - Had a lot of student volunteers. Talked about their gardening programs, few trips and performances attended by older adults.

Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee, AHAAC – Jan Macidull

Kathy Puskar, Attorney, gave the update on the View – the new independent living/assisted living development near Goodwin House. They are coming back to the Commission on Aging before they go back with their proposal. They discussed about having seven affordable housing units. She gave dates on the different meetings that will be held and the meetings are available on the Office of Housing website.

Executive Committee Report - Discussion / Action Items

Age Friendly Plan – Next Steps – Jane King and DAAS Staff

Jane reported we are still on track and all committees are working as planned. Ashely encouraged folks to attend one of the last meetings.

By-Laws Changes – The changes were submitted to the members of the Commission. Looking for flexibility for leadership commission. Substantive change will be to have co-chairs to give folks more flexibility. The rest are cosmetic word changes.

A motion to approve the by-law changes was approved by the Commission.

Comments on Housing 2040 Master Plan

Gerri went to the last meeting. Meeting was held very similarly to Age Friendly Meetings. They were gathering the information. Michael said one of the issues for us is affordable assisted living which is a big issue and getting set asides in specific new buildings. The second area would be state legislation

to give us more tools to address the high rates of evictions in Alexandria. We want to give Alexandria more accessibility to assisted living affordability.

A motion was taken to submit the comments to the Housing 2040 Master plan – specifically on affordable assisted living and evictions.

Motion to submit comments was approved by the Commission.

Older Americans Month Proclamation

On May 13th when we have the Aging on Excellence Awards we want to have a Proclamation that will be read before the City Council session. [The date has been changed to May 17th – a Saturday morning.] Would like to have the proclamation read by City Councilmember Canek. At the federal level it probably will not be held since the Administration for Community Living was eliminated. The theme is ***Flip the Script*** – talking about aging in a more positive light and talk less about “senior citizens” and using stereotypes of older persons. Ashley shared the screen with the Proclamation and get the commission approval to have it submitted – Chris would lead the way on that.

A motion to approve the draft and presenting the proclamation to the City Council was approved by the Commission

Response to potential federal and state safety net funding – Jessica Lefevre wanted to discuss this but she was not able to attend the meeting. Jim added that the Shark Tank program can help older workers who lost their jobs to start their own businesses.

Excellence in Aging Awards Update – Barbara thanked the Awards Committee which picked the awardees; and she contacted the winners.

Nomination Committee: Jessica chair the nomination committee. She met with the committee. Folks can volunteer for the positions.

Future Speakers

Committee Updates

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

Meets on May 21st.

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

Met on March 20th and meets every other month. And talked about the updates on LGBTQ and SNAP program. Espirita Bullard also spoke to them and looking for help with the outreach to the community.

Transportation – Chair, Alan Dinsmore

Next meeting is scheduled for the 16th.

Economic Security and Civic Engagement – Chair, Jessica Lefevre

Concerned about the budget cuts and also the Shark Tank. Michael said the is talking to AARP state and national and maybe we can be involved with the updates and advocacy information.

Health /Dementia Friendly Committee – Chair, Barbara Huelat

Had a meeting today with 9 attendees – a record for the Committee. Discussed the data from the public health survey and all the surveys we got today.

Other Business- no comments

New Business – no comments

Public comments – no comments

Adjournment – 6pm.

Next Commission Meeting: Thursday, May 8, 2025 – 4:30 PM, Mark Center

Executive Committee Meeting: April 28, 2025– 1:30 p.m. In-person – Mark Center

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

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