

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023  
7:00 p.m., City Hall  
301 King Street, Room 2000  
The Chet and Sabra Avery Room

Members Present

Lisl Brunner, Chair  
Matt Harris  
Katherine O'Connell  
Elisabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson  
William Tom Reeder, Jr.  
David Rigsby, Vice Chair  
Jon Thompson

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director  
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez, Adm. Support

Members Excused

Danielle Beach  
Scott Schwartz, Vice Chair  
Conrad Sylvanus

Guests

Kim Cadena, Office of Housing  
Megan Prince

Commissioners Marc Bendick, Jr and Susan Kellom participated remotely by telephone.

**1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair Brunner**

Chair Brunner called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Introductions were made.

**2. Approval of Minutes of March Meeting**

Upon a motion Commissioner Harris, seconded by Commissioner Palmer Johnson, the Commission approved the minutes of the March meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye.

**3. Guest: Kim Cadena**

Kim Cadena is the housing analyst from the Office of Housing and works on the federal funding that the Office receives every year for Housing and Community Development programs.

Kim Cadena gave a summary of what is in the annual action plan, which is the annual application to HUD for their Community Development Block Grant & Home Investment Partnership Program money. They explained that every five years the City must submit to HUD a consolidated plan, which provides information about housing needs in the community, and other needs. The Housing Office starts by determining a list of community needs.

Kim Cadena explained that they have a consolidated five-year plan and then every year they have an actual plan of what they are going to do in that year.

The current five-year plan is from 2022-2026 and they have established three priority needs: Equitable Access to Housing, Prevent and End Homelessness, and Maintain Housing Stability.

Kim Cadena also explained where the money is being allocated and said that the housing opportunity fund is money that they usually use for development loans. The flexible homeownership assistance program is the first-time home buyers' program, and is funded by the Home Investment Partnership Program, and from the Community Development Block Grant.

Kim Cadena talked about the Home Investment Partnership Program and said that this year half of it is going to the Housing opportunities fund and half of it is going to the Home Rehabilitation Loan Program, which they have done in the past years. Moving some of that funding into home rehab allows them more flexibility than if they were using it just out of the CDBG program.

Kim Cadena stated that the rental property rehab program is going to be funding Park Vue this year. They are intending to take it from a market rate building to an affordable building, but it needs some improvements such as rehabilitating the elevators and windows. The HUD definition for low income is 80% of the area median income or less; the definition of very low income is 50% of AMI or less and extremely low income is 30% of AMI or less. The Alexandria Redevelopment Housing has a flat rent of \$50.00 a month, but generally if people live in public housing their rent is going to be 30% of their income.

Kim Cadena explained the Samuel Madden project and said that currently it has 66 units of public housing and that whole area is going to be redeveloped into 532 units; there will be 66 replacement units and the entire north building is going to be an all-affordable building. Units ranging from 80% AMI all the way down to public housing units and then there are also going to be some public housing replacement units in the south building, which is going to be a market rate building with some 80% AMI units.

Please see the attached PowerPoint presentation. After their presentation, Kim Cadena answered questions from the Commission. Chair Brunner thanked Kim Cadena for the presentation.

#### **4. Executive Committee**

Director Kelleher reported that the Executive Committee met last Monday and said that Commissioner Harris agreed to serve as the nominating committee chair. She also reported that the Commission has five vacancies currently advertised by the City Clerk's office.

Commissioner Harris and Commissioner Palmer Johnson will serve on the nominating committee and will be contacting the commissioners to see if there is an interest in serving as chair or vice chairs.

Director Kelleher reported that Chair Brunner and her were discussing possibly having a remote meeting in June. Upon a motion by Commissioner Palmer Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Commission will have a remote meeting in June and the Commission will not meet in August and December. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brunner attended the Alive food hub this past week on South Van Dorn Street. Commissioner Palmer Johnson volunteered to attend the June 10<sup>th</sup> Alive food hub.

#### **5. Old & New Business**

Director Kelleher asked for a couple of volunteers to attend the Pride Month event on Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, which is going to be held at Market Square this year. Vice Chair Rigsby, Commissioner Thompson and Commissioner Prince volunteered.

Director Kelleher also reported that the Fair Housing Testing report was presented to the Executive Committee on Monday.

Director Kelleher stated that she joined members of the VAHR steering committee and said that the plan is to disband the Virginia Association for Human Rights at this time, because many jurisdictions are not participating. Commissioner Harris suggested having an Ad Hoc committee or appointing someone from the Commission to contact other northern Virginia commissions and see if they will be interested in sharing ideas.

Commissioner Harris brought up the ICE question that Commissioner Bendick, Jr. had raised. Director Kelleher stated that the way it was left at the Executive Committee was that Chair Brunner was going to write up the results of findings from her meeting with Tenants and Workers, and the Legal Aid Justice Center, which she did and presented it to the Executive Committee for discussion and plan the next steps; and the plan was for Director Kelleher to talk personally with the Sheriff, which she has done. Director Kelleher stated that the City provides a grant to the Legal Aid Justice Center for a Universal representation pilot project, which has now turn into annual amount of \$100,000, which is provided for legal assistance for those at risk of deportation without due process. The irony for the City providing that money for legal representation as she explained to Sheriff Sean Casey.

Director Kelleher stated that she would like to do more research into what the other jurisdictions are because she doesn't think that it is accurate that Arlington and Fairfax are doing something different from what Sheriff Casey is doing.

Director Kelleher stated that there were three particular questions that Tenants and Workers and the Legal Aid Justice Center wanted the Commission to ask Sheriff Casey specifically. Director Kelleher stated that she had a lengthy conversation with Sheriff Casey.

1) The Alexandria Sheriff's office is making courtesy calls to ICE.  
The Sheriff answered: There is no such thing as a courtesy call to ICE.

2) That the Sheriff's Office is transferring to ICE individuals who are wanted by ICE under an administrative warrant as supposed to a warrant signed by a Judge.  
The Sheriff answered: The Sheriff is honoring all of those warrants, because that is the legal framework that he is operating in Virginia. He agrees to follow Federal, State and Local Law and he explains that he does get legal advice whenever he seeks it. There were eleven warrants in FY 2022 and all of the eleven were administrative warrants.

3) The Sheriff's office is holding individual past their schedule release times to facilitates those transfers.  
The Sheriff answered: There are no release times; there are release dates, so when the person is eligible to be released, they work with the magistrate to get the person processed and released. If in fact there is

one of those administrative warrants, and he is notifying ICE, he tells them that date. Th Sheriff does not hold anyone past that release date.

Director Kelleher will contact the other jurisdiction to get more information about what they are doing in terms of ICE warrant requests.

## **6. Liaison Reports**

Commissioner Palmer Johnson reported that the Commission for Women met on Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. She reported that as the nominating committee Chair, she presented the slate and by acclamation they elected their former slate of officers again. She also reported Jane Plitt was their speaker at their meeting; Jane Plitt is the founder and Director of the National Center of Women's Innovations. She reported that on June 8<sup>th</sup>, there will be a discussion webinar about abortion across the Commonwealth.

She announced that the Democratic Black Caucus in Virginia is having a panel discussion on May 25<sup>th</sup> with all of the Police Chiefs from surrounding jurisdictions to discuss the changes in their departments since the George Floyd incident.

Commissioner Reeder reported that the Commission on Aging met last week, and their guest was Mary Horner, who talked about evictions in Alexandria. He reported that they also elected their officers at the May meeting. He announced that Senior Services of Alexandria is having a Senior Law Day on Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> at the First Baptist Church on King Street, at 9am. He also announced that the Executive Director of Senior Services in Alexandria just received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Commissioner Prince reported that the Alexandria Commission on Person with Disabilities Commission spends the majority of the time awarding scholarships and awards for community members.

Vice Chair Rigsby reported that he attended the Boards and Commissions meeting at the new facility on the West End in the Del Pepper building. He stated that they invited all of the Commission to use their meeting space to do their meetings, and Commissions can also arrange to have a tour of the facility in the fall. He said that Kate Garvey talked about the all the services that they offer.

Chair Brunner reported that the Landlord and Tenant Relations Board has reached out to Morgan Properties and is trying to hold a public meeting with them, and the Commission will be invited to participate on that.

## **7. Announcements /Adjournment**

**MOTION:** adjourn the meeting.

Palmer Johnson/Thompson **PASSED** unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.