

ALEXANDRIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2020
7:00 p.m.
Black History Museum
902 Wythe Street

Members Present

Danielle Beach
Amy Blackwood, Vice Chair
Francisco Durán, Chair
Matt Harris, Vice Chair
Alex Howe
Michael Kreps
Elizabeth "PJ" Palmer Johnson
David Rigsby

Staff Present

Jean Kelleher
Miladis Martinez Gutierrez

Members Excused

Kevin Edwards
Damien Hammond, Sr
Christopher Harris
Susan Kellom
Scott Schwartz

Guests:

Audrey Davis, Director, Black History Museum
Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director RPCA, Office for the Arts
Barbara Wilmer, Grassroots Alexandria
Jennifer Wade, Citizen

1. Call to Order/Introductions by Chair, Francisco Durán

Chair Durán called the meeting to order at 7:09p.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of January Minutes

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Harris, seconded by Commissioner Rigsby, the Commission approved the minutes of the January meeting. All Commissioners present voted aye.

3. Guest: Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director RPCA, Office for the Arts

Chair Durán welcomed guest Diane Ruggiero and asked her to introduce herself. Ms. Ruggiero stated that she is the head of office of the arts, which is a division of the City's Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities Department. She stated that one of thing that they do is to oversee the City's public art program. She stated that because the new portion of the waterfront park is temporary, they decided to do temporary public art there. She stated that last year they had mirror. Mirror was their inaugural piece for that park and the idea is that every year they will have a new artist and a new project. She stated that the artist that was selected for 2020 is Olalekan Jeyifous. Ms. Ruggiero conducted a PowerPoint presentation and talked about the new art piece that is going to be installed at the waterfront. She stated that this project was done as an invitational, because they were looking for artists who do a very specific kind of work. She said that they invited 50 artists to apply and 30 artists responded. She stated that all their public art process and all of their public projects have a task force. The task force is composed of community members, members of the arts commission and then, usually, project Stake holders

like other City Departments or whoever is involved in the project. She added that every single public art project has a unique set of goals specific to that project. She said that the task force had talked about public art that is destination oriented, something that will compel people to come, something that people would want to see repeatedly. This project must be site specific; it must be unique to Alexandria; it has to be within the park, and it has to hold up to a lot of visitors. The selected artist is required to come to Alexandria, and the artist is taken all over the City, they do not only see the site where the art is going to go, but they take them to Arlandria, to Del Ray the West End. Once the Artist has come to the City, the artist is asked to come up with a concept, there were themes that Olalekan Jeyifous walked away with. One was the history of Alexandria as a trade City and a port City. The other thing that he was attracted by was the African-American quilting tradition that existed mostly in the South, and so, with that he developed a set of patterns. Ms. Ruggiero stated that the concept was showed to several people, it was very well received, and the Arts Commission approved it. She stated that they are expecting the art piece to open to the public on Saturday, March 21, 2020.

Chair Durán thanked Diane Ruggiero for her presentation to the Commission.

Audrey Davis, Director, Black History Museum, OHA
(Alexandria history and context for the first EJI public meeting)

Chair Durán welcomed guest Audrey Davis, Director of the Black History Museum. Ms. Davis stated that she was going to show a short film that was 17 minutes long called “Our Alexandria,” and it is led by volunteers Linwood M. Smith and Sharon J. Frazier. Ms. Davis said that they had a display of the dollhouse at the Black History Museum and said that the last display was there for nine months and it had 26 dollhouses. She said that this film is couched in Civil Rights Era, and is why they created their newest creation, which is on display at the Black History Museum.

She stated that initially she was going to do a presentation on the EJI program focusing on Alexandria’s lynching history. She stated that there were two lynching’s in Alexandria; Joseph McCoy on April 23, 1897 and Benjamin Thomas on August 8, 1899. She said that what Alexandria is trying to do is retrieve the pillars from EJI. Ms. Davis stated that they have establish seven different committees that are working on different aspects. She also added that they are having different programs that they have done already with EJI. She added that last Saturday they posted a film at the Lyceum called “The rape of Recy Taylor” a very powerful documentary about an African-American woman who was gang raped by six white man, and she had the courage to stand up and she named names. She added that they have four programs coming up with Susan Strasser, a History Professor at University of Delaware. She is going to do four called A White Woman Confronts Racism, the first one will be on slavery, the second one will coincide with the anniversary of the Joseph McCoy’s lynching, so it will be on lynching, and she will also do sections on voting rights and segregation. The Commission watched the film “Our Alexandria,” which is about a set of dollhouses that reflect life in Alexandria’s African-American community years ago in Old Town.

4. Executive Committee Report

Chair Durán stated that the Executive Committee met and stated that on March 2, Dr. Goodman is coming to share with the Executive Committee the Fair Housing Testing results. He added that Dr. Hutchings, Superintendent from the Alexandria City Public Schools will be coming to the March Commission Meeting. Chair Durán asked Commissioners to please submit their questions for the School Superintendent to Director Kelleher by March 2. He stated that Sheriff Lawhorne has confirm that the April meeting will be held at the Detention Center with a tour. He added that in May and June the Commission wants to invite Sarah Taylor to come and report about what legislation passed. He also stated that the new Equity Officer Jaqueline Tucker may be able to join the Commission either in May or June as well.

Director Kelleher stated that the new Equity Officer Jaqueline Tucker just started this week and will be to the equity group meeting this Friday. She added that Ms. Tucker will be meeting with all the City Department heads. Chair Durán stated that May and June are still up in the air, those are not confirmed yet and asked Commissioners if they have any ideas of who to invite for May or June to let him know. Commissioner Howe asked if the Commission will still be having a panel discussion around the amazon effect and housing. Chair Durán stated that the Commission would still like to do it and maybe it could be a topic for the July retreat.

5. Old & New Business

Commissioner Palmer Johnson stated that she had forwarded information to Miladis about the upcoming Commission for women activities. She also announced that on March 23, they will have their Salute to Women's Award and said that they are currently soliciting nominations from all the Commissions and from private citizens. She added that the deadline for submitting the nominations is February 27, 2020.

Commissioner Harris brought up an issue about a hair salon publicizing hair cut prices based on gender, different prices for men and women. Director Kelleher stated that she will have the summer interns to work on sending reminder letters to all the hair salons.

6. Liaison Reports

Commissioner Howe stated that Landlord and Tenant Relations Board talked about the work to do, to enhance tenant relocation/displacement programs. The Board is working on the policies that they have in place, the ones for condom conversion is the only one where they can mandate any kind of action on the part of the developer. If they are converting apartments to condominium, they can say you have to give them first right of refusal to buy the condo or relocation cost. He added that they have other things on the books, but it is completely voluntary, and it is part of the developer contribution negotiation and said that the Board is looking to expand those. He stated that maybe by the next meeting he will be able to share a draft of what the City Staff in the Office of Housing has done.

7. Announcements /Adjournment

MOTION: adjourn the meeting.

Palmer Johnson / Howe **PASSED** unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.