

Meeting Minutes
Health & Safety Coordinating Committee
Lee Center
January 23, 2026

1. JANUARY MEETING MINUTES & DATA REPORT

Mayor Gaskins asked for comments on the minutes, noting that they had been circulated in advance. Councilwoman Green confirmed she had no questions on the minutes, but requested clarification on the accompanying “significant changes report.”

Turning to that report, Councilwoman Greene raised a question on page two regarding increased calls to the domestic violence hotline. Referring back to earlier conversations about outreach strategies, she asked Director Garvey for updates. Director Garvey attributed the increase primarily to expanded outreach, increased awareness, and improved access to resources through trusted staff, noting that call volume tends to rise as awareness improves.

The Mayor then asked a question on crime situational awareness data on page seven, specifically about a reported 500% increase in “disorderly” incidents despite the small absolute number of six cases. She requested additional context from Chief McGuire regarding the discrepancy between small totals and large percentage changes. Chief McGuire noted that such data can reflect a wide range of low-frequency incidents. Deputy City Manager Yon Lambert added that because the baseline number is low, percentage fluctuations can appear exaggerated and are not necessarily statistically significant. The Mayor requested year-over-year information to help contextualize the trend.

Next, the Mayor referenced data on gang intervention/prevention referrals, noting an increase in referrals but a decrease in assigned cases. She asked for clarification on whether both figures corresponded to the same program and how referrals translate into assignments over time. Lambert responded that staff would need to follow up with more detail. The Mayor requested a brief written explanation in a future meeting packet rather than a full presentation.

The November meeting minutes were then formally approved following a motion, a second, and unanimous voice vote.

2. SAFE HOUSING ALERT, RESPONSE, & ENGAGE

Deputy City Manager Lambert introduced the item, explaining that although the City has successfully deployed short-term task forces in response to specific housing and public safety challenges, there is a need to institutionalize interdepartmental coordination. The goal is to establish an ongoing, standing group able not only to respond tactically but also to anticipate emerging issues through proactive information sharing.

Strategic Initiatives Officer Dana Wedeles presented an overview of SHARE. She acknowledged the organizational role of Virginia Patton and noted that the acronym represents Safe Housing, Alert, Respond, and Engage. Wedeles explained that SHARE's purpose is to coordinate public safety and social support services at properties exhibiting rising calls for service or other concerning trends. The initiative centers on a shared data dashboard incorporating Police, Code Administration, and 311 data to identify emerging patterns, trigger internal discussions, and determine appropriate outreach to property managers or owners. She emphasized that the approach does not replace existing outreach, but formalizes and streamlines coordination.

Wedeles shared an example of dashboard data indicating that the most useful insight came not from threshold events, but from trending increases in the months leading up to them. She reported that the City already possesses the underlying data and is in the process of finalizing the interdepartmental dashboard. An interdepartmental outreach workshop, supported by an APD grant related to work at Brent Place and Mason Van Dorn, is scheduled for February and will focus on developing a scalable outreach model applicable to any property exhibiting concerning trends.

City Manager Parajon added context regarding resource deployment, noting that coordinated data will help determine when intensive interventions should begin and when they can be scaled back. He suggested that improved predictive analysis may allow for earlier intervention and reduce the need for more aggressive public safety responses later. Looking ahead, he noted that more sophisticated data tools, including AI, may further enhance situational awareness and long-term planning.

Mayor Gaskins expressed support for SHARE's focus on upstream prevention and asked about the level of resources required for current interventions. Mr. Parajon estimated that properties such as Brent Place have required sustained deployment of multiple employees over long periods, costing thousands of dollars weekly, and offered to provide more detailed cost information. Councilwoman Greene asked how long intensive support would continue at properties that have implemented recommended improvements. Mr. Parajon responded that one of SHARE's first tasks is to define criteria for scaling interventions up or down based on metrics such as calls for service and code enforcement activity.

The Mayor observed that standardized criteria would aid both communication and prioritization, particularly because the City appears to have the capacity to manage only one or two intensive interventions at a time. Parajon agreed that two is likely the maximum and that one is preferable.

Asked which departments participate, Ms. Wedeles indicated that nearly every department represented at the table would have a role, with composition depending on property-specific needs. She also noted the importance of including external partners such as ARHA when appropriate. Lambert confirmed that outreach to ARHA had already begun.

Chief McGuire requested that the dashboard differentiate by call type to improve relevance. Ms. Wedeles confirmed that both Police and 311 data are already being filtered to focus on quality-of-life issues rather than high-volume but less relevant calls.

Mr. Parajon encouraged the team to refine the data inputs to avoid information overload and maintain focus on indicators most connected to root causes. Dr. David Rose asked whether SHARE was meant to detect new problems or primarily monitor long-standing ones. Ms. Wedeles explained that while many identified properties may be familiar, the program's value lies in collaborative, proactive targeting rather than episodic response. Analyst Eli Smith added that data will be evaluated at the block level, which may surface previously unrecognized hotspots.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that SHARE's success will depend on interdepartmental collaboration, effective data triage, and alignment with other community-based planning efforts previously presented to the group.

3. REDUCING HARM IN THE EVICTION PROCESS

Mary Horner from the Office of Housing began the discussion and briefly described the City's ongoing focus on eviction processes over the past several months. She explained that the purpose of the presentation was to highlight legislative proposals currently under consideration at the state level that could impact eviction procedures and housing conditions in Alexandria.

Mary noted that although it remains unclear how many of the proposed bills will ultimately pass, housing has emerged as a statewide priority. She shared that in just the first week of the legislative session, the City was already tracking over 80 housing-related bills, while external trackers suggested that nearly 160 may have been introduced statewide. Even a small subset of these passing, she explained, would significantly alter the legal and procedural landscape for eviction and housing-related matters, including the process previously mapped out by the City last year. She added that some proposals were also focused on housing safety more broadly, not just eviction.

Ms. Horner displayed the City's adopted legislative housing priorities, emphasizing the City's request for tools and funding to expand housing options. She then walked through a subset of tenant-protection and eviction-prevention bills introduced this session, clarifying that her summary was not exhaustive and that more bills had appeared since her materials were prepared.

She organized the bills along the timeline of a typical tenant's housing experience: application, move-in, paying rent and utilities, notices, court process, and post-judgment, highlighting several themes along the way:

Addressing Barriers at Move-In: Ms. Horner noted an increase in up-front housing costs such as holding fees and high application fees, sometimes reaching several hundred dollars. Proposed bills would cap or prohibit certain fees, limit application costs (currently averaging ~\$150

locally), require landlords to accept more flexible payment methods (such as credit cards), and prohibit certain “maintenance fees” that tenants are currently charged even for issues not caused by them. These changes, she stated, could reduce financial barriers to entering housing.

Billing Transparency and Access to Ledgers: Ms. Horner described bills requiring greater transparency in utility billing, particularly relevant in buildings that use the ratio utility billing system (RUBS), where tenants are charged based on allocation formulas rather than direct usage. She emphasized that many tenants are unable to understand or verify their charges, and that even obtaining a basic payment ledger from landlords is often difficult, especially during eviction proceedings. The proposed changes would require clearer records and easier ledger access, benefiting both tenants and service providers.

Notice Requirements and Accuracy: Next, Ms. Horner described bills addressing notice of rent increases and court-related notices. One bill would require landlords to provide 60 days’ notice before increasing rent for all tenants (including month-to-month tenants), noting that 30 days is often insufficient time for families to relocate. Another bill would require that notices for nonpayment be accurate and itemized in order to be valid in court, addressing current inconsistencies where incomplete or approximate notices are treated as sufficient.

Extending the “Pay or Quit” Timeline: Ms. Horner highlighted the City’s top legislative priority in this space: extending the nonpayment “pay or quit” notice from 5 days to 14 days. She noted that more than half of tenants whose cases were filed in Alexandria and who do not attend court do not ultimately receive a judgment because they manage to resolve the issue, usually by paying, before court. The extended timeline would likely reduce the number of eviction filings by allowing tenants to reach their next pay period. She expressed optimism about this bill’s passage based on its prominence in the Governor’s housing platform and previous legislative traction.

Payment Plans and Diversion: Ms. Horner also discussed bills requiring landlords to offer payment plans before filing in court, similar to conditions that existed during COVID under House Bill 7001. She noted that such policies previously reduced filings and could do so again.

Once in court, Ms. Horner said, other bills would modify or expand the statewide eviction diversion program adopted last year. Many jurisdictions have struggled or refused to implement the current program due to strict requirements, including a 25% up-front payment and eligibility limits, and the proposed changes would reduce financial thresholds and expand participation. One bill would allow localities to design their own program with more flexibility.

Attorney Fees: Ms. Horner mentioned a bill proposing limits on attorney fees charged to tenants, noting that attorney fee awards currently range locally from \$200 to as high as \$3,000 in some cases. The bill’s mechanics remain unclear, she said, but the intent is to prevent fee burdens from eclipsing rent owed, especially at redemption (when tenants pay everything due to stop an eviction).

Local Enforcement Authority: One bill would empower localities to bring enforcement actions directly against properties for habitability violations. While acknowledging implementation work would be required, Ms. Horner stated that such authority could strengthen the City’s safe housing efforts and address the difficulty many unrepresented tenants face navigating the current tenant-assertion process.

Mold Remediation and Habitability Standards: Multiple mold-related bills have been introduced with differing approaches—some expanding landlord liability for personal injury, others requiring relocation or alternative accommodations during remediation. Ms. Horner said the statewide focus on mold aligned closely with Alexandria’s own community feedback and healthy-housing concerns.

Defenses and Anti-Retaliation: Ms. Horner noted growing legislative interest in closing the “justice gap” by allowing tenants to raise habitability defenses in court even if rent is owed, or to file cases without being current on rent. Bills also seek to expand the definition of unlawful retaliation to include tenant organizing and media engagement, with the intent of encouraging reporting of unsafe conditions without fear.

Other Housing and Land Use Bills: Ms. Horner flagged additional housing bills not directly tied to eviction but relevant to affordability and preservation:

- **Right of First Refusal**, allowing localities to purchase properties exiting affordability programs
- **Authority to Adopt Affordable Housing Ordinances**, expanding powers Alexandria already holds to other jurisdictions
- **Use of Surplus Public Property for Affordable Housing**
- **Faith-based development**, easing development of affordable housing on religious property
- **Local Anti-Rent-Gouging (Rent Stabilization) Authority**, enabling but not requiring local adoption of caps on annual rent increases

At this point, City Manager Parajon noted that the surplus property bill (House Bill 143) raises policy concerns related to local discretion over public land, indicating Council may want to examine its implications.

In closing, Ms. Horner summarized the projected impacts if even a subset of these bills passed: reduced financial barriers to entering housing, fewer eviction filings, clearer billing and ledger transparency, stronger procedural safeguards in court, higher landlord accountability around habitability and mold, and expanded protections against retaliation. She noted that not all bills will pass, but even modest changes could materially shift Alexandria’s housing environment within the next year.

Discussion

Mayor Gaskins contributed that many Alexandria renters are already paying unsustainable rent burdens, noting that 57% of residents are renters and 44% of those renters pay more than 30% of their income toward housing. She emphasized that large rent increases, 10% to 20% in some properties, put many households at risk with little buffer.

Councilwoman Greene asked about a bill limiting attorney fees (HB 1093), specifically whether it applied to court costs and landlord attorney fees, and whether tenants would recover any funds. Mary described how the bill distinguishes between pre-court and post-judgment redemption stages, noting that it caps attorney fees at \$50 at the first return and again at the redemption stage, though implementation details, particularly regarding allocation of any remaining fees, are unclear.

The discussion concluded and meeting adjourned at 9:21.

NEXT STEPS

- **SHARE**
 - Develop criteria for scaling SHARE interventions up or down (based on calls for service, code enforcement trends, etc.), including capacity for simultaneous intensive engagements (current assumption: 1–2 properties at a time with no additional cost).
 - Finalize the SHARE data dashboard, including differentiation on call types and filter to quality-of-life indicators.
 - Clarify how ARHA will be engaged when properties within their portfolios show concerning trends.
 - Clarify how non-profits will be involved in outreach.
 - Present to City Council at the June legislative meeting, covering operational structure, data capabilities, outreach model, and resource considerations.
- **OTHER FOLLOW-UP ITEMS**
 - Provide year-over-year trends for “disorderly” incident data to contextualize percentage changes.
 - Provide written clarification on gang intervention/prevention referral and assignment data.