

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

MINUTES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025

301 KING STREET

Rm. 2000

7 PM

ATTENDANCE: T. Nicole Hutchinson; Elisabeth Palmer Johnson; Allison Heiser Kafi Joseph; Lexi White; Shelley Brown; Vanita Datta; Yvette Jiang; Eva Bastianon; Jennifer Beatty; and Krystle Bransky

VIRTUAL: Hope Nelson and Kafi Joseph

ABSENT: Nichelle Johnson Billups

STAFF:

Debra Evans

LaTanya Chinagorom

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Lexi White, former Commission Chair

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

First Vice Chair Jiang welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

PRESENTATION FROM KIRSTIN “HOPE” SIEVERS, CITY OF ALEXANDRIA’S OPIOID WORKGROUP

Hope Sievers, Opioid Response Coordinator, provided a presentation on the Opioid Workgroup, services and data. **Action Item: Ms. Sievers will share talking points and will look into the Alexandria Jail tracking and barriers to recovery/housing data by gender. She will also provide information to assist the Commission with the Status of Women Report.** Ms. Sievers can be reached at Kirstin.Sievers@alexandriava.gov.

PRESENTATION FROM NATALIE TALIS, ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Natalie Talis, Population Health Manager, provided a presentation on “Alexandria’s State of Health: Making Impactful Change.” **Action Item: Ms. Talis wants to recruit Commissioners to join a coalition under the Community Health and Improvement Plan Coalitions.** The next meetings are:

- Wednesday, November 5, 2025, 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m., Patrick Henry Recreation Center (Landmark/Van Dorn)

- Mental Wellness – Oct 29th, 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., Del Pepper Center, 4850 Mark Center Drive, 1st floor, Café
- Arlandria – TBD (May use another model where citizens are more comfortable)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Second Vice Chair Heiser announced that tonight is her last time serving on the Commission due to her role on her job. She will work closely as a volunteer with the Commission and work with Commissioner Joseph on membership and volunteers. **Action Item: Ms. Heiser will hand over social media info. Action Item: Commissioners were asked to let Ms. Heiser know if they are interested in walking through social media with her.**

Maxanne Witkin and Kendra Green resigned due to personal capacity and commitments.

One uncontested youth member is being voted on in the October 14th City Council meeting.

ELECTION

Commissioner Palmer Johnson is representing the Nominating Committee. She shared that the bylaws do not cover the situation with former Chair Lexi White. In the bylaws, it states that if the Chair resigns or leaves, the First Vice Chair would be Chair. First Vice Chair Jiang declined to the position. The positions of Chair and Second Vice Chair are currently vacant.

The Nominating Committee will poll Commissioners for the positions of Chair and Second Vice Chair. If the Nominating Committee receives only one name for each position, no election is needed. All can nominate from the floor as well. If the meeting is fully virtual, the Commission can vote. **Action Item: Commissioner Palmer Johnson will send an email asking for nominations on October 14th. Action Item: Commissioners were asked to contact Commissioner Palmer Johnson with nominations and to submit their own names if they would like to self-nominate.**

The slate of officers will be presented at the November 2025 meeting. Commissioner Palmer Johnson suggested that the new Chair may want to set up a committee to oversee the bylaws regarding nominations for information purposes. **Action Item: A new date will be set for the November Commission meeting. First Chair Jiang will send a doodle poll.**

The Commission has a total of 4 vacancies, with one being filled on October 14th and the other 3 will be filled in November.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT OUT ON PROGRESS

Commissioner Datta reported that on the Fairfax County roundtables – they plan to hold them in December 2025. Former Commissioner Witkin had previously written to them. A representative asked that they attend. Commissioner Datta will follow up with Fairfax County soon and plans to attend the December roundtables. **Action Item: Commissioners were asked to inform Commissioner Datta if they want to be involved.**

Subcommittees for the Commission for Women were previously divided based on advocacy functions.

A Proclamation will be made for Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October) and to honor breast cancer survivors on Saturday, October 18th at 9:30 a.m. All were invited to join the event.

Thanks were extended to those who volunteered at the NAACP meeting

Volunteer Subcommittee – Two people volunteered through Volunteer Alexandria to assist with the update of the Status on Women Report. The subcommittee needs more volunteers to work on the Report. **Action Items: Commissioner Joseph will create an internal alert on Commissioner's time in services. Commissioner Joseph will look into refresher training on policies and opportunities.**

Event and Community Outreach Subcommittee – The Commission for Women has an official invitation to walk the Scottish Bridge on December 6th. A banner or sign is needed. The sign will be used for the walk and for the Mental Wellness event and tabling at the Farmer's Market. **Action Item: Commissioner Beatty will send a poll to Ms. Evans who will then send it to the entire Commission.**

Farmers' Market – It was noted that working with coalitions would expand community outreach.

Planning and collaboration – Commissioner Palmer Johnson, Bastianon, and Hutchinson = Carpenter's Shelter volunteer service will be from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Carpenter's Shelter.

Commissioner Bastianon suggested sending an email once per week to notify the commission of upcoming events for future weeks (up to a week and a half).

Domestic Violence Awareness Month's Purple Out Day – **Action Item: Commissioners were asked to take pics of themselves and post online. A link will be sent out to Commissioners for Instagram and Facebook posts from Second Vice Chair. Commissioners will also send their pics to Ms. Evans for posting on the City's social media.**

Legislative Priorities were sent out.

City Manager's Budget Letter for FY 2027 – July 1 – June 30th:

The City Manager asked the Commission if there is anything that they want to be amplified. Priorities are:

- Monitor continued economic uncertainty
- Dynamic shifts impacting the community and maintain investments in our employee recruitment and retention.
- Increase affordable housing
- Sustainability for Capital Improvement projects, especially the need to reduce required borrowing and associated debt services.
- Economic strengths and diversification of the City's tax base.

Information about DASH Bus's funding advocacy and proposals will be shared at the next Commission meeting by First Chair Jiang.

Cross check legislative priorities with the City's priorities - If Commissioners did not respond to the email, they voted to support other priorities. **Action Item: Email feedback to the E-Board and a letter will be generated by the E-Board as done in the past. Action Item: Ms. Evans will email the previous letter to the Commission.**

The Human Rights Commission approved their legislative priorities. Commissioner Palmer Johnson submitted the priorities for the Commission for Women. Human Rights included it in their priorities stating "they approve and support the priorities of our liaison committees."

DASH Bus will host their annual Rodeo where bus drivers compete on their driving skills. Commissioners can volunteer as a judge. The event will take place on October 19th at 9am.

DASH will hold a facility groundbreaking ceremony on October 30th. More info will be provided.

ACAP – Held an unofficial meet and greet with student members at Alexandria City High School. ACAP will keep their full funding. **Action Item: Commissioner Hutchinson will send an email about the event to Ms. White and Helen Norris to speak with the youth.** The information to be shared at the meeting will be on trends in repro health.

Eboard/Council Update — First Vice Chair Yvette will meet with Mayor Alyia Gaskins at 3:30 p.m., Oct 30th with the E-Board. Second Vice Chair Heiser and Ms. White were invited to attend the meeting along with any members who would like to join.

Commissioner Palmer Johnson met with Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley because the tax rate was raised for taxi services, which impacts women more because women are least likely to have automobiles. No one came to protest when the issue came before Council. **Action Item: Commissioners were asked to pay more attention to what is on the docket and calendar. Action Item: Commissioner Datta will monitor the docket. All were encouraged to sign up for Alexandria City eNews.** The next legislative meeting is October 28th.

Council Member Pairing – The E-Board will revisit the roster for pairing opportunities. It was suggested to pair a new commissioner with an old commissioner. Councilman John Chapman will be paired with Commissioner Datta. **Action Item: Second Vice Chair Heiser will send the latest working document of the external assignment list to Commissioner Palmer Johnson.**

Funding - **Action Item: It was recommended to describe the discovery project and ask for funding to support and ask for a line item.** Funding is needed for the Tableau Software funding as well. It was suggested to contact Volunteers for events expertise. **Action Item: Commissioner Beatty will find out the cost of the banner / tablecloth and forward it to Ms. Evans.** It was suggested for the Legislative Director take the Status on Women's Report to Richmond for next Fiscal Year. It was also suggested to take the Commission's talking points and connect it to priorities.

Suggestions were made to submit expenses and have them approved or denied by the City Clerk, but there is no budget to do that. The new Commissioner packet includes an FAQ about the budget (this question comes up by new Commissioners).

Action Item: Commissioner Datta and Palmer Johnson will partner on a pro forma budget.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The November 2025 meeting will be virtual: the date to be determined.