

*City of Alexandria, Virginia***MEMORANDUM**

DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER *J*

SUBJECT: COMMISSION ON AGING 2007 – 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

ISSUE: Throughout the year the Commission on Aging engages in activities including advocacy and education to help insure that issues affecting Alexandria's older citizens are given the time and attention required. At the end of each fiscal year, the commission prepares a written report summarizing and highlighting its activities and accomplishments for the year.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council accept the 2007 to 2008 Annual Report from the Commission on Aging.

BACKGROUND: The Commission on Aging serves as the principal advocate for issues relating to aging and promotes the implementation of the Older Americans Act and other age-pertinent laws and policies in Alexandria and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Commission advances programs and services that address the needs of older Alexandrians, especially for (but not exclusively) low-income citizens.

The Commission on Aging consists of 21 members, the majority of whom are citizens age 60 and older. Members also include designated representatives from a health care provider organization, a supportive service provider, an individual with leadership experience in a volunteer organization as well as a local elected official or his or her designee. Vice Mayor Del Pepper has served in this latter capacity for many years. Additionally, the Commission has liaisons with other commissions as well as city and private programs.

The full Commission meets monthly from September through June, while the Executive Committee meets at least monthly, and more often as warranted. Meetings are open to the public and well attended.

ATTACHMENT: Commission on Aging 2007 – 2008 Annual Report.

STAFF:

Debra R. Collins, Assistant City Manager for Community and Human Services
Leticia Lacomba, Deputy Director of Human Services

The Alexandria Commission on Aging
Annual Report

2007 –2008



Respectfully Submitted by William Harris, Chair

Alexandria Commission on Aging

July 2008

Alexandria Commission on Aging Annual Report 2007-2008

The Alexandria Commission of Aging is comprised of members appointed by the Alexandria City Council. The purpose of the Commission is to represent the senior adults of Alexandria City and to provide oversight and advocacy for all matters affecting their well being. It has 21 members and met 10 times this past year.

During the past year the Commission dealt with the following issues:

1. Elder Readiness – “Building a More Livable Alexandria for All Ages”

This year the Commission began exploring the ramifications of the phenomenon of the increasing number of elderly and their increasing ages who are commonly known as “Baby Boomers.” The Commission became concerned about what it should and/or could do to deal with these coming important demographic and social changes. As a start the Commission chose as its theme in this effort “Building a More Livable Alexandria for All Ages.”

To begin this exploration effort staff in the Office of Aging and Adult Services looked at what Arlington and Fairfax have done in this arena. They also initiated contact with the City’s Demographer and GIS Department and began to get information on the aging demographics and population trends in the city. It soon became evident the task is too big for the voluntary members of the Commission. While the staff was extremely supportive and heavily involved, there are too few of them to undertake a project of this magnitude without outside support. The Commission then appealed to the City Council for help:

- a. Support assigning one staff person in each city department to be the lead person for senior issues. The individuals selected will be responsible for learning about the special needs of the elderly, evaluating what their departments are doing now to meet those needs, and making recommendations for better meeting those needs in the future. The Commission recommended that coordination, and leadership as needed, be given by the Director of the Office of Aging and Adult Services.
- b. Engage an outside contractor to develop a long range action plan for meeting the needs of the coming Baby Boomers. The Commission recommended the contractor study what the City needs to do to prepare for the increasing number of its older citizens, produce a written long-term strategic plan for meeting those needs, and resources permitting provide guidance with the implementation of the plan.
- c. Expand the City’s Senior Taxi program to include one “anywhere” trip. This recommendation by Vice Mayor Del Pepper to expand availability of taxicabs for seniors in Alexandria for additional purposes, such as going to religious services, visiting family, attending meetings, etc. was strongly supported by the Commission.
- d. Develop a work-for-taxes program for seniors. This program recommended by Vice Mayor Pepper would give low-income Alexandria citizens who could not afford real estate taxes an opportunity to work for the City in lieu of paying those taxes was also endorsed by the Commission.

2. **Service Providers' Feedback Forum**

The Commission supported Debbie Ludington, Long Term Care Coordinator, in sponsoring this forum, held in April at the Hermitage Continuing Care Retirement Community. Thirty-one organizations each presented three-minute reports on what they saw as the pressing needs of the elderly now, and in the near future. A wealth of information was presented and put into a Summary Report which will be used as an element of the Aging Needs Assessment.

3. **Transportation**

The City developed a draft *Master Plan for Transportation for Alexandria*. The Commission appointed a committee to review and comment on the draft plan. The committee found the draft plan did not give adequate consideration to the needs of the City's elderly citizens, and made numerous suggestions for their benefit. The final transportation plan was much stronger and better because of the commission's input. *The oversight of elderly issues by the committee drafting the plan points out the need for someone in each area or department of the City to be assigned the responsibility for looking out for the needs the City's elderly and more vulnerable citizens.*

4. **PACE (Program for All-inclusive Care of the Elderly)**

Alexandria Commission on Aging is cooperating with other Northern Virginia commissions in a collaborative effort to develop a program. The PACE program provides housing and care support to frail elderly who qualify for nursing home care under the Medicaid program. *(Alexandria's efforts were reported on in its 2007-2008 annual report to City Council.)* There are currently seven non-governmental agencies working together to bring PACE to northern Virginia.

5. **Annual Commission on Aging Awards**

Each year the Commission gives out three awards to individuals and organizations that have demonstrated extraordinary service to benefit elderly Alexandria citizens. An awards program was hosted by Goodwin House Alexandria during which the accomplishments of the following recipients were recognized:

- a. "Annie B. Rose Lifetime Achievement Award" to Sandy Calhoun
- b. "Lois Van Valkenburgh Excellence in Aging Award for an Individual" to Amber Nightingale and Barbara Callahan
- c. "Excellence in Aging Award for an Organization" to ALIVE

6. **Cooperation with Arlington Commission on Aging**

This year the Commission joined with the Arlington Commission on Aging in several projects. The first was an invitation to the Director of the Arlington Aging on Aging to share with our Commission some of the things they are doing. Following up on her presentation, the Commission jointly sponsored a "legislative update" to which all state senators and delegates from Northern Virginia were invited to share their thoughts and plans for the coming legislative session. In May the Commission jointly sponsored a "legislative forum" to which federal legislators were invited to present their take on current federal legislation affecting the elderly.

7. NVAN (Northern Virginia Aging Network)

NVAN is an informal networking organization made up of the Commissions on Aging of all Northern Virginia jurisdictions, including Alexandria. Meetings are held every other month to share concerns and ideas about how to better support each other in helping to improve the lives of all elderly citizens. A major function each year is the development of a legislative platform and the presentation of same to state legislators at an annual legislative breakfast meeting each fall. NVAN is recognized as one of the state's more effective advocacy groups for the betterment of the elderly.

8. Hunting Terrace and Towers Redevelopment by IDI

The proposed redevelopment was given considerable time and attention by the Commission the past two years. The matter came up when a member of the Commission expressed concern that IDI may not have been dealing fairly with the elderly residents of the facilities, and the Commission directed the Chair to send a letter expressing that concern be sent to IDI. This resulted in a meeting of the Commission Chair with the IDI owners and with a followup presentation to the Commission by one of the owners about the project. A presentation was also made by a representative of the Alexandria Office on Housing. The Commission considered all information it had and came to the conclusion that IDI had been more than fair with the few remaining elderly tenants. No further action was taken by the Commission.

9. Bedbug Infestation at Ladrey Hi-Rise

A severe infestation of bedbugs occurred at Ladrey during the 2007-2008 year and carried over into the current year. The problem was a major concern to the elderly residents, their families, and the Office on Aging and Adult staff. Support to correct the problem came from many sources, not the least of which was OAAS which provided staff, mattress covers, plastic sealable storage containers and other support services. The infestation was finally controlled last fall.

Organizations with which the Commission has liaison relations:

- Charles Houston Senior Center
- Senior Services of Alexandria
- Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Successful Aging
- Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities
- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
- AARP
- Alexandria Adult Day Senior Center
- Alexandria Homeless Services Coordinating Committee
- Commission on Human Rights
- RSVP
- TRIAD/SALT Council
- St. Martins de Porres Senior Center
- Commission on Public Safety

Goals for 2008-2009

- Engage a firm to examine and evaluate the needs of the coming Baby Boomers, and develop an action plan that will guide the City in its efforts to make Alexandria a more liveable community for all ages.
- Follow through on having one person in each City department be directed to be knowledgeable about the special needs of the elderly and to advocate for meeting those needs in all matters considered by that department.
- Arrange for those responsible for aging issues in each City department to meet as needed, and coordinated by the Director of the OAAS, to share information and coordinate efforts to help make Alexandria a More Liveable Community for All Ages, especially the elderly.
- Convene Town Hall Meetings in several locations in the city for the purpose of getting first hand information from residents about the needs and concerns of elderly citizens.

The Commission has dealt with many issues this year and is committed to continue working with them in the year ahead.

The Alexandria Commission on Aging presents this report for the year 2007/2008, with appreciation for the opportunity to have been of service to the City.

Bill Harris, Chair
David Horne, Vice Chair
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Cedar Dvorin
Robert Eiffert
Don Fowler
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Sabrina Reilly
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Vice Mayor Del Pepper, Liaison from City Council
MaryAnn Griffin, Director, OAAS
Debbie Ludington, Long Term Care Coordinator, OAAS