ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON EMPLOYMENT

September 8, 2026 Minutes

Attendance

Lenwood Roberts	Present
Patrick Edwards	Present
Betel Aklilu	Present
Sonja Allen	Present
Kathleen Sindell	Absent
Tricia Allen	Present
Mackenzie Betrone-Harpst	Virtual
Alex Cooley	Absent
Paloma Martinez	Absent

Youth Members
None present

DCHS and WDC Staff

Lesa Gilbert	Present
Katrina Ashmore	Present
Rayna Yu	Present

Overview

Tricia Allen and Katrina D Ashmore discussed agenda items and action steps for upcoming ACE-related deliverables, including a strategic plan due to Council at the end of September and the city legislative packet and feedback survey (due September 18). They also reviewed subcommittee updates, the Alex Forward workforce/CBO integration issue, use of the industrial kitchen at the market center, SNAP/Volunteer Alexandria and Together We Bake, concerns about Workforce Pell implementation, and items for the Commission/board meeting on September 14.

Key Decisions and Action Items

- Tricia will add a handwritten thank-you card idea to the meeting agenda.
- Tricia will draft and send the meeting agenda tomorrow, and update the room number to 9259 for the Commission/board meeting.
- Katrina will confirm the exact due date for the strategic plan to Council (end of September referenced; Katrina will reach out to Kathleen for confirmation).

- Katrina forwarded the city's legislative packet process and will ensure the group reviews the feedback survey due September 18.
- Tricia will circulate the Chamber's legislative agenda to the group after it becomes public on October 10 (Chamber release date noted).
- Subcommittee report-outs will be included on the agenda so each group can share updates and next steps (Tricia and Katrina to coordinate).
- Katrina will include Kim in the SNAP/Volunteer Alexandria presentation to answer questions.
- Tricia and Katrina will continue advocating that community-based organizations (CBOs) be included in Alex Forward workforce efforts and the project charter.
- Consider adding Workforce Pell access concerns to the ACE legislative agenda (Katrina suggested adding to legislative priorities).
- Tricia and Katrina will coordinate outreach and stakeholder engagement on the market center industrial kitchen concept (conceptual stage; funding and partners to be determined).
- Katrina will print signage for elevators and campus areas noting Workforce Development Center closure as needed.

Discussion Details

Strategic Plan to Council

- The strategic plan must be submitted to Council at the end of September (exact due date unclear). Katrina will contact Kathleen to confirm the precise deadline.
- The plan should be straightforward because committees and priorities are already formed; Kathleen has a draft that Tricia referenced.
- Agenda will include discussion of the Council submission and subcommittee updates.

City Legislative Packet and Feedback Survey

- Katrina forwarded the city's legislative packet guidance and noted Alethia (deputy city manager) included a feedback survey due September 18.
- The group should review whether to submit items; as city staff, some members cannot lobby directly, so appropriate channels must be used.
- Katrina recommended adding Workforce Pell issues to the ACE legislative agenda to influence policy.

Chamber Legislative Agenda

- The Chamber's legislative agenda is embargoed until public release on October 10. Tricia will brief the group on her participation in that drafting process and share the agenda once released.

Subcommittee Updates & Workforce Development Co-convener Role

- Tricia reported meeting with her committee (employer pipeline partnership concept) and will set cadence and regular meetings.
- Katrina is now Co-convener for the Alex Forward Workforce Development group; she is writing the project charter and emphasizing inclusion of community-based organizations (CBOs).
- Katrina noted pushback from some members (specifically Alex Cooley and others) regarding CBO involvement; she and Tricia will continue advocacy and aim to ensure CBO representation in the charter.
- DCHS and Kate Garvey indicated CBOs should be part of the Alex Forward process; the group will continue building the project charter and meet again in September.

Alex Forward / CBO Inclusion Issue

- Concern: certain committee members resisted broad CBO involvement, preferring a narrower approach; Katrina argued for community-led solutions and broad CBO inclusion.
- Tricia has been advocating for CBOs in conversations with the mayor and in other venues, linking CBO inclusion to Alex Forward themes: access, inclusion, and equity.
- Plan: continue conversations and leverage subcommittee representation (Tricia noted Alex Cooley is on the subcommittee and could be influenced given her economic development background).

Market Center Industrial Kitchen (Together We Bake and kitchen concept)

- Conceptualizing how the full industrial kitchen could benefit community populations: summer youth, people impacted by the justice system, and people with employment barriers.
- Key unknowns: program model, funding sources, and who should sit at the planning table. Several stakeholders have reached out
- Together We Bake and SNAP/Volunteer Alexandria items will be included in next presentation

Workforce Pell Concerns

- Tricia raised concerns that Workforce Pell, as written in legislation, may limit eligible training providers to community colleges and four-year institutions, excluding nonprofit providers and short-term programs (e.g., Together We Bake) that directly reach populations with barriers.
- Discussion emphasized potential negative effects if the program excludes local nonprofits and shorter credential programs (serve-safe example).

- Action suggested: place Workforce Pell access issues into ACE's legislative agenda to advocate for inclusive implementation.

Commission/Board Meeting (September 14)

- The Commission/board is soliciting agenda items for the September 14 meeting. Tricia will prepare and send the agenda; Katrina recommended including Workforce Pell on the agenda and coordinating with allied commissions (e.g., Economic Opportunities Commission, Commission on Aging) to advance priorities.
- Update logistics (room number 9259)

Next Steps (who / what / when)

- Katrina: Confirm exact strategic plan due date with Kathleen (ASAP).
- Tricia: Draft and send meeting agenda tomorrow; update room number to 9259 and remind members to prepare.
- Tricia & Katrina: Continue to advocate for CBO inclusion in Alex Forward; participate in developing the project charter and prepare to present options at the next Alex Forward meeting in September.
- Tricia: Share Chamber legislative agenda with group after public release (post-October 10).
- Katrina: Add Workforce Pell concerns to ACE legislative agenda recommendation; coordinate with allied commissions (EOC, Commission on Aging) to build support.

Meeting Adjourned: 5:30 pm