

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 26, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF THE FY 2004 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

ISSUE: Receipt of the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) Fiscal Year 2004 Annual Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council receive the Annual Report from the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities and thank the commission members for their efforts on behalf of the City.

DISCUSSION: The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities is a 17 member advisory Board appointed by City Council to serve as the principal advocate for issues relating to disability in Alexandria. Their Annual Report (Attachment) lists a number of activities for 2003-2004:

- ▶ Developing the nomination of the City of Alexandria for the National Organization on Disability, "Access America 2004" award, resulting in Alexandria being named as one of eleven finalists.
- ▶ Enhancing accessibility in the City by working with Transportation and Environmental Services to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that ensures ACPD's review and input in City projects at the 30% completion level. Similar MOUs are being developed with General Services and Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Activities.
- ▶ Organizing and serving on Work Groups that focused on accessible/ talking ATMs, accessible voting machines, captioning of City Council meetings, audible pedestrian traffic signals and the installation of audio description and assisted listening technologies.
- ▶ Providing testimony and written recommendations to City Council and for Public Hearings on issues affecting persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Continuing involvement in planning and advocacy for affordable, accessible housing for persons with disabilities in Alexandria.

- ▶ On-going efforts in disability awareness throughout the year, and specifically, during October, 2003 “Disability Employment Awareness Month”, including National Student Mentoring Day and the Annual Departmental ADA Coordinator’s Training. Other annual events including the presentation of the Gerry Bertier Scholarship, the John Duty Collins III Outstanding Advocate Award, the Community Organization Grant and the Disability Awareness Business Awards undertaken in conjunction with the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce.
- ▶ Successful advocacy efforts regarding persons with disabilities and senior transportation resulting in City Council approving \$5000 to correct inequity relating to the cost of transportation for disabled seniors needing accessible vehicles through DOT.

ATTACHMENT:

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities 2004 Annual Report.

STAFF:

Debra Collins, Director, Department of Human Services

Jack Powers, Director, Division of Community Programs

MaryAnn Griffin, Director, Office of Aging and Adult Services

Carol Stewart, Disability Resources Coordinator, Office of Aging and Adult Services

Debbie Ludington, Long Term Care Coordinator, Office of Aging and Adult Services



Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities

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FY 04 ANNUAL REPORT

Members of the Commission

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Jane Kachulis, Vice Chair

Amanda Babcock
Roger Barbee
Kathryn Cunningham
Joseph Delfico
Kathryn Edwards
Barbara Gilley
Louise Harrison
Anne Marie Hohman
Jeffrey McAllister
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Tom Sachs
Ruth Soto

Members of City Council

William D. Euille, Mayor
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Ludwig P. Gaines
Rob Krupicka
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Paul C. Smedberg
Joyce Woodson

ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003 to 2004

INTRODUCTION

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) is a 17 member volunteer citizen body appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The Commission is composed of 14 citizen members, a representative of the Alexandria Commission on Aging and two representatives of the business community (one from the Chamber of Commerce and one at-large). A majority of the citizen members are persons with disabilities. The Commission is organized into an Executive Committee, and five standing committees. Through its committees, the Commission focuses its work on issues of transportation, access, housing, employment and public awareness. Monthly meetings are held at City Hall, Room 2000, at 7:00 PM on the second Wednesday of each month.

The ACPD provides advice to the Mayor, City Council, and City Manager on policies, programs and legislation affecting Alexandria citizens who have a disability; makes recommendations regarding the City's affirmative action plan; provides a forum for the expression of concerns and problems by persons with disabilities and recommends corrective action. The ACPD also serves as Alexandria's Disability Services Board (DSB). The DSB develops and makes available for public comment a comprehensive needs assessment identifying local needs, service gaps, priority populations and services for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities. The DSB administers the local Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF) to leverage private and public dollars to improve service delivery and public awareness regarding its target population. The RSIF funds are granted by the Virginia General Assembly through the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS).

The following report highlights the Commission's actions and accomplishments in the areas of transportation, accessibility, housing, employment, awards and public awareness for the City's fiscal year from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004.

TRANSPORTATION

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities worked with transit staff to develop a visitor policy, a no show policy and a policy on abusive behavior, as applicable to riders. An appeals policy was also formulated to define the protocol for challenging denial of service, application review and suspension of service due to frequent No Show or Abusive Behavior. The Office of Human Rights reviewed the policies for consistency and City staff worked on framing the language in order to ensure that persons with language or cognitive deficits could understand each policy.

The Commission also provided DOT with insight regarding the specific needs of persons utilizing para-transit services, when Staff was developing the Request For Proposals for the new

DOT contract for para-transit services, as well as the process by which the DOT vendor would be selected.

The ACPD and the Commission on Aging (COA) worked together to develop a process and budget that will ensure that the Senior Taxi Program complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by having wheelchair lift vans available to serve mobility impaired seniors. Seniors who require a wheelchair lift van needed to be enrolled in both the Senior Taxi and the DOT Programs. The cost equity problem was addressed, as the cost for the DOT Program (which has the wheelchair lift vans available) is \$2, whereas Senior Taxi (which does not have wheelchair lift vans available) costs \$1.50 per trip. An agreement was reached with City Council voting to provide funds to pay the cost differential.

ACPD has undertaken a long-term effort to provide input to City Council on the regulation of the Taxi Industry within the City of Alexandria. The focus of this effort has been to protect the interests of persons with disabilities who are entitled to quality service and convenience. Therefore, the training of taxi drivers is essential. ACPD has also developed and presented a paper to Transit Services on the benefits and disadvantages of a voucher system for the participants in the DOT Program and the Senior Taxi Program.

Various Commission members provided input and/or testimony at MetroAccess Public Hearings regarding the proposed fare increase and other changes in the regional para-transit service. Part of this effort included work on and testimony before the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Regional Task Force. Testimony and advocacy included the issues of fare increases, the three-quarter mile rule and surcharges for specific long distance trips.

ACCESSIBILITY

The ACPD has actively worked with the Registrar of Voters, the Electoral Board and City Staff to develop recommendations for the City Council regarding the most accessible voting machines. Models of accessible voting machines were on display and available for testing by persons with disabilities and the public in general. The result was significant input from persons with disabilities as to their respective preferences, which were included in the recommendation. The City Council followed the recommendation for purchase of the model manufactured by HART, because of its great versatility and ease of use. With funds allocated by City Council and monies from the Help American Vote Act (HAVA), accessible HART voting machines were purchased for all precincts and use was initiated in the February 2004 presidential primary. This was a full two years before federal regulation required that accessible voting machines be available to persons with disabilities. ACPD participated in developing the training on the accessible voting machines for the precinct volunteers. The Commission also participated in the many efforts to inform the community of the accessible voting machines. Persons with disabilities report gratifying experiences of being able to cast their vote privately for the first time in their lives.

The ACPD has worked with the Chamber of Commerce and the American Red Cross on enhancing the accessibility of the Red Cross building, in which the Chamber of Commerce often

holds events. A subcommittee of the Board of the American Red Cross has been formed to focus on accessibility and coordinate efforts with ACPD.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and signed between the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities and the Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES). The MOU establishes that ACPD will be asked to review plans and designs for accessibility at the 30% completion point of all projects. Two architects serve on the Commission and have devoted many hours in such reviews and discussions. A major focus has been the revision and upgrading of curb cuts throughout the City. Similar Memoranda of Understanding are being developed with Alexandria General Services Administration and Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities.

The Commission strengthened its involvement in ensuring accessible facilities by providing input into the design of the new main entrance to City Hall, reviewing the plans for the new TC Williams High School and Chinquapin Recreation Center, the bridge at Pickett and Duke Streets, the Duke Street Concourse linked with the King Street Metro Station, the design of Duncan Library, accessibility of the Federal Court House and other projects.

A major ACPD effort during this year was the Audible Accessible Pedestrian Traffic Signal Work Group. The Work Group comprised of City Staff, members of ACPD, Orientation and Mobility Instructors and persons with disabilities researched the various types of audible/accessible pedestrian traffic signals and also developed a method of evaluating intersections and established a priority for testing the different models. With money from the Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF), three different signals were purchased and installed by Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES). Reports from persons with disabilities indicated a preference for the PRISMA System. Two additional intersections have been selected: Braddock Road at Mt. Vernon Avenue and Diagonal Road and King Street by the King Street Metro Station. Monies have also been obtained to retrofit all traffic signals on Duke Street with the audible, accessible pedestrian traffic signals.

In conjunction with the AMC Hoffman Theater Center 22, the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities spearheaded the project to install audio description and rear window captioning for persons with hearing impairments.

Captioning was further expanded by advocacy from the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities to City Council. After developing a working relationship with the National Captioning Institute, City Council Meetings are now captioned in English, with plans to also caption in Spanish as well as expand the types of meetings that will be captioned.

ACPD prepared a proposal to City Council requesting that ACPD be designated as a permanent seat on the Commission on Information and Technology. The Commission will provide input on accessibility in the spirit of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The Talking ATM Work Group was formed by the ACPD, with representatives of the banking community, persons with disabilities, non-profits serving persons with disabilities and City staff. The goal of the Work Group was to review current regulations from the U.S. Access Board and state of availability of talking/accessible ATMs in Alexandria. At the beginning of the project, there were few accessible ATMs within the City; however with efforts to inform banks of the requirement for talking/accessible ATMs and the cooperation from City Code Enforcement, the number of talking/ accessible ATMs has increased dramatically with the trend continuing. A report with recommendations was sent to City Council, which accepted the findings and recommendations. Additional work on this project will be required once the new Americans with Disabilities Act Guidelines (ADAG) has been published

In cooperation with the Human Rights Commission, a joint letter has been developed to send to all gas stations within the City informing the operator of the requirement to provide accommodation to persons with disabilities at the self-serve pumps, and charging only the cost of gas at the self-serve pump even if the driver requires an attendant to pump his/ her gas.

HOUSING

The recent 2003 Needs Assessment undertaken by the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities demonstrated that affordable, accessible housing is one of three top priorities in Alexandria. A Commissioner remains a member of many local, regional and state level task forces and work groups on housing, as well as the Olmstead Implementation Team. The Commission has advocated to City Council and the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority on behalf of persons with disabilities in the need of affordable, accessible housing. To date, there has been no response from ARHA as to its interest in working on a regional task force with the ACPD with the goal of developing short and long term goals to ameliorate the housing crisis.

The City's Office of Housing offers a variety of projects, including the Residential Assistance Modification Program (RAMP) has actively worked to modify existing housing to meet the accessibility needs of the residents. ACPD continues to work with RAMP by making referrals and informing persons with disabilities that this program is actively seeking to assist persons with accessibility needs.

EMPLOYMENT

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities continued to review and study the City's Affirmative Action Program Report. This review and study includes the Applicant Tracking Report and the Annual Utilization Report. Over the last few years, the statistics outlined in these reports showed that the hiring and promotions of employees with disabilities has remained flat. The Commission strongly encourages revision of the voluntary Personal Data Form, and that a voluntary survey be undertaken to determine what specific jobs within the City are held by persons with disabilities. The goal of the revision is to establish a base line of data

that can be used as a comparative tool in the future. The ACPD will continue working with Personnel Services and the Affirmative Action Officer to complete this project.

The Commission maintains a partnership with the City's *JobLink*. The Employment Training Specialist for Persons with Disabilities and the Assistive Technology Specialist attend all ACPD meetings. ACPD also is kept updated on the Assistive Technology available to persons with disabilities who use the Employment Resource Room. These services originally started as a result of a Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund Grant, AA Model Employment Initiative. The passing of the Work Force Investment Act (WIA) resulted in more regulations requiring employment services for persons with disabilities. The Commission endorsed a *JobLink* grant entitled AA Path to Employment through the Work Force Investment Board, which expanded services and technology available at the facility. It should be noted that *JobLink* has been nationally recognized by the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy of the U.S. Department of Labor as a ABest Practices site in services to persons with disabilities in a One Stop Employment Center.

In a collaborative effort between ACPD, *JobLink*, Personnel Services, and City staff a training program, "How to Get a Job With the City" has been developed in order to recruit qualified persons with disabilities for employment with the City. *JobLink* has adopted the curriculum as part of its regular training calendar and it will be offered quarterly. The first presentation of the program will be in October 2004, as part of Disability Employment Awareness Month.

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month and many activities to focus on employment of persons with disabilities are undertaken by ACPD. The Mayor read a Proclamation, declaring October 2003 as Disability Employment Awareness Month in the City. In conjunction with Personnel Services and the Alexandria City Public Schools, the Commission promotes participation in National Student Mentoring Day, which provides students with disabilities the opportunity of shadowing a City employee to learn the various aspects of governmental jobs.

Each department in the City has designated an ADA Coordinator to serve as a resource person for new hires or incumbent employees requesting reasonable accommodations. An annual Departmental ADA Coordinator's Training Program is sponsored by Personnel Services and endorsed by ACPD. Staff to the Commission and Disability Resources Coordinator provides assistance to staff of Personnel Services in developing a curriculum locating speakers, presentations on Assistive Technology and other points of interest for the ADA Coordinators. The training, which is presented in October of each year, provides updates on the ADA as well as regulations and case law.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

The ACPD began planning its annual fund-raiser. The fund-raiser will be a cooperative effort between the Port City Playhouse and the ACPD. The play, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* will debut in October 2004, at the Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center Auditorium. This site was selected because of its state-of-the-art accessibility features which include comfortable wheelchair access, audio description and captioning. The funds raised by this event are used to

support the Gerry Bertier scholarship, the John Duty Collins III Outstanding Advocate Award and the Community Organization grant.

On June 22, 2004, ACPD held its annual Awards Ceremony in the Vola Lawson Lobby in City Hall. In attendance were the Mayor, Members of City Council and numerous Directors and Deputy Directors of City departments. Beverly C. Steele, a retired City employee, was the recipient of the John Duty Collins III Outstanding Advocate Award in recognition of her years of work on behalf of persons with disabilities.

As part of its continuing efforts to educate the Alexandria Police on disability issues, the Commission participated in training of cadets at the Police Academy. Training included an overview of the ADA and other disability and civil rights laws, as well as practical applications of assistive technology such as the Light Writer serving as a sighted guide for the blind, communication with persons with cognitive impairments and etiquette related to use of a wheelchair.

The ACPD and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce sponsored two joint business awards titled the "Disability Awareness Awards" in November 2003. The focus of one award is to acknowledge an Alexandria business that excels in employing persons with disabilities and the second award acknowledges a local business that provides outstanding service to persons with disabilities. The 2003 Awards Ceremony was held at the American Red Cross.

ACPD has closely followed the Emergency Preparedness Plan that has been developing over the last several years. Efforts to upgrade the Plan have increased since 9/11. ACPD has a liaison seat with the Citizen Corps Council and works continuously to ensure that disaster and emergency services for persons with disabilities will be provided effectively and efficiently.

The ACPD began developing a web page to serve as an informational resource on the Commission, disability issues and links to other disability-related web sites.

A Commemoration Committee was established to research options to honor members of ACPD who died during their respective service on the Commission. The concept of a ALiving Landscape@ area, where all citizens can enjoy the memorial is predominate in the Committee's work. A tree, bench or picnic table with the ACPD logo and the names of the deceased Commissioners on a brass plaque is currently under consideration.

The Commission, which also serves as the local Disability Services Board, undertook a Needs Assessment related to persons with physical and sensory disabilities. The goal of the Needs Assessment was to integrate census data, survey results and other information in order to establish the priority of eleven service areas. Approximately 2500 individual surveys were distributed to persons with disabilities, with a 14% response rate. Over 200 service provider surveys were distributed with a response rate of 5%. The Needs Assessment demonstrated that access to medical and pharmaceutical services, housing and transportation were the top three priorities among respondents to the survey. Service providers were also surveyed and the information gathered was integrated into the report. Results of the Needs Assessment will be

used in ongoing project planning and advocacy for persons with disabilities.

SUMMARY

Many of the projects and programs undertaken by the ACPD served as the foundation for the City of Alexandria being selected as one of eleven finalists in the "Access America 2004" award. This award, sponsored by the National Organization on Disability, in conjunction with UPS, offers this program in order to enhance community awareness of disability-related issues and to recognize those communities that exceed the minimum standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act. ACPD was actively involved with the preparation of the nomination of the City of Alexandria for this award. The nomination served as a showcase of the extensive accessibility features and the positive environment in the City promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of community life. The naming of Alexandria as a finalist was used by the Communication Specialist of the City Manager's Office to publicize disability awareness in the City.