

City of Alexandria Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) Meeting Minutes September, 2023, 8:00 PM ET

Attendees:

1. Aminata Ly
2. Meronne Teklu, Chair
3. Jenn Ayers
4. Conrad Sylvanus
5. Alison Coleman, Staff
6. Janeka Cogdell
7. Berole Bekele
8. Councilman Canek Aguirre (guest)
9. Ajashu Thomas (guest)

Absences:

1. Tim Laderach (excused)
2. David Parker (excused)
3. Charles Brown (excused)
4. L'Allegro Smith (excused)
5. Karishma Merchant (excused)

Councilman Aguirre Remarks

- Councilman Aguirre, shared a brief introduction of himself, as well as Ajashu Thomas, member of the DASH Advisory Board and board member of the Alexandria Tutoring Consortium (ATC) (K-2nd grade tutoring; see Alexandria Tutors.org)
- Tutors are needed for ACPS, training provided, resources provided for guidance. The window time for tutoring is October to May during school hours. Usually twice a week. Tutors that know other languages are especially helpful.
- Councilman Aguirre shared his priorities regarding affordable housing, economic opportunity, eviction prevention, healthcare, transportation, and others. He also shared reflections on his time chairing the Economic Opportunities Commission prior to his election in 2018.

Meronne Teklu, EOC Chair, commenced the meeting at 8:10 PM ET.

Procedural

- Meronne reviewed the agenda, Janeka moved to approve the agenda and Jenn seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the agenda.
- Meronne reviewed the June minutes, Janeka moved to approve the minutes and Jenn seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the June minutes.

Chair's Opening Remarks

- Passing of EOC Commissioner Rev. Dr. Barbara LaToison.

City Updates

- **OCS updates/DCHS updates - Alison & Lesa**
 - Periodic state audit of DCHS; state representative will attend next EOC meeting as part of this process.
 - Four commissioners will be interviewed, 1 hour interviews.
 - Virtual interviews ahead of time, or in person on Oct. 18.
 - A comm'r is interested in business cards; table discussion for Oct. meeting.
 - Update on youth employment program; ended
 - 217 jobs with 55 employers
 - Medicaid unwinding
 - Re-eligible started in April
 - Each month, 3,000 renewals. ~2,800 lost coverage
 - Internally, pushing staff to encourage households to renew
 - Customer relations
 - Increase in volume coming to DCHS; average 4,000 calls per month, 2,200 individuals coming to the office.
 - 80% for public benefits (e.g. SNAP, Medicaid renewals, etc.)
 - 19% for rental assistance, prescription, burial, homelessness
 - Eviction prevention task force
 - Pattern identified in individuals who seek assistance: housing from homelessness services and evictions.

Old Business

- **EOC Nominating Update:**
 - Meronne shared EOC application summaries.
 - Meronne moved for approval of two applicants, Taylor Phillips and Illiana Moses. Aminata seconded. The commission unanimously voted to approve the EOC nominees.
- **EOC Onboarding Update:**
 - Slides are saved in the EOC folder.
- **Duke Street In Motion Update:**
 - Aminta shared a letter at the City Council on behalf of the EOC in support.
 - Council voted to approve the DSIM Advisory Group's recommendation.
 - Meronne to share additional community outreach opportunities with the commission throughout the fall.
- **Special Events Update:**
 - Meronne shared details regarding the proposed State of the Community event.
 - Proposal for the EOC to host a community event between community members facing hardship and city representatives.
 - Discussion about translation services available at the meeting and how to best navigate logistics during the meeting.
 - Virtual meeting via Zoom is ideal if the EOC conducts it in October 2023.
 - EOC decided to table the event until Spring to incorporate potential translation services and more detailed planning efforts.

- **Needs Assessment Update:**
 - Meronne shared an update on the Needs Assessment.
 - Has been drafted and shared with city staff.
- **Alexandria Fund for Human Services Update:**
 - No update; Charles is out of town.
- **Alexandria Human Rights Commission Update:**
 - Conrad provided an update.
 - Discussion regarding recent Supreme Court decisions pertaining to human rights and affirmative action.
 - Meronne suggested EOC could join HRC and LAJC in a letter related to immigration.

New Business

- **Fall 2023 Meeting Speakers**
 - Meronne suggested LAJC representative; Sarah Taylor; or representative from ACT for Alexandria.
- **Legislative Packet Proposals**
 - Requested by second week of October.
- **CHIP Survey update**
 - AHD looking for an update.
 - EOC has committed to three priority areas.

Announcements

- Zoning for Housing/Housing for All sessions; proposal to have at least one EOC representative at each session.

Closing: Janeka moved to adjourn the meeting, Conrad seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM ET.