



**Annual Report**  
**Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission**  
July 2014 - June 2015

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The Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission's 2015 year (July 2014 - June 2015) is marked by a broadening of its membership base, attention to the critical issue of access to care in Alexandria, engagement with the 2016 City Budget, and recognizing the recipient of the 2014 Flora Krause Casey Public Health Award. These efforts are addressed below in the Commission's Annual Report.

In the coming months, the Commission will continue to look towards the [2014- 2019 Community Health Improvement Plan](#) (CHIP) as a guidepost when examining public health issues facing the City. A collaborative effort expanding several years, the CHIP was developed by the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria in conjunction with the Alexandria Health Department and in collaboration with non-profit organizations, schools, City agencies, relevant City Boards and Commissions, local businesses, community leaders, and concerned residents. The CHIP is a thoughtful and comprehensive strategic plan to address our community's public health needs and aligns with Alexandria's strategic goals and provides a framework to achieve optimal community health and well-being for all Alexandrians.

Included as a priority issue in the CHIP, the issue of access to care also remains a priority issue for the Commission. Commissioners have expressed particular interest in examining access to elderly care in the City. In addition, as electronic cigarette use is on the rise among children, teenagers,<sup>1</sup> and adults<sup>2</sup> throughout the country, the Commission plans to develop a brief in an effort to inform City Council about this issue on the local level. Going forward, the Commission encourages City Council to proactively refer to the Commission as a resource on Alexandria public health matters.

### **Membership**

The 14 member Commission meets on a monthly basis on the third Thursday of each month at the Alexandria Health Department. As included in City code, some of the functions, powers, and duties of the Commission include advising and supporting the City and City Council on any health matters in the city, providing information and evaluation of public health related matters at the request of City Council, investigating specific public health issues on its own initiative and at the request of the City Council, and providing a forum for the discussion of public health matters.

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<sup>1</sup> René A. Arrazola, MPH, Tushar Singh, MD, PhD, Catherine G. Corey, MSPH, Corinne G. Husten, MD, Linda J. Neff, PhD, Benjamin J. Apelberg, PhD, Rebecca E. Bunnell, PhD, Conrad J. Choiniere, PhD, Brian A. King, PhD, Shanna Cox, MSPH, Tim McAfee MD, Ralph S. Caraballo, PhD. "Tobacco Use Among Middle and High School Students - United States, 2011 - 2014." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 17 April 2015. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6414a3.htm?s\\_cid=mm6414a3\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6414a3.htm?s_cid=mm6414a3_w)

<sup>2</sup> Brian A. King, Roshni Patel, Kimberly Nguyen, and Shanta R. Dube. "Trends in Awareness and Use of Electronic Cigarettes among U.S. Adults, 2010-2013." *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*. 19 September 2014. Available at: <http://ntr.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/09/25/ntr.ntu191.short>

Ensuring that the Commission was well equipped to address the City's public health matters was a priority for the year. Thus, in May 2015, the Commission was pleased to have Dr. Michael Trahos, nominated by the Medical Society of Northern Virginia, fill the physician position. In early June 2015, City Council unanimously approved an ordinance sponsored by Councilman Justin Wilson concerning recommended changes to the Commission's roster. In an effort to broaden community representation on the Commission, the positions of 'representative from the Alexandria City School Board' and 'representative from the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Steering Committee' were added to the Commission roster. As Alexandria City Public Schools works to further a healthy environment and lifestyle among its students, there is a natural synergy between the School Board and the Commission. The addition of a representative from the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria will help to ensure continued collaboration between the Partnership and the Commission for years to come. The Commission has greatly benefited from the Chair of the Partnership's Steering Committee, Allen Lomax, attending Commission meetings and providing updates and insight to the group. Also approved by City Council was an update to an organization's name included in the roster and a change in representation from the Department of Emergency Management. Included in Appendix A is the Commission's roster for the fiscal year, along with an updated roster as of August 2015.

The Commission continues to be grateful for the subject matter and administrative support provided by Dr. Stephen Hearing, Director, Alexandria Health Department, and Diana Sanchez, Executive Administrative Assistant, Alexandria Health Department. Not only do they both attend and engage in every Commission meeting and function, but they are always on hand to discuss an issue and offer resources to the Commission.

### **Access to Care**

Access to health care for Alexandrians has long been a priority issue for the Commission. For the past two years, per the desire of the Public Health Advisory Commission, City Council has requested in its legislative package that the Virginia General Assembly adopt Medicaid expansion for low-income adults, as included in the Affordable Care Act. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 very low-income residents of Alexandria, along with more than 200,000 Virginians, do not have comprehensive health insurance due to the refusal of the General Assembly to approve Medicaid expansion. The Commission will again request in its legislative proposal to City Council for 2016 that the Virginia General Assembly adopt Medicaid expansion for low-income adults, as included in the Affordable Care Act.

In Fall 2014, Meredith Taylor, Commission Chair, was named to Mayor Bill Euille's Special Advisory Panel on the Health Care Needs of the Uninsured in Alexandria. The Commission and Partnership did not want to duplicate efforts, so the Commission tabled its planning efforts to jointly examine the complex issue of access to care in the City. Throughout the year, access to care remained as a standing agenda item for the Commission, as the group received regular Advisory Panel updates and shared thoughts on its efforts. In June 2015, Meredith Taylor voted 'no' in support of the Advisory

Panel's final recommendations. Reflecting the Commission's feedback, Meredith Taylor encouraged that the final recommendations be crafted in a manner that are clear and specific to ensure clarity upon receipt by the Mayor and City Council and success upon implementation by the community. In addition, she communicated the need for all recommendations to include a lead organization, objectives and goals, identification of any public or private resources, agreement by any named organization for inclusion in the recommendation, and timeframes for final reports and/or findings.

In September 2015, the Commission is scheduled to determine how it would like to address the issue of access to care going forward, given the conclusion of work by the Advisory Panel. Already, Commissioners have expressed interest in examining Alexandrian's access to the Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), which is also addressed in the CHIP.

### **2016 City Budget**

The Commission actively engaged in the City's 2016 Budget efforts. In January 2015, Meredith Taylor, Commission Chair, and Katya Wanzer, Commission Vice Chair, sent a letter to City Council advocating for public health needs to be at the forefront of budget considerations for the upcoming fiscal year, since health is a critical determinant of Alexandrian's security, academic performance, quality of life, economic and overall well-being. In addition, the letter urged City Council to reference the newly released CHIP when setting funding priorities. Commissioners also attended the Healthy and Thriving Residents civic engagement session for the 2016 Budget. At the session, Commissioners reiterated points that were included in the January 2015 letter to Council and worked to educate participants on the critical public health programs that are administered by the Alexandria Health Department (i.e. disease surveillance ranging from measles, to TB and Ebola; restaurant inspection and licensing; pool inspection (award winning); vector control, ranging from rabies to West Nile and other mosquito borne diseases; emergency services, including weather related events, terrorism and pandemics; running immunizations clinics; as well as providing epidemiologic surveillance and participating in the many community-based health partnerships in the city).

For fiscal year 2016, there was no fat to be cut in the budget since the Health Department had been wrestling with continuous budgetary restrictions for years. Previous cuts made it difficult for the department to retain staff and recruit top candidates for open positions. From 2008 - 2015, the department's budget was reduced (by 11%) in comparison to the general fund budget (up by 23%) and other City departments.

Upon release of the 2016 City Budget, the Commission was pleased that the Health Department did not endure another successive year of budget cuts.

### **Flora Krause Casey Public Health Award**

Also in January 2015, the Commission held a reception honoring Arlene Hewitt with the 2014 Flora Krause Casey Public Health Award. For over 2 decades, the Alexandria Public Health Advisory Commission, in partnership with the Alexandria Health

Department, has been recognizing individuals with the Casey Award for their work in furthering the health of the Alexandria community. The award is in honor of Flora Krause Casey, whose life work improved the health of Alexandria's most needy and vulnerable residents. Upon review of many nominations, the Commission selected Arlene Hewitt as the 2014 Casey Award Recipient for her service to Alexandrians for over four decades, working to address critical issues and develop workable solutions for the betterment of Alexandrians. Arlene Hewitt not only started four new departments during her tenure at Alexandria Hospital, but she has also led and served on numerous boards and commissions in the City. The reception included such notable speakers as Dr. Stephen Hearing with the Alexandria Health Department, Mayor Bill Euille, Congressman Jim Moran, and Jon Porter with ACT for Alexandria. The Commission plans to request nominations for the 2015 Casey Award in late 2015.

The Commission appreciates City Council's review of this year's Annual Report and welcomes questions and feedback regarding its content. Going forward, the Commission encourages City Council to proactively refer to the Commission as a resource on Alexandria public health matters. The Commission welcomes the opportunity to examine public health issues of interest and develop recommendations as appropriate.

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**Appendix A**

**Public Health Advisory Commission Rosters**

**July 2014 - June 2015 Roster**

- Three health professional citizen members:
  - Kate Dziak
  - Zuhail Haidari
  - Katya Wanzer (Vice Chair)
- Five non-health professional citizen members:
  - Rebecca Ash
  - Arlene Hewitt
  - Andrew La Vanway
  - Meredith Taylor (Chair)
  - Vacancy
- A physician practicing in the city, nominated by the Medical Society of Northern Virginia:
  - Dr. Michael Trahos
- A dentist practicing in the city, nominated by the Northern Virginia Dental Society:
  - Dr. Jessica Hill
- A representative of the Alexandria Community Services Board:
  - Masharia Holman
- A representative from the Inova Alexandria Hospital, nominated by the hospital:
  - Mary Dixon
- A representative from the Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services, Inc. Board of Directors:
  - Keith Hearle
- A representative from the city's office of emergency preparedness:
  - Mark Penn

**Roster as of August 1, 2015\***

- Three health professional citizen members:
  - Kate Dziak
  - Katya Wanzer (Vice Chair)
  - Vacancy
- Five non-health professional citizen members:
  - Rebecca Ash
  - Arlene Hewitt
  - Andrew La Vanway
  - Meredith Taylor (Chair)
  - Vacancy

- A physician practicing in the city, nominated by the Medical Society of Northern Virginia:
  - Dr. Michael Trahos
- A dentist practicing in the city, nominated by the Northern Virginia Dental Society:
  - Dr. Jessica Hill
- A representative of the Alexandria Community Services Board:
  - Vacancy
- A representative from the Inova Alexandria Hospital, nominated by the hospital:
  - Vacancy
- A representative from Neighborhood Health Board of Directors:
  - Keith Hearle
- A representative from the City's Fire Department:
  - Vacancy
- A representative from the Alexandria City School Board:
  - Vacancy
- A representative from the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria Steering Committee:
  - Vacancy

*\* The Commission is actively working to fill vacancies that will be announced to the public in August 2015.*