

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING

Meeting: Thursday, September 11, 2025, 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Mark Center

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

Members Attending In-Person:

Co-Chairs, Michael Schuster, DT Oliver; Vice Chair, Ana Rivas, Secretary, Kimberly Koch, Barbara D’Agostino, Barbara Huelat, Canek Aguirre, Gerri Wallace, James Bruen, Jane M. King, Jessica Lefevre, Jim Lindsay, Marshall Hespe, Michele McLaughlin, Victoria Rutson, William Thomas Reeder

Members Attending Remotely With Approval From The Co-Chairs:

Ray Biegun, Kathleen Demik

Members Excused:

Alan Dinsmore

Members Unexcused:

Joy Kone

Liaisons Present:

Juanita Balenger, St. Martins Senior Center; Darrell Wesley, Adult Day Services Center; Ian Torrance, Police Department; Gaynelle Diaz & Pamela Guerra, Senior Center @ Charles Houston; Cathy Turner, Virginia Hospital Center

Guests Present:

Bob Eiffert, Housing Committee; Jan Macidull, Housing Committee; Lois Steele, Housing Committee; JeanAnn Mayhan, Public Health Advisory; Natalie Talis, Health Department; Wendy Ginsberg, Alexandria City Legislative Director; Rose Sutherland; Virginia Kalish; Tricia Rodgers

Staff Members Present:

Chris Moore, Ashley Johnson, Pam Austin, Division of Aging and Adult Services; Clarence Parkinson, Workforce Development Center

Call to Order Meeting called at order at 4:30 pm

Approval of Agenda as is.

Approval of Thursday, June 12, 2025 - Minutes Approved

Installation of New COA Officer

Councilmember and COA Commissioner, Canek Aguirre swore in the newly elected COA officer: **Kim Koch** as secretary.

Alexandria Police Department Liaison Report – Sgt. Ian Torrance

Sgt. Torrance shared what the Department’s protocol is for working with ICE. He shared that the Police Department is not directly working with ICE and they don’t get notifications from ICE on their activities. The only interaction would be with the Sheriff’s Department. He shared the only activity seen is what has been reported in the media and the related protest in Arlandria. He also shared that there are three ongoing investigations related to the man who recently died while in police custody.

Special Presentation: “Alexandria’s State of Health and Aging: A Conversation About Collaboration” with Natalie Takis and DT Oliver

Natalie is Population Health Manager with Alexandria Health Dept. Her team is focused on a lot of community engagement, doing data analysis, working on systems and policy change. Bottom line is they try to figure out what are the major health issues in Alexandria, and then work with the people most impacted. The Community Health Assessment (CHA) report is available online: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/health-department/alexandria-community-health-improvement>

Question: What is the Community Health Assessment (CHA)?

It is essentially an analysis on the state of health in Alexandria. The CHA is done every 5 years; state of the health of Alexandria. The CHA is not legally required – Alexandria does it because it is the right thing to do. Data is vital to creating new solutions, improving upon existing resources. Data is collected through a variety of means: Hear from residents (survey), looked at 1000s of data points (health and non-health determinants), and community walk abouts to check out neighborhoods in person.

Bottom line: The team looked at a lot of different topics, and the bottom line is that Alexandria as a community, when you look at the big picture, the overall numbers demonstrate that Alexandrians are fairly healthy. Overall residents are healthy but found differences in health based on: income, education level, where you live, etc. This was not shocking.

Question: What are some major themes in the CHA? The number one response for what are the top health issues in our community was mental health. Across almost every slice of the numbers, almost every single one, mental health. And it's the same thing for adults 60 years and older. Mental health was the top selection. At number 2, for the overall respondents, we had alcohol, drug, and opiate use, but for those 60 and older, it was aging-related health concern. Number 3 across all respondents was violence and crime. Strengths that were identified include: diversity (across all ages), opportunities to be involved (across all ages), public transportation for those 60+.

Question: What is the next step? The next step is a five-year improvement plan called the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The process is starting now. They are focusing on three areas: mental wellness, and the other two areas are place/neighborhood-based (Arlandria neighborhood and Landmark/Van Dorn area). Each area will have a coalition to identify their needs and priorities. The process starts in October/November, with a goal to release plans in June 2026 – short medium and long term goals.

Discussion and Comments: Complement to the coalition approach is to get residents actively involved in decision making. This approach provides a deeper experience than just a survey. This month the team is recruiting members for the coalitions. They are taking an active role in recruiting 1:1, tabling at libraries, large public spaces, and are exploring different recruitment channels for Arlandria specifically. The goal is 100 people per coalition (60% citizen members) and to avoid over-representation by City agencies. Membership to the coalitions can be fluid – bring on new partners as identified. Commission members expressed interest in learning more and/or joining the coalitions. As follow up, Natalie will send registration links to Michael to share and to sign up for the email lists. Meetings should start in late October/November.

Special Guest: Alexandria City Legislative Director – Dr. Wendy Ginsberg, Ph.D.

Dr. Ginsberg is the new Legislative Director for the City. She shared with the Commission and meeting attendees her legislative priorities. She shared she and her staff make sure they are representing the priorities of the City of Alexandria in Richmond; they are surveying the community, particularly the boards and commissions, the department heads who work for the City and the City Council members themselves, and try to get an idea about what they think the policy

priorities should be for the year. They are currently going through the process now to develop the legislative package for the 2026 General Assembly.

She shared more about the process. The package is divided into three parts. One is key legislative priorities they are trying to, as a City, find a patron for. The second section is more about our legislative priorities that might still be legislative priorities, but aren't quite - eight key legislative priorities they have decided are the City's legislative priorities. And then finally, there's a legislative principles section, which has a lot of other issues that we think of as part of our City, things like, preserving state aid to localities. They ask each of our boards and commissions to contribute their ideas to this process and actively encouraged the COA to advocate for issues important to COA stakeholders.

Liaison Reports

- **Division of Aging and Adult Services** – Chris Moore reported there have been recent retirements and they are filling two positions, the most recent open position to be Director of Older Adult Mental Health Services with Rhonda Williams' retirement at the end of September. The Division is working closely with The Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority ARHA and Ladrey to assist with any gaps in services and support for residents moving. DAAS will be doing dementia training for their staff in October. We have a Northern Virginia Dementia Caregiver Conference coming up in November and flyers will be shared with the COA.
- **Ladrey Senior High-Rise** – Gaynelle Diaz reported that the purchase of The Alate has been finalized and ARHA owns the property. They have hired a new property management company. They have added new services for case management for residents with more complex needs. Over 62 residents have first priority to move to The Alate. For residents 62 and older who don't go to The Alate, and those under 62 years of age, will receive Tenant Protection Vouchers. Residents also have the option to transfer to a standard ARHA residence. Residents also have the option to move outside the City of Alexandria. The relocation team is local and has set up an office at Ladrey. They are multi-lingual. The current understanding is the relocation company will move people out of the area. The staff is working with partners so there are no gaps in services. They are currently looking for a company to assist residents with decluttering and packing. As related to the timeline, Gaynelle shared everyone is to be moved out by the end of December 2025. One person is ready to move this month and others will start moving in October. Residents will be at The Alate for 2-3 years during the renovations. Everyone has right to come back to the renovated Ladrey Senior Hi-Rise.
- **Human Rights Commission** – Tom Reeder reported the Commission is beginning to work through committees. They are centered on outreach mostly and the expectation is they will have a presence at more community events. Pride Day was successful, with activity at the City Hall. City of Alexandria just received a 100 percent rating from the Human Rights Campaign, citing five areas the City excelled in, one being services to LGBTQ+ older adults. Tom raised the issue of age discrimination related to federal workers and the Commission is urging workers to file with the City's Office on Human Rights. Chris asked if there has been a push from the governor to erase our rainbow sidewalk and Tom has not heard anything. They are looking to do a second one in Del Ray. Tom also shared that Alexandria-based Systems Planning and Analysis Corporation is expanding their business in Alexandria and the people who will get priority for the new jobs will be placed from the Work Development Center.
- **AHA (At Home Alexandria)** – Bob Eiffert reported AHA has identified 20% of their membership as frail elderly and need extra care and extra attention. They are pairing those individuals with a buddy who constantly checks in on them and keeps up with what their needs and what is happening with them. Members have access to a full array of services, the number one request being transportation.
- **NVAN** – Michael Schuster reported they are working on planning the 10/3/2025 legislative breakfast with members of the Northern Virginia delegation to the General Assembly.

- **St. Martins de Porres Senior Center** – Juanita Balenger reported she submitted a written report. Highlights include: they hosted a vaccine clinic in partnership with Safeway on September 10th. They have a bus going to the Farmer's Market on September 16th. Also, they're signing seniors up for the Senior Robust Walkathon on September 30th. On September 17th, they will have their next concert in connection with the monthly birthday party. The next field trip is September 24th to the Gogo Museum in the Anacostia section of DC. Along with their VICAP representative they have confirmed a couple of dates in November for the Medicare Open Enrollment presentation.
- **VHC Health (formerly, Virginia Hospital Center)** – Cathy Turner reported they are hosting a free fall prevention fair (vision screening, risk assessment, prescription reviews) on September 12. On September 26, in partnership with Positive Aging they're offering a free webinar on the Balance for life, the vestibular advantage for older adults. For more information, visit vhchealth.org/seniorhealth or email SeniorHealth@vhchealth.org. The question was asked about concerns raised in finding a geriatrician. Cathy acknowledged this is a challenge and they are working on it. They are starting a new geriatric program in 2026.
- **Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria** – Tricia Rodgers is the new liaison for the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria. The Partnership is asking for a representative from the COA to be on the CHIP Mental Health Coalition, and if you live or work in one of the two place-based areas (West End/Van Dorn-Landmark area and/or Arlandria) would like representation here as well. She also asked for assistance from the COA to help get the word out on the work of the Coalitions and the call for members through our personal and professional connections. The goal is for all Alexandria residents be heard from during the process.
- **Senior Center @ Charles Houston** – Pam Guerra shared there will be a 53rd anniversary for the Center at Elate Apartments on 9/23/2025. She submitted a report with all updates.
- **Senior Services of Alexandria** – Marshall Hespe reported they recently hosted a Centenarian Celebration. The Senior Academy is underway. They've been at City Hall, and talking to DASH, the Health Department, etc. They have a number of fundraising events coming up; e.g., a fundraiser with Giant, upcoming walk. They also procured 300 COVID and flu tests and will determine a method of distribution to Meals on Wheels clients.
- **Arlington Commission on Aging** – Michael Schuster shared he will be attending in person the next Commission meeting on Monday, September 15, 2025. He emphasized the value of our two Commissions on Aging working together on advocacy and regional programs.
- **Alexandria Adult Day Services Center (ADSC)** – Darrell Wesley shared they recently has a team member resign and now have an opening for a therapeutic recreation specialist. They have their Global Health LPN students with them 3 times a week to help out. Up to six St. Catharine's University (Minnesota) students will be here at the end of the month for three consecutive days during their field work experience. St. Catharine's is an online university that produces occupation and service students. Upcoming field trips include: The Showplace Arena in Upper Marlboro for a rodeo and Jones Point Park to do some fishing.
- **Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (AHAAC)** – Jan Macidull reported AHAAC met on 9/4/2025 and one issue specific to COA was upcoming trainings for landlords. She shared that the Office of Housing is offering training for landlords to help them in terms of housing discrimination, as well as in appropriate management practices, to include training on mental health. On November 12th, they're going to have an apartment manager seminar for managers from larger apartments rental-only buildings with a focus on mental health issues and aging in place. The COA will be meeting with AHAAC on October 15 to talk about the Age-Friendly Plan, and proposed housing goals.
- **No Reports:**
 - INOVA Alexandria Hospital
 - AARP – Jane King
 - Commission for Women

- Public Health Advisory Commission
- Commission on Persons with Disabilities
- Alexandria Commission on Employment (ACE)
- Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance (NVFPA) – Marshall Hespe
- Arlington Legislative Committee – Michael Schuster
- Successful Aging Committee
- Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Executive Report

Discussion/Action Items

- a. Age Friendly Plan – Update and Approval of Goals and Objectives
 - i. Related to the age-friendly plan, we discussed the process at the executive committee meeting last week, and thought we would slow down the process. So today, we're not going to approve anything, but have a general discussion about where we are, the proposed objectives and goals and whether or not we're on the right track. And then we'll talk about how some of these things should go back to the committees to refine. Michael emphasized the document he shared was to re-energize/jumpstart the work.
 - ii. We want to have maybe 2 or 3 goals for each domain. And then, if you wanted to flesh it out with objectives, that's fine, but we have to make this a document that can be read by the community.
 - iii. Kathleen requested a definition of affordable housing for the acronyms list. Michael will work on a draft for review.
 - iv. Michael shared his vision for the process will be we try to get a good document we can vote on in the October meeting. And then we will figure out, whether or not we can get it on the docket for the City Council in December. The important thing is to make sure that we're all in agreement with all the goals and objectives in each domain
 - v. See below for Committee comments.
- b. 2024-2025 COA Annual Report – Reviewed and Approved
 - i. Michael had circulated a copy to review. It is due October 3rd.
 - ii. Motion to approve and seconded. Approved with no corrections or changes.
- c. NVAN 2026 Legislative Platform and Continuing Concerns – Reviewed and Approved
 - i. Seven platform priorities being presented for 2026: 1) Enable local jurisdictions to negotiate affordable unit set-asides in newly licensed assisted living facilities, 2) Reduce or prevent evictions by increasing the notice period and enacting other tenant safeguards, 3) Require a study of affordable housing options that addresses the respective range of care provided in independent assisted living, assisted living and nursing homes. 4) Increased funding for Critical Area Agency on Aging Services, 5) Protect Medicaid and oppose any cuts or barriers to access, 6) Fund a short-term, statewide, free, certified nursing assistant recruitment and training workforce program for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and veterans care centers, and 7) Appropriate \$1,792,055 needed to support the critically underfunded local offices of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to protect vulnerable adults.
 - ii. There are also continuing concerns: 1) legislation dealing with medical aid in dying, 2) expand or replicate the Northern Virginia RAF program that's dealing with mental health support, 3) require nursing homes and assisted living facilities employ a full-time infection preventionist, 4) Increase

the auxiliary grant rate for assisted living facilities to \$2,875, and raise the personal needs allowance to \$115 a month, 5) increase the minimum monthly SNAP benefit from \$25 to \$50 for older adults, 6) require employers to provide at least 10 days of paid sick leave for all workers, including direct care workers in nursing homes, assisted living, and home care, and 7) require Medicaid to cover the cost of hearing aids.

iii. Motion to approve and seconded. Approved with no corrections or changes.

Committee Updates

- 1. **Housing Committee** - Co-Chairs, Michael Schuster and Lois Steele: No comments on document circulated on goals and objectives. Lois shared the committee has been monitoring the Ladrey situation and felt Ms. Diaz provided a thorough update. The committee remains concerned about the support provided to residents during their moves. The City Council approved for The View, a special use permit. It may be a little dated now. And, there will be 7 affordable units that we've gotten some concessions on, and they are anticipating completion in 5 years. Next meeting is next Monday (September 15th.)
- 2. **Outreach Committee** – Co-Chairs, Marshall Hespe & Barbara D'Agostino: Sought input on Goal 2, Section IV. Had a request the other Committees to join their Committee meeting if something in their plan is tied to outreach. Encourage cross-collaboration where goals and objectives intersect across domains. Thie next meeting is next Thursday (September 18 at 11:30 AM at Goodwin House.)
- 3. **Transportation** – James expressed his support for Goals 1 and Goals 2 in this transportation. The issue is how to enforce it. Next meeting is scheduled for September 17th. Allan is stepping down as Chair. May need to pause the Committee until a new chair is found.
- 4. **Economic Security and Civic Engagement** – Chair, Jessica Lefevre: After some discussion, no comments on document circulated on goals and objectives. The committee met on September 4th. Jen Ayers, Executive Director of ALIVE!, gave a presentation. The focus was what the city is doing, what SSA is doing, and what ALIVE! is doing, all focused on the food security and the safety net for the city residents. In collaboration with, Arlington County, the Workforce Development Center will be working on a state grant, the Pivot grant, for 100 displaced federal employees who are finding it difficult to find work. The Shark Tank project will begin with a new cohort in September. The current cohort graduates in December. Center for Economic Support/Social Services has hired someone to focus on enrolling older adults for SNAP. Goal is 1500 new enrollees total.
- 5. **Health /Dementia Friendly Committee** – Chair, Barbara Huelat: The committee met this afternoon to go over the goals and objectives. One priority area is addressing the Medicaid issue. The other one is goal is for the unmet health services. Specifically, the Objective 2.1 that deals with mental health of older Americans related to be more specific with the unmet needs of dementia and dementia caregiving. The other objective relates to dental services. The Committee has developed quite an extensive list of objectives that it is going to add in. The Committee is adding back in the dementia component to their work. Their next meeting is November 13th at 3:00 PM.

Other Business No comments.

New Business

- Commission members were asked to let Michael and the Committee chair know if they have changed their committee's commitment so we can have proper Committee membership rosters.

Public comments No comments.

Adjournment Meeting was adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Next Commission Meeting: Thursday, October 9, 2025 – 4:30 p.m. VIRTUAL
Executive Committee Meeting: September 29, 2025– 1:30 p.m. VIRTUAL

NVAN Meetings: September 16, 2025 9:30 – Virtual – Host: Arlington County COA

COMMISSION OFFICERS: Michael Schuster, Co-Chair
DT Oliver – Co-Chair
Ana Rivas Beck, Vice Chair
Kim Koch, Secretary