

Legislation Committee Report from Ronald Haddox, Chair, ronhaddox@aol.com and Juliet Hiznay, Vice-Chair

August 25, 2020

The Legislation Committee has been active this summer, meeting on July 14, 2020 and August 1, 2020.

Coronavirus Response

Members of the committee have been tracking coronavirus response in Arlington, inquiring about basic human resources support in the county to address emergency needs associated with food insecurity and loss of housing. This aligns with one of our current areas of inquiry: Virginia landlord-tenant law. Overall, we have been pleased to learn that Arlington County has had a vigorous cross-departmental response and is working closely with non-profits and Arlington Public Schools. Indeed, during the period of time after the first Virginia eviction moratorium ended, at the beginning of August, Department of Human Services personnel were at our local court to provide services coordination for Arlingtonians at risk of eviction. These measures have helped to stem a tidal wave of evictions and the many associated health and financial impacts. Many PTAs in the county have been working hard to provide food during this time, supplementing the efforts of local government and existing non-profits. The current eviction moratorium authorized by the Virginia Supreme Court on August 7, 2020 is set to expire on September 7, 2020.

It is important to understand that an eviction moratorium does not waive outstanding debts. It also does not prevent the court from hearing unlawful detainer proceedings. It only prevents physical removal from the home. If you know someone who is at immediate risk of eviction, please be aware that Thrive is administering an emergency relief fund which can be used to pay rent. <https://arlingtonthrive.org/> Legal Services of Northern Virginia is a non-profit that provides legal services to tenants for those who meet criteria. They can also make referrals to pro bono attorneys if an applicant does not meet criteria, one of which is US citizenship. <http://www.lsnv.org/what-we-do/housing-law/>

Please join us in congratulating committee member Nicole Merlene for her work founding the Arlington Condo Owners and Renters Coalition.

Formation of Civil Rights Working Group

The Legislation Committee has been monitoring and discussing various civil rights issues now prominent in the public discourse in Arlington. County government has a couple of important initiatives. In January 2020, the County Manager launched Restorative Arlington. <https://topics.arlingtonva.us/restorative-arlington/> Liane Rozell, a Senior Policy Associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is on loan to the County Manager for the calendar year. The first community meeting, hosted by Arlington Mental Health & Disability Alliance was held on January 7, 2020, which was well attended by county and school agencies. Several committees have been working diligently to develop recommendations to the County. Ms. Rozell presented a status report to the County Board on July 21, 2020. In July 2020, the County

Manager appointed a Police Practices Group to look at numerous issues surrounding policing. <https://departments.arlingtonva.us/cmo/police-practices-work-group/>. The Police Practices Group is being co-led by Marcia Thompson, Vice President of Law Enforcement Consulting and Julie Shedd, Associate Dean and Associate Professor School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. An external review is under way which will look at use of force, training and supervision, cameras, recruitment and retention, internal affairs, and data and statistics. Police Practices Group meetings have begun. However, no public meetings have been announced as of the date of this committee report. While a number of members of the Civic Federation are interested in the work of the Police Practices Group, the Police Practices Group does not include an appointee from the Civic Federation. The Police Practices Group charge is quite extensive. It is notable that the charge specifically carves out a number of pressing issues. These include the issue of qualified immunity, the presence and role of School Resource Officers in Arlington Public Schools and the use of technology by the Arlington County Police Department.

Meanwhile, several community groups are actively engaged on civil rights issues in Arlington County. Numerous public events, including peaceful marches and protests, have been held in Arlington following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the participation of the Arlington County Police Department in the removal of protesters from Lafayette Square, pursuant to a mutual aid agreement with the National Park Service. Among other groups, the Arlington Chapter of the NAACP has been engaged, as well as Arlington for Justice and Black Parents of Arlington. Arlington for Justice is holding regular Let's Talk Tuesday on Facebook Live. Past programs are available on their Facebook page, Arl4Justice.

In light of community concerns, the Legislation Committee has formed a working group on the status of civil rights in Arlington. The purpose of the working group is to share information learned with the membership, and to develop appropriate recommendations. We view this as a natural extension of work already completed over the last several years in the area of criminal justice reform, and work currently underway in the committee relating to data and privacy rights. A presentation on our preliminary work will be made to the ACCF membership at our October meeting, which will be held virtually.

The Legislation Committee will be working on an accelerated schedule. Over the course of this year, we expect that significant data will become available as the county's external review is completed, and hopefully shared by the county with the PPG and the community at large. We understand that many of the issues being reviewed by the PPG fall under the jurisdiction of other ACCF committees, who also intend to work on public safety and policing issues during this time. Accordingly, coordination with other committees is anticipated.

New members to our committee are always welcome. If you are interested in working with the Legislation Committee on the status of civil rights in Arlington, please reach out directly to the working group lead Juliet Hiznay at juliet@jdhiznay.com. She can also be reached by telephone at 202-352-8982.