

Minutes of the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission

February 20, 2024

7:30 PM
Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Chairperson Kratovil, presiding

Attendance: Commissioners: Belkowitz, Gasimov, Gulakowski, Kirk, Kharat, Kratovil, Rosier, Svab

Remote Participation: Commissioners: Springer

Absent: Commissioners: Roark

Staff: Rebecca L. Makely, Director
Cable and Consumer Services
Amanda K. Kastl, Director
Consumer Services Division
Susan C. Jones, Branch Manager
Consumer Affairs Branch

Guests: Second Lieutenant Richard A. Barron
Fairfax County Police Department
Detective Adam Armstrong
Fairfax County Police Department

Public: Mary Othrot, RN-BSN
Statewide Policy Advocate for
Mental Health Child Welfare

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairperson Kratovil.

Chairperson Kratovil notified the Commission that Commissioner Springer requested to participate in the meeting remotely.

Commissioner Gulakowski made the motion to approve that Chairperson Kratovil’s decision to approve Commissioner Springer’s request to participate from a remote location was in conformance with the Consumer Protection Commission’s Remote Participation Policy. Commissioner Kirk seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0-0, with Commissioner Belkowitz not present for the vote.

Chairperson Kratovil made the motion that Commissioner Springer’s voice can be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location. Commissioner Kirk seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 8-0-0, with Commissioner Belkowitz joining the meeting. Commissioner Springer participated remotely from Fairfax, VA due to his daughter’s medical appointment.

Minutes

Chairperson Kratovil moved to accept the January 16, 2024, minutes. Commissioner Gulakowski seconded the motion. The minutes were adopted unanimously, 9-0-0.

Report of the Chairperson

Chairperson Kratovil had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Old Business

Commissioner Kratovil reminded the Commissioners to continue offering topic suggestions for upcoming meetings.

New Business

1. Fraud Presentation. Second Lieutenant Barron and Detective Armstrong provided an overview of the Fairfax County Police (FCPD) Financial Crimes Unit online complaint process, staff make-up, 6,000 cases handled by four detectives, types of crimes, along with information on the partnerships with state and federal agencies, and ongoing work with victims.

A discussion ensued on a lottery scam, victims' reluctance to report crimes, identity theft, elder crime, repeat offenders, volume of warrants and court cases, and education and prevention.

Public Comment: Is there a list of banks that could be provided to consumers that work best with Fairfax County on financial fraud cases? Detective Armstrong responded that every bank has anti-banking laws and invests in detecting and avoiding fraudulent transactions.

Director Makely inquired if there are any metrics or case data on the FCPD website for the public to review. Second Lieutenant Barron responded that there is some information on the Financial Crimes website.

Report of the Director

Director Makely introduced Amanda Kastl, Director, Consumer Services Division who joined the Department of Cable and Consumer Services on January 29, 2024.

Director Makely stated the County Executive presented the FY 2025 Advertised Budget to the Board of Supervisors on February 20, 2024. Town meetings will be scheduled in magisterial districts, and public hearings will be held in April. The final budget will be adopted in May 2024.

Director Makely said staff has currently reviewed approximately 140 legislative bills with the most discussion and interest on trespass towing bills.

Director Makely stated the request for Authorization to Advertise a Public Hearing to be held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, 7:30 p.m. on Proposed Amendments to Fairfax County Code Section 84.1-6-3, Rates, fares, and charges established will now take place at the April 16, 2024, meeting. Director Makely stated a taxicab certificate holder requested the rate increase. Staff reviewed the ordinance and more information and data must be provided.

Susan Jones, Branch Manager, Consumer Affairs spoke about the upcoming National Consumer Protection Week, March 3 – 9, 2024, with emphasis on Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Day on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at the Government Center Board Auditorium.

Commissioner Matters

Commissioner Rosier requested information to provide to the public on the functions of the CPC.

Commissioner Gasimov suggested a one-page document with bullets. He stated the Community Engagement Committee will plan to meet in early March.

Commissioner Kirk had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kharat had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Belkowitz mentioned clicking on his phone settings and was shocked to see over 150 warnings about scams and being susceptible to data breaches.

Commissioner Gulakowski had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Svab had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Springer had no matters to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kratovil had several issues to bring before the Commission.

1. Provided information on identity theft crimes observed by 60 years or older by zip code in Northern Virginia and in Virginia.
2. Thanked staff for their support as the CPC committees begin their planning sessions.
3. Inquired about status of appointments to the CPC. Director Makely indicated no new appointments to the CPC.
4. The Federal Reserve Working Group is working to develop a common system to help financial institutions classify scams.

Chairperson Kratovil made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gulakowski seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 p.m.