

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2021
7:00 p.m.
VIRTUAL (Zoom)

Members Present

Lisl Brunner, Vice Chair
Janeka Cogdell
Kevin Edwards, Vice Chair
Lynette Foster
Matt Harris, Chair
Susan Kellom
Katherine Lloyd
Elizabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson
David Rigsby
Scott Schwartz

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher, Director
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez

Members Excused

Michelle Cho
Danielle Beach

Members Not Excused

Chris Harris

Guests

Race and Social Equity Officer Jaqueline Tucker
Race and Social Equity Fellow Kim Hurley

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair, Matt Harris

Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Introductions were made. Chair Harris welcomed special guest Jacqueline Tucker, City Equity Officer, and Kim Hurley,

2. Approval of March Minutes

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Edwards, seconded by Vice Chair Brunner, the Commission approved the minutes of the March meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye.

3. Equity Officer Jaqueline Tucker

Chair Harris welcomed Jacqueline Tucker, the Equity Officer for the City. Chair Harris stated that Ms. Tucker has a good, an exciting and an important job.

Jaqueline Tucker thanked the Commission for having her tonight. Ms. Tucker stated that she is the Race and Social Equity Officer for the City and said that she is located in the City Manager's Office. She stated that she started in February 2020, and prior coming to the City, she was the East Region Project Manager for The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). Ms. Tucker stated that she is joined by Kim Hurley, who is the Race and Social Equity Fellow, so she has been with her full-time since October. Ms. Kim Hurley stated that she has been with the City for 14 years, and said that she started with the Department of Community and Human Services. She said that she has been working in the Development Team as a community-based counselor, so she has been working with middle and high school students in prevention and trying to help them avoid risky behaviors like teen pregnancy, drugs, and alcohol. She added that she got heavily involved over the last few years with her department's racial equity core team, and this has allowed her to expand her training experience. She is very excited to be here and appreciates the Commission's support.

Ms. Tucker shared a slide presentation and talked about the City's commitment to race and social equity. She stated that Alexandria has an equity vision; Alexandria is a caring, kind, compassionate, fair, just and an equitable City that supports affordable, livable Community for all. She stated that part of the concepts that they are trying to initiate across community and across staff using the GARE framework of normalized, operationalize and organized. Normalizing is just getting people at a baseline foundation to understand the basic concepts of race and equity and what it means.

Ms. Tucker showed a slide that reflected the City's population and poverty statistics and said that the City population is 49% white, 16% Hispanic or Latino, 20% Black or African Americans, Asian 5%, and 4% two or more races. She added that the percentage of those populations that are in poverty are about 20% of the White population are living in poverty; 29% of the Hispanic or Latino population living in poverty; 34% of the Black or African American population is living in poverty; 3% of the Asian population alone are living in poverty; 5% of two or more races; and 8% some other race are living in poverty. She said that there is a huge disproportionate outcome for the Hispanic or Latino and the Black and African American populations and said that those are the gaps that they would like to work towards reducing and eliminating.

Ms. Tucker showed a slide reflecting the median income and said that the source of most of this data is from the 2018 American Community survey. She stated that the White population median household income is \$122,000, Hispanic or Latino \$60,000, Black or African American \$58,000, Asian alone \$104,00, two or more races \$85,000 and some other races along \$52,000. She also showed a slide about educational attainment and said that that over 80% of the White population has a bachelor's degree or higher education, and added that 35% of our Hispanic or Latino population has less than a high school diploma, and stated that 25% of our Black or African American population has some college or Associate degree.

She presented a final slide on housing tenure; this is about whether residents are renting or owning a home in the City of Alexandria. She stated that about 57% of our White population own their homes, 43% renting, then every other demographic category, a majority of those populations are renting. She stated that housing status and educational attainment play into the ability to own a home in the City, which is really not affordable for many people.

Ms. Tucker talked about the difference between equality and equity. She explained that equality is just about everybody having access to the same thing or access to a resource for the ability to go out and pursue something. She explained that equity really considers the social, cultural, political context of the nature of policy in laws as they have been created in the past excluding certain groups from full participation, and equity takes that into account and make sure that everybody has exactly what they need.

Ms. Tucker stated that the City's commitments are: Center, Understand and Embrace, and build. Center – center race and how it intersects with other areas of marginalization, so how race intersects with gender, how race intersects with class, how race intersects with sex, how race intersects with gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, religious affiliation, and age. Understand - understand and embrace the truth our history and how that influences current circumstances and iniquities. The last one is to Build - build and shared leadership and responsibility so that race and social equity is everyone's role.

Ms. Tucker stated that their goal of their work is to reduce and eliminate disparities and inequities experienced by all residents. Especially those in communities of color and other groups who have been historically and systematically marginalized. She added that their vision is that we will live in a city where everybody will be embraced and be celebrated for who they are, and they would be able to reach and thrive to their highest potential. She stated that they would do that by removing barriers, systemic institutional barriers to full participation in the logging in life and culture. She stated that All Alexandria means all of us, all of us are going to benefit as a result of our pursuits of equity and equitable outcomes; and that is all race, all abilities, all ages, all countries of origin, all immigration status, all ethnicities, all genders, all sexual orientation, all gender identities, all religious affiliation, and all of our residents. She stated that the way they are going to do this, is by using the GARE framework, so normalized, operationalize and organized. She said that what she showed today is normalizing.

She stated that operationalize is really using a data driven approach being able to use racial equity tool and asking who is benefiting, who is burden by decisions that are being made at the City level. Lastly, is organizing how do they create internal and external infrastructure to support their work, how do they create a staff infrastructure that is going to be moving their work forward, and what are the key partnerships with organizations, Commissions, Nonprofit, Faith based communities and residents that can really help them to organize them with the workforce. She stated that All Alexandria resolution was adapted on January 23, and said that this process involved over 150 community members weighing in. She stated that the resolution has been posted on the City's website.

Ms. Tucker concluded her presentation by sharing some of their priorities, which are to expand language access, creating a budget equity tool, so next budget cycle will have equity at the forefront. Incorporating equity in staff performance evaluation, all staff training, making sure that all of their staff are trained in these concepts, and then community engagement; reaching the populations that are not often heard at the table and making sure that they are engaging with those communities.

Ms. Tucker addressed questions by Commissioners and explained that the City does not have jurisdiction over the Alexandria City Public Schools. Ms. Tucker also explained that in order to get Board and Commissions more diverse is going to require evaluation of the code and the outline of how Boards and Commissions are created and said that she is also a proponent of compensating people for their time. Ms. Tucker also explained that it will take some time to get

up to speed on the economics, wages and housing and added that the Housing Department as well as the Planning and Zoning Department are looking at evaluating housing practices and committing to housing for all, which is affordable housing, increasing the capacity of affordable, moderate to low-income housing in the City and added that homeownership needs to increase.

Ms. Tucker also address a question about how elderly homeowners are losing their houses to the taxes opposed to the mortgage and stated that she was not familiar with this issue. She added that in the Community Health Improvement Plan, housing, mental health and poverty, there is an emphasis about home improvement to older homes, for those who own their home, especially older individuals. Director Kelleher also explained that the housing for all initiative is really focused on creating more units and it is shifting the focus from just rental to homeownership as well.

Ms. Tucker also address a question about small minorities business ownership and said that for the first time they will be able to target those and provide them or connect them with resources directly to have more equitable outcomes for those types of businesses. Ms. Tucker also addressed the issue on the limited number of spaces available for after school care programs for elementary age children offered by the recreation department and how people who do not have access to the internet are not able to grab one of those slots to register their children in those programs. Ms. Tucker stated that this is the first time that this issue is being raised and stated that this is something that they can look into and said that she is wondering what the supports at the City level is, and what can the City do to improve the access to these programs, and to make them more equitable and accessible.

Chair Harris thanked Ms. Tucker and Ms. Hurley for coming before the Commission.

4. Executive Committee /Upcoming Meetings

Ice Breaker

The ice breaker is for Commissioners to describe a new activity that they have engaged in since COVID-19 or describe an experience that led them to become an advocate for human rights and take an interest in this Commission. The following Commissioners participated at April meeting: Commissioner Rigsby, Commissioner Lloyd, Commissioner Kellom, Commissioner Palmer Johnson, Commissioner Foster, Chair Harris, and Director Kelleher also participated.

5. Old and New Business

Rainbow Crosswalk letter

Director Kelleher stated that she just heard from the Mayor two weeks ago thanking her for forwarding the letter, and saying that “we are looking into this”. Director Kelleher stated that this is in the City Council’s hands now and they are focusing on it. Chair Harris thanked Commissioner Schwartz for taking the lead on drafting the letter.

Library Fees

Chair Harris stated that a letter was received from the Library Board with their detailed in-depth statistics on their budgetary issues, which included missing books and late fees. Chair Harris said that the Commission wants to know how much revenue they generate from late fees. Commissioner Schwartz asked what the Commission is doing to follow up with the library on what the Commission had asked for two months ago. Director Kelleher stated that Commissioners can contact City Council members and express that they really think that these fines should be cut.

Metro Stage Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Chair Harris stated that Metro Stage wants to reaffirm its commitment to diversity, especially given some of the entertainment awards and their lack of diversity at different events. Commissioner Kellom stated that Metro Stage is trying to make sure that what they present is totally acceptable to everyone and they are trying to also make sure that people are looking at them as trying as hard as they can to be fully equitable. She added that they have an event coming up on April 21, 2021.

CPRB & Collective Bargaining Ordinances Passed

Chair Harris stated that City's Civilian Policing Review Board and collective bargaining agreement ordinances both passed unanimously by City Council. He added that the Commission probably will no longer be holding hearings on excessive use of force by the Police.

Alexandria Community Remembrance Project

Director Kelleher informed the Commission that the Community Remembrance Project, part of the greater national Equal Justice Initiative, is focused on bringing a replica of the Alexandria pillar back from Alabama. She added that Alexandria has commemorated the lives of Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas in April and August of 2020. Those two events had to be done virtually, and so this year's event for Joseph McCoy is on April 23, the anniversary date, and there is an event at 8:00 a.m., at the corner of Cameron and N Lee Streets. She added that City Hall will be illuminated with purple for three nights this weekend and so will the Masonic Temple. She stated that on Saturday at 1:00 p.m., there is a talk by Dr. Susan Strasser entitled "A White Woman talking about Black History."; the first one was on slavery and this one is on lynching and there is also a poet who will be presenting on Saturday as well.

Anti-Asian Hate Panel from NVCC for City Town Hall

Director Kelleher stated that this is panel through Northern Virginia Community College and Jim McClellan reached out to us to see if it would be a good idea for the City to have a Town Hall using the same panelists and professors. The Commission agreed co-host this event.

6. Liaison Reports

Commissioner Lloyd reported that the Alexandria Commission on Person with Disabilities had Jennifer Schlesinger from Transportation and Environmental Services give a presentation on the status of Alexandria's mobility plan. She added that it is an update to the 2008 transportation master plan for the City of Alexandria; it is open for comments on the website.

Commissioner Palmer Johnson stated that April is sexual assault awareness month, and they had the 10 members of the sexual assault response team address the Commission. She added that April 28th is denim day and she invited the commission to go into denimdayinfo.org to get the history of denim day and why they are celebrating denim day.

7. **Announcements /Adjournment**

There were no announcements.

MOTION: adjourn the meeting.

Schwartz /Palmer Johnson **PASSED** unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 9:13p.m.