LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

6:30 p.m., Virtual Microsoft Teams

Attendance: Samantha Perez, SC Nealy, Laura Tinter, Sam Barnes, James Fisher, Michael Castellano, Elizabeth Matlock, Cynthia Liccese-Torres, Jennifer Weber, Paul Battaglia

I. Welcome

II. Approval of Minutes from October 2025 Meeting

James Fisher moved to approve, Michael Castellano seconded. It was unanimously approved.

III. Public Comment

a. Kellen Macbeth spoke about the promise and significance of the committee, noting that it has been given a good platform, but it will take work for every member of the committee. The committee should develop recommendations and initiatives and should advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, especially as the County considers a tight budget in the upcoming year. Kellen noted that the position of the OHR Director may be left vacant to recognize savings. Kellen encouraged the committee to advocate during budget engagement in March. Kellen also advocated that the committee should seek continued support for Pride Month and should participate in legislative engagement.
James Fisher seconded Kellen's remarks, noting that in conversation with Mark Schwartz, he shared similar thoughts.

IV. Housekeeping

a. Meeting date discussion
    i. Laura Tinter expressed that Tuesdays were not good for her, and she preferred in person meetings.
    ii. SC Nealy expressed that Tuesday worked well for her, and the virtual format made the meetings more accessible.

V. Annual Letter review

a. Samantha Perez shared a draft letter, laying out the framework and asking for input.
b. James Fisher supported the framework and overview.
c. James Fisher expressed concern that the County may not have a Director of the Office of Human Rights (OHR) and how that may impact human rights issues.
d. Elizabeth Matlock noted that Anna Maynard is in the acting role, so the Office of Human Rights is continuing to do their work.

e. James Fisher recommended inviting Anna Maynard to the next LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee meeting.
f. Kellen Macbeth expressed that he did not believe that OHR was doing their job, noting that they were doing lots of work but not enforcing the Human Rights Ordinance.
g. Laura Tinter advocated for continuing to improve the visibility of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the community, through history and art projects as examples.
h. James Fisher suggested working with arts organizations and the community at large to understand how community attitudes may or may not be shifting.
i. Sam Barnes suggested that, related to safety, the All in Arlington Pride sticker should be given to businesses that are openly welcoming to LGBTQIA+ individuals.
j. SC Nealy suggested adding collaborating with Funds for Queer Causes and the Arlington Community Foundation to support health issues.
k. Laura Tinter suggested including health and safety for LGBTQIA+ individuals who are justice-involved, particularly in the prison system. Samantha Perez noted that it might be beneficial to hear from the County on what they are doing in the prison system.
l. James Fisher asked if this is the most helpful presentation of the information. Elizabeth Matlock responded that keeping the list succinct, highlighting top priorities would be most effective.
m. Samantha Perez will send out a final draft of the letter by the end of the week. The final letter is included as Attachment 1.

VI. Work Plan discussion
a. Sub-committee sharing – there were no subcommittee reports.
b. 2026 plan
    i. Samantha Perez suggested forming a subcommittee to develop a work plan for the upcoming year.
        1. James Fisher and Laura Tinter offered to work in the subcommittee.
    ii. Elizabeth Matlock noted that all subcommittee meetings could be posted online, so committee members could reference the website for meeting details.

VII. Pride Month 2026 Planning
a. Cynthia Liccese-Torres shared what the Office of RACE is planning for Pride Month 2026:
    i. Partnering with OUTstanding to secure permanent seating at the “Be the ‘Eye’ in Pride” mural
    ii. Ensuring Pride flags are at every facility
    iii. Expanding the Pride Spotlight poster series, both in the number of posters and the number of facilities hosting the display
    iv. Refreshing the mural area with new plantings, ideally with the support of a business sponsor
    v. Consider activations at the mural space to encourage small scale gatherings

vi. Cynthia asked for any additional ideas and encouraged the committee to consider partnerships that would be needed to support the ideas

b. James Fisher suggested that the County's social media team could support the creation of content that the committee could push out
c. Cynthia requested what topics should be considered for the poster series. Sam Barnes expressed support for a legal background. Samantha Perez suggested partnering with the Arlington Community Foundation who had produced a very informative exhibit in years past.

VIII. Meeting Wrap-Up

James Fisher moved to adjourn. Laura Tinter seconded; it was unanimously approved.

Attachment 1: Annual Report letter to County Manager

February 2, 2026

Mark Schwartz, County Manager
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 302
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Re: Arlington LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee

Dear County Manager Schwartz,

I submit to you the inaugural Annual Report on behalf of the LGBTIA+ Advisory Committee. This past year, the committee was formed with the mission of providing advice to the County Manager regarding issues impacting LGBTQIA+ residents in Arlington County and to keep the county leadership informed of issues impacting these residents. This work is to include visibility, support, inclusion in business and community, safety and freedom from discrimination, and promoting education and understanding. Most importantly, as stated in the charter, the advisory committee is to provide a voice for Arlington's LGBTQIA+ residents to the county government.

Key Accomplishments and Activities in 2025

- Pride 2025

In 2025, Arlington County hosted its first county-sponsored Pride events, including both temporary public art displays, a block party, and programs spanning county departments. Advisory committee members participated in brainstorming and planning sessions and provided feedback to staff along the way, resulting in a well-received Pride season.

- Establishment of Area-Focused Working Groups

As part of creating a working structure to best fulfill our chartered responsibilities, the committee established the following working groups:

- **Policy and Equity**
  The Policy and Equity committee is established to examine and suggest recommendations on county legislation and governance, ensuring the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community are met.
- **Culture and Community**
  The Culture and Community subcommittee is established to monitor matters of representation and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ residents and workers in Arlington, making recommendations regarding programs, resources, events, and education.
- **Health, Safety, and Wellness**
  The Health, Safety, and Wellness committee is established to ensure that LGBTQIA+ residents and workers of Arlington have access to all the resources necessary to live healthy and safe lives, including access to effective and culturally competent medical care and health resources, and protection from crime and discrimination.

- Updating of County LGBTQIA+ Resource List

The Culture and Community subcommittee conducted an audit of the county's LGBTQIA+ Resources page, removing out-of-date links, adding more than two dozen

new resources across several categories, and updating 36 more with increased detail and accuracy, greatly improving the usefulness of this page.

- Department Report-outs

The committee heard reports from county departments on how they serve the LGBTQIA+ community, including overviews of programs and policies to begin building a more complete picture across the county.

- Commendation of the County Board for Resolution of Support

The committee applauded the County Board for its adoption of the resolution affirming the county's support of World Pride and the LGBTQIA+ community, noting the necessity of this support in the national environment. The committee affirmed the principles of the resolution and resolved to apply them in its assessments and recommendations.

- Public Comment

Every meeting of the LGBTQIA+ Advisory committee included at least one comment from the public, with wide-ranging topics including suggested tasks for the subcommittees, advocacy for LGBTQIA+ needs in Latino communities and for LGBTQIA+ residents and workers for whom English is not their first language, and feedback on Pride events.

2026 Goals and Directions

In 2026, the LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee aims to continue its work, making use of the subcommittees to develop a focused work plan to advance the goals and commitments laid forth in its charter. As evidenced by our 100 score on HRC's Municipal Quality Index, Arlington values the safety and well-being of its LGBTQIA+ residents, which offers comfort in the challenging national environment. For 2026, the Committee aims to focus on ways Arlington can provide shelter from erosions in national protections, attacks from hostile interest groups, and improve cultural visibility and understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Below are the primary issues that each subcommittee considers the top areas of concern and the types of goals we intend to put on our work plan in response.

- **Policy and Equity**
    - Issues and developments being Monitored:

        - APS's ongoing legal dispute over the Department of Education's withholding of federal funds and the impacts of their demands on LGBTQ+ and particularly transgender students.[1]
        - The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's rescinding guidance that enhanced protections for LGBTQIA+ workers.[2]
    - Related initiatives and actions:
        - Gathering data on protections currently offered by the county across departments and providing feedback and expertise to staff to support these efforts.
        - Working in particular partnership with the office of human rights to monitor and respond to violations and concerns.

- **Culture and Community**
    - Issues and developments being Monitored:
        - Researchers have found a rise in anti-gay bias since 2020.[3]
        - Eroding support for the protection of the civil rights of transgender Americans.[4]
    - Related initiatives and actions:
        - Listening sessions, surveys, and other tools to understand the extent of this erosion in our community.
        - Work across departments, commissions, organizations, and community partners to improve visibility and understanding of LGBTQIA+ folks.

- **Health, Safety, and Wellness**
    - Issues and developments being Monitored:
        - At a time of rising STI rates, federal funding for HIV prevention and treatment is being repealed across agencies.[5]
        - Gender-affirming care is under attack from multiple angles, from direct bans and restrictions for pediatric care, to HHS pressure on providers to stop covering these services entirely for all patients.[6]
        - Increasing violence from immigration enforcement agencies frequently uses the characteristics of victims to justify harm. While it is primarily our immigrants and communities of color threatened, it is clear these threats are extending to all people "othered" by leadership.[7]
    - Related initiatives and actions:

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[1] https://www.arlnow.com/2025/09/08/federal-judge-dismisses-aps-lawsuit-over-education-dept-funding/
[2] https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/us-eeoc-scraps-guidance-that-expanded-workplace-protections-lgbtq-wor kers-2026-01-22/
[3] https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/26f8v_v1
[4] https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/02/26/americans-have-grown-more-supportive-of-restrictions-for-tran s-people-in-recent-years/
[5] https://jheor.org/post/3145-facing-cuts-a-grim-future-for-america-s-hiv-response
[6] https://natlawreview.com/article/latest-moves-federal-agencies-regarding-gender-affirming-care-risks-mount-providers
[7] https://prismreports.org/2026/01/28/renee-good-identity/

- Work with Arlington's Department of Human Services to monitor and meet both existing and emergent needs, especially access to STI testing, PrEP, and behavioral health services.
- Maintain resource guides so residents are aware of the services the county and community partners offer.
- Work alongside law enforcement to ensure policies are fair and statistics about the safety of the LGBTQIA+ community are understood.

Thank you for commissioning us to do this important work, and we look forward to working together to keep Arlington County a place where LGBTQIA+ people can live, work, and thrive.

Sincerely,
Samantha Perez,
Chair, LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee