City of Alexandria Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2024, 7:00 PM ET

Attendees:

1. **Meronne Teklu, Chair**
2. **Aminata Ly, Vice Chair**
3. **Tim Laderach, Secretary**
4. **Conrad Sylvanus**
5. **Jenn Ayers (online)**
6. **Taylor Phillips**
7. **David Parker (online)**
8. **L'Allegro Smith**
9. **Illiana Moses**
10. **Charles Brown**
11. **Alison Coleman, Staff**
12. **Lesa Gilbert, Staff**
13. Guest(s):
    a. Natalie Tallis (ADH)
    b. Allen Lomax (Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria (PHA))
    c. Mesha Hall (DCHS)
    d. Melaku Ayalew
    e. DT Oliver

Absences:

1. *Berole Bekele
2. *Babak Pirouz
3. *Karishma Merchant

*Excused

Meronne commenced the meeting at 7:05 PM ET.

- Brief welcoming remarks.
- Introduced guest speakers.

Guest Speaker: Mesha Hall (DCHS)

- Here to discuss CSBG Funding that we receive each year
- Most community action agencies are non profits, but for Alexandria, DCHS fulfills that function.
    - EOC is the board for the community action agency for the city of alexandria
- CSBG funds can only be used for rental and utility assistance; use local funds to fulfill all other functions
    - 727 requests in Q1 and Q2 2024
    - Rent, utility, moving and storage, burial, prescription
    - Most $$ goes to rental assistance

    - $530,578 spent so far, 245,477 from CSBG (81% of total CSBG budget)
- Q: Why spend CSBG first?
    - Use or lose
    - May be able to apply for additional later in the year if exhausted
- Q:
    - Rental assistance is 3 months per household per fiscal year

- Q: what is the role of the "board" ? How does it compare to a non profit board/company board?
    - Advisory vs. decision making, etc.
- **Q; Role of the board**
    - **Report to the board every year CSBG funding**
    - **City staff can't advocate, board can advocate**
    - **EOC is a tripart board, representation of voices**
    - **Community needs assessment report q3years**
- Q: How does this FY compare to what we expect for FY25?
    - Hard to answer
    - With more funding, we could be more flexible (and accept more households)
    - Potentially could fund more positions and help more people
    - ~$300,000 calculated in terms of households that would be approved
- Q: What is the financial gap between people we serve and people we can't serve because we have to turn away?
    - Have been tracking % cases that have been denied or approved
    - usually ~⅓ not approved
        - 90 households per month served
- Q: what is included in "utilities"?
    - Washington gas, dominion energy, alex renew, V.A. Water
    - Through apartments, could be contractors, but mostly the above

Guest Speaker: Natalie Tallis (ADH)

- **Agenda**
    - CHIP 2021-2025
    - Community Health Assessment
    - Quick Healthy Homes Update
- **CHIP**
    - In the middle of implementing current CHIP
    - Developed in Oct. 2019, came from previous community health assessment
    - Top 10 health issues in Alexandria, brought to community, asked which of the 10 the community wanted to work on:
        - Poverty
        - Mental Health
        - Housing
    - CHIP is co-developed by ADH and PHA
    - 80 total tactics, 70 in progress

    - Tactic progress by priority
        - Housing: 89%
        - Mental Health: 92%
        - Poverty: ??%
    - Aligned strategies
- **PHA**
    - PHA offers technical assistance, relationship building
        - Has contacts at other stakeholders***
    - TACTICS EOC VOLUNTEERED FOR: (8)
        - Housing:
            - Tactic 2: Assess and promote viable zoning changes that will help to increase the supply of affordable housing
                - ***COMMUNICATE OUR ADVOCACY FOR ZFH TO PHA***
            - Tactic 1: Promote energy efficiency policies
                - Concepts and opportunities for retrofit initiatives identified; Policies that would be feasible & beneficial for Alexandria residents are identified; Energy Efficiency policies, concepts & opportunities presented to City Council.
        - Childcare
            - Tactic 3… advocate for greater investment in childcare at the local and state levels, including subsidies, funding for childcare facilities, and higher pay for childcare workers.
        - Employment
            - Tactic 1: $15 minimum wage
            - Tactic 2: Create and promote a “hire Alexandrians” initiative for all building/development projects in Alexandria
                - Tactic 2 [SIC]: Identify sources of financial support for career exploration and workforce development programs
        - Financial
            - Tactic 2: advocate for community banking policies that are friendly to low-income individuals and families
                - A campaign developed and launched; number of banking policies that are changed that are friendlier to low-income individuals and families
                - Reduce dependence on pay-day lending
        - Transportation
            - Tactic 1: Advocate for free DASH/reduced fares
            - Tactic 2: Support funding for service increases of the 2022 and 2030 Vision Plan networks
- **CHA 2024**
    - Comprehensive look at Health in Alexandria
        - Leads us to the next CHIP
        - Quantitative & Qualitative data

    - Steps
        - Identify overarching topics to assess
        - Develop methods and identify other assessments (like EOC's)
        - Implement assessments
            - qualitative: surveys, focus groups, built environment, photovoice
            - quantitative: core indicators, disparities in data
        - Analyze and review findings
        - Generate report
    - **Public kickoff meeting end of August 2024**
        - Complete ~ June 2025
- **Healthy Homes Update**
    - Developed an Action Plan *LINK AND DETAILS FOLLOW UP*
    - To create a coalition to do community engagement
    - ALX Breathe came out of this
    - Data
        - 311 data re housing conditions
        - APEX data (code admin.) for citations/rental inspections
        - Hospitalizations from various issues
- DISCUSSION
    - Data sharing, how to share data among organizations responsible for reports like needs assessment, CHA

City Updates

- **OCS updates - Alison**
    - Fully staffed
    - Able to fund a temp. position for eviction prevention
        - Has seen decrease from 8.5 weeks to 3-4 weeks
    - Shelter waitlist high, ~100 people (from all categories)
- **DCHS updates - Lesa**
    - No updates.

Procedural

- Meronne reviewed the agenda, Aminata moved to approve the agenda and L'Allegro seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the agenda.
- Meronne reviewed the May minutes, L'Allegro moved to approve the minutes and Conrad seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the May minutes.

Old Business

- **Elections**
    - Slate:
        - Chair: Tim
        - Vice Chair: Conrad
        - Secretary: Taylor
    - Meronne moved to nominate the above slate, L'Allegro seconded. The Commission unanimously voted to approve the slate.

- Community Cookouts and Pulse Check
    - Pulse Questionnaires to administer at cookouts
    - DT is collecting pulse check questionnaires, has collected 31 so far, compiling into a database
    - Best way to get to DT?
        - Add Date, where asked

New Business

- Bylaws update in June
    - Incorporate new virtual meeting policy (50%)
    - Possibly child care provision; need to reach out to city clerk
- Next season schedule discussion
    - Food Security plan usually given in September, but may be delayed this year
    - Tim to create workstream document to incorporate EOC responsibilities to help aid meeting discussions and deliverables
    - DT: commission on aging, potential partnership/guest speaker for EOC
- Summer session – EOC in recess
- Next meeting: Sept. 18, 2024 in person.

Announcements / Open Discussion

- Conflict of interest policies for signature
- New Commission of the year award, consider for next year
    - * Can add to workstream *
- 14 of 15 seats filled, 1 vacancy under elected officials
    - Recent appointment on behalf of Compagna Center
    - L'Allegro coming off (representing Councilman Chapman)
    - Another elected official position open

Closing: L'Allegro moved to adjourn the meeting and Conrad seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:59 PM ET**.**