

**City of Alexandria Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) Meeting Minutes  
January 17, 2024, 7:00 PM ET (Virtual)**

**Attendees:**

1. Meronne Teklu, Chair
2. Aminata Ly, Vice Chair
3. Karishma Merchant
4. David Parker
5. Conrad Sylvanus
6. Taylor Phillips
7. Jenn Ayers
8. Illiana Moses
9. L'Allegro Smith
10. Charles Brown
11. Babak Pirouz
12. Berole Bekele
13. Alison Coleman, Staff

**Absences:**

1. Tim Laderach (excused)

**Meronne Teklu, EOC Chair, commenced the meeting at 7:06 PM ET.**

**Procedural**

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

**Chair's Opening Remarks**

- Brief welcoming remarks.

**City Updates**

- **OCS updates/DCHS updates - Alison**
  - Budget Discussion
    - Continued conversations leading up to City Council budget discussion.
  - General Assembly session
    - Update on GA session and legislative priorities advocated for by City.
  - Point in Time (PIT)
    - Planned January 25, 2024.
    - Annual, nationwide PIT count; conducted on coldest night of the year
    - City of Alexandria canvasses the city, meet with people experiencing homelessness, ask them questions to obtain information, collect information along with data from shelters.

- Expecting an increase in number of people experiencing homeless across the region.
  - Subsequent regional report from Council of Governments.
- 2024 Strategic Plan to end homelessness
  - Finalized in 2023, presented to council January 23.
  - Asking council to support.
- State Monitoring Interviews
  - State approved state monitoring visit; submitted to City
  - Received positive feedback from state on data collection and reporting.
- Board of Community Action Agency / Virginia Community Action Partnership
  - Alexandria DCHS provided feedback to these agencies that there is not enough focus on housing crisis
  - New committee formed re housing
- Staffing
  - All permanent positions at OCS are full pending a final offer letter.
  - In process of hiring for eviction prevention service navigator position.
- Funding:
  - CSBG TANF funding exhausted
  - almost all CSBG basic funding from state almost exhausted
  - All additional funding from the City for emergency rental assistance is exhausted.
  - Approximately 6 month lead time for appointments
  - Still have a high need for funding.

## Old Business

- **Needs Assessment:**
  - Meronne shared the needs assessment report with the commission.
  - Request to review finalized version and provide last comments electronically; vote electronically on approving finalized version by January 23.
  - Babak shared comments regarding fluctuation of numbers over time, specifically relating to the transitory population. Encouraged language relating to new arrivals of refugees.
- **City Budget Letter:**
  - Meronne shared a recap relating to the city budget discussion in the November meeting.
  - Meronne, Taylor and Aminata to co-draft EOC's letter to the City.
- **Business Cards**
  - Dave provided comments on business cards; plan to pursue via third party company.

## New Business

- **Monumental Entertainment District Proposal**
  - Dave shared comments relating to discussions at the Carpenter's Shelter.

- Meronne shared thoughts on how EOC could explore the proposal and methods of expressing a formal position if one is desired by the Commission.
- Shared public engagement opportunities presented by the stakeholders.
- Other potential relevant issues raised:
  - Stress on police department and public services
  - Reduction in commercial tax base in the City
  - Potential infrastructure concerns
  - Jobs, number of jobs, types of jobs, union commitments
  - Affordable housing in the neighborhood; displacement
  - Transit investments
- Potential for EOC to shape the conversation and highlight relevant issues from the EOC's mission perspective.
- Commissioners interested in drafting a letter for the Commission's consideration are welcome to do so.
- Panelists
  - Alison shared that EOC formerly had a rhythm of inviting panelists to speak before the Commission at its monthly meetings to inform the Commission.
  - Prior areas include: health, childcare, employment, housing, workforce development, etc.
  - Commissioners expressed interest in hosting panelists at future meetings, including representatives from other commissions.
  - Other groups expressing interest to join EOC to present:
    - YIMBYs (Yes In My BackYard) of NOVA (Northern Virginia)
    - Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC)

### **Announcements / Open Discussion**

- Point In Time Count
- Town Hall with Alexandria Delegation to General Assembly

**Closing:** L'Allegro moved to adjourn the meeting, Babak seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:09 PM ET.