



2021 Alexandria City Council Candidate Survey – Florence King

The following questions are derived from the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce’s 2021 Legislative Agenda. Through the Legislative Agenda, the Chamber has identified its priority action items for the next year and beyond.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. We encourage you to review the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce’s 2021 Legislative Agenda as you prepare your answers.

Your answers will be made available to the Alexandria business community and other interested parties in whole and without edits. Please return the completed survey to Maria Ciarrocchi, mciarocchi@thechamberalx.com by April 30, 2021.

Introduction by Video.

- 1. COVID-19 RECOVERY – Please share your thoughts on what economic recovery looks like for the City, particularly its businesses.**

When the pandemic first took place during it’s hey day around this time last year, there were no cars on the streets, no restaurants open, and the only businesses that were open were supermarkets and health care facilities. Fast forward today, we are gradually getting back to normal; however, it’s a new normal. As the states lifted restrictions during the winter months outdoor dining was permitted and restaurants invested in heated lamps inside of igloos, globes and bubbles. As we recover, out door seating was an added plus for restaurants on King Street. Owners have mentioned that this effort has been very profitable for them. I would like to see something similar for restaurants that are not located along King Street. We know we can’t close street along a busy corridor but we can add lights and incentives. These restaurants are suffering. Lighted trees add a lovely touch. I would like to see the city invest in these lights along Washington Street as well. Basically organizations and the printed press for example Zebra have done an outstanding job encouraging our residents to support local shops and restaurant businesses.

I would like to see the city implement more of these practices as well. Now that the state is opening back up, we should take advantage of people who visit our diverse city as their new destination. Marketing efforts by the city to attract more tourism is crucial.

2. **COVID-19 CHANGES** – The City has relaxed a fair number of regulations to allow for businesses to operate under COVID-19 protocol. Which of these loosened restrictions would you like to see in perpetuity? Are there any you would like to roll back?

I would like to see the outdoor dining remain and where the streets are closed off at the bottom of King Street remain, however, I would like to add street closure one block over to the left and right of Union Street at the end of King.

I would like to see some of the city council, commission, and board meetings remain virtual with an even mix of in person meetings.

3. **EQUITY & INCLUSION** - There is a broader conversation about equity in relation to COVID-19 as well as racial justice in response to recent events throughout the country. Alexandria demonstrated a commitment to advancing equity in its work with the addition of the Race and Social Equity Officer. As an elected leader, working in concert with the Race and Social Equity Officer, what ideas do you have to help Alexandria, particularly the business community, work towards being more inclusive?

Some of the small businesses are not aware of the city's Small Business Development Partnership. The Race and Social Equity Officer should partner with this center to make sure small businesses know about the programs that are free to them.

The Small Business Development Partnership should go out of their way to find these types of businesses that are operating in our neighborhoods. A lot of the minority businesses run by Black and Brown Owners did not qualify for PPP loans because they didn't meet the minimum government requirements. Some of their hurdles were simply filing their current income taxes, having the appropriate Tax ID Numbers or EIN numbers. Some businesses don't know that they must separate their personal banking accounts from business banking. Some businesses are cash and carry and are operated by foreign born owners working under the radar. Some are not up to date with their state payment to the Commission on Employment. Some are not aware that they may be operating illegally. I would like to see the Race and Social Equity Officer concentrate on these types of businesses who vastly need a helping hand which in turn will increase equity and inclusion.

4. **CITY ISSUES** – What do you feel are the three (3) most pressing issues facing the City of Alexandria today?

A. We have a Housing Crisis. We are losing our middle class who no longer can afford to live here.

B. Flash Flooding. We need to invest in our infrastructure.

C. Congestion. We have a transportation problem and it needs to be fixed, but not without community engagement and the input from Civic Organizations.

5. STATE AND REGIONAL ISSUES – What do you feel are the most pressing state and regional issues effecting Alexandria?

We need to remain in concert with the State’s Environmental Policy plan to include clean Air and their Climate Action Plan.

We have to abide by the State’s ruling on the Covid-19 pandemic, whether we like it or not.

We should work together to come up with logical solutions concerning taxing our senior citizens who own their homes outright but can’t afford to pay their yearly taxes because they are on fixed income. We need to find ways to prevent them from losing their homes.

We need to fight for our rights to limit state legislators from interfering in our city’s decisions that are controlled by the state. We must let our citizens know that our hands are tied and that we are working with the state to come up with workable agreements. We do not have the authority to place a fine on drivers who cut through our city and busy intersections to get to the beltway, but we should have this authority.