

Minutes
City of Alexandria, Virginia
WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting – Virtual
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2022

7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present:

Agnes Artemel, East of Washington St. and North of Pendleton St.
Sarah Bagley, Member, Alexandria City Council
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners
Kristina Hagman, Founders Park Community Association
Charlotte Hall, VisitAlexandria
Judy Heiser, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Trae Lamond, Representative, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront Commission
Brian McPherson, Park Planning District III
Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large
Louise Roseman, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Barbara Saperstone, Citizen, east of Washington St. and south of King St
Stephen Thayer, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Chair, Waterfront Commission
Patricia Webb, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Robert Weinhagen, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Esther White, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

Absent

Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Scott Shaw, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

Vacancy

Representative, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

City Staff

Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Mike Durham, Assistant Dockmaster, RPCA
Ann Horowitz, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Matthew Landes, Division Chief, Waterfront Program Manager, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Katy North, Division Chief, Mobility Services, T&ES
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
James Spengler, Director, RPCA
Terry A. Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation
Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, T&ES

Guests

Charles Allegrone	Gina Baum
Brian Buzzell	Yvonne Callahan
Bruce Catts	Matthew Carroll
Stuart Fox	Sara Igielski, Carollo Engineers
Cecilia Lewis	Jeff Lipsky
Joseph Mancias, Jr	Jenna Manuszak, Carollo Engineers
Jon Rosenbaum	Ann Shack
Carole Sieling	Sydney Smith
Daniel Straub	Julie Wannamaker

Note: All information presented at Commission meetings is posted on the [Waterfront Commission website](#).

Call to Order – Stephen Thayer, Chair

Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

He welcomed three newly appointed Commissioners: Louise Roseman, who was reappointed to represent Park Planning District I, Agnes Artemel, newly appointed to represent the area East of Washington St. and North of Pendleton St. and Brian McPherson, representing Park Planning District III.

Discussion Items for Action and Information

ITEM 1 APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 6, 2021 & JANUARY 18, 2022 MINUTES

Motion: Macek moved and Reid seconded that the December 6, 2022 minutes be approved. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Motion: Macek moved and Hall seconded that the January 18, 2022 minutes be approved. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM 2 FLOOD MITIGATION UPDATE – Terry Suehr and Matthew Landes, DPI

The presentation was introduced by Chair Thayer, Vice Chair Macek and DPI Director Suehr.

Thayer explained the briefing’s purpose was informational, to familiarize the full Commission and members of the community with the major issues the Commission’s Flood Mitigation Committee (FM Committee) has been reviewing in detail with DPI staff since the Committee’s creation in April 2021.

The full Commission will consider a recommendation to City officials about options being developed for revising Phase 1 implementation of the Waterfront Plan after the FM Committee has developed a proposed recommendation for the Commission to consider. DPI staff is still analyzing recently collected data needed to determine the relative viability of the potential options being considered.

Macek, the FM Committee’s chair, provided background on the Committee’s process and membership.

FM Committee members are:

- Macek, the Commission’s Planning Commission representative;
- Kristina Hagman, the Commission’s Founders Park Community Association representative;
- Trae Lamond, the Commission’s Old Town Business Professional Association (OTBPA) representative;
- Esther White, the Commission’s Alexandria Archaeological Commission representative; and
- The Commission’s Park and Recreation Commission (P&RC) representative. (Note: A P&RC representative hasn’t yet been appointed to replace Gina Baum, whose P&RC Commission service ended recently.)

DPI staff has been working for the past year on options for updating and scaling back elements of the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Plan that Council approved in 2015. The 10-year CIP budget has \$102 million for implementing Phase 1 of the Waterfront Small Area Plan (Waterfront Plan), including the flood mitigation project, but the cost today to implement those elements is estimated at almost \$200 million. Flood Mitigation is the most expensive and complicated part of Phase 1 so DPI has been developing options to modify it to fit the current budget and respond to changes in flood mitigation best practices, more intense and frequent storms caused by climate change, and changed regulatory requirements.

DPI/FM Committee collaboration - Since April 2021 DPI has been meeting regularly with the FM Committee and other community groups to solicit feedback on detailed information about each of many options being considered. DPI’s goal is to ensure that when decisions are made about changing Phase 1 elements they will be consistent with community priorities for the Waterfront Plan.

The FM Committee’s task is to develop a proposed Commission recommendation to Council on Phase 1 implementation options after staff has completed its evaluation of the options and data related to them.

Next steps – The FM Committee plans to meet in the near future to develop a proposed recommendation for the Commission. The exact timing of FM Committee action is not fixed yet.

DPI Briefing: WATERFRONT IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT - FLOOD MITIGATION UPDATE – Matthew Landes (DPI)

Prioritizing community input – Director Terry Suehr introduced the briefing. During the past year, as staff has been considering options for updating and scaling back parts of the City’s original implementation plan for the flood mitigation project and Waterfront Plan, staff’s goal has been to ensure they hear from a broad range of stakeholders, e.g. residents, businesses, visitors, about which elements of the Waterfront Plan’s Phase 1 implementation are the most important to implement first. DPI sees the Waterfront Commission and the constituencies that Commissioners represent as an important part of staff’s decision-making process.

- Reviewed the baseline Waterfront Plan approved in 2014 and the funding and phasing for implementation of the Waterfront Plan, approved in 2015, highlighting that baseline plan, as approved, is estimated to cost between \$150 and \$250 million if implemented today in its original form.

- Separate from the cost issues, the philosophy governing flood mitigation design has changed since 2014 - from designing to hold back flood waters to designing resilience that facilitates rapid recovery from flooding using protection, prevention and rapid recovery.
- Focusing on cost-effective alternatives for scoping the 2015 baseline design to current budget.
- Types of flooding needing mitigation –river overtopping the bulkhead, backflow from the river backing up into storm sewers, and heavy rains inundating storm sewers.

Commissioner Comments – Flood Mitigation – Matthew Landes, DPI

- ***Is information available on how other localities have handled similar flood mitigation challenges? Is that information available to review?*** A: Staff has reviewed and shared with the FM Committee examples of best practices in flood mitigation implemented by other communities in recent years.
- **Follow-up:** Staff will post online examples of other mitigation projects, including localities that use underground rainwater storage tanks similar to those being considered for Waterfront Park and/or Founders Park.
- ***Founders Park testing results?*** – What information will the test results provide? How might that information affect the assessment of Founders Park’s potential viability as a site for storing rainwater temporarily in underground tanks?
- A: All test results will be posted online. Types of testing conducted:
 - geotechnical;
 - geoarchaeological, including impacts on cultural resources;
 - geological;
 - an environmental site assessment to test ground water for potential contaminants to identify what, if any mitigation would be needed if various project elements were implemented and what that would cost;
 - Preliminary research has been done by the City Archaeologist’s Office to identify potential archaeological resources that might be found in Founders Park since this is a known historic area. Staff expects that further study will be needed.

Costs & funding

- ***What happens if additional funds become available after work on the design/build contract has begun?*** A: Staff chose a progressive design/build process because it is the most flexible in terms of how many decisions must be made up front. Additional Waterfront Plan elements could be added to the design after initial work has begun if additional funding becomes available.
 - Staff is working with the Commission and the community now to identify which Waterfront Plan elements should be prioritized so that staff knows which elements should be added in first if/when more funding becomes available in the future.
- ***Relative cost effectiveness of levees, movable flood gates and resilient shorelines?*** A: Levees were rejected early as an option. They are costly public work projects with significant environmental impacts inconsistent with the Waterfront Plan’s vision. Deployable barriers have lower capital costs but high operation and maintenance costs. Mixing needed bulkhead replacements with landscape-based flood barriers is very cost-effective.
- ***Private funding - In addition to grants that staff is pursuing, has the City considered private sector funding as a potential source for additional project funds?*** A: The City always welcomes

donations. The Rosenbaum family’s bequest to fund Point Lumley Park enhancements that are consistent with the Waterfront Plan is an example of this. Staff hasn’t focused on this outreach yet but several individuals have indicated they might be interested in making donations to support Waterfront public spaces.

- **Public/Private partnership for the Waterfront**– Macek noted that the Commission has urged the City to consider creating a BID to help finance Waterfront-related projects, maintenance and operations. In 2015, a Commission Governance Subcommittee was created to study five types of potential governance models to see which might be most appropriate to manage and generate additional revenue to support Waterfront operations. The Commission continues to urge the City to consider this.

Staff reminders:

- *Restoring parks and other sites to original condition after construction work* – Any City property impacted by construction of any of the flood mitigation options being considered, e.g. installing underground tanks for temporary rainwater storage in Founders and/or Waterfront Park, will be restored to its condition prior to the work. The City always does this restoration after utility work.
- **Gina Baum** - The City needs to have a plan to implement permanent Waterfront parks and amenities as envisioned by the Olin landscape design. She reminded Commissioners that the City viewed upgrades to Waterfront Park and King Street Park as interim measures that would stay in place until flood mitigation construction began. The intention was to implement permanent public space amenities as envisioned by the Waterfront Plan after flood mitigation construction was finished. Also, the area between King and Prince Street should be elevated as originally planned.
- A: Landes said implementing the Olin design’s amenities has not been discarded but the City needs to adapt plans to stay within available budgets. Alternative funding is being pursued by staff because implementing additional Waterfront amenities as soon as possible remains a priority. Browand noted there are discussions ongoing regarding potential donations similar to the Rosenbaum bequest supporting Point Lumley Park enhancements.

ITEM 3 - 100 BLOCK OF KING STREET – SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS Update - Katye North, Division Chief, Mobility Services, and T&ES

North reported that Council has approved closing the 100 block of King Street to vehicles permanently. The following actions are now planned: improving barricades at King/ Union and improving areas outside restaurants that are being used for dining. ARPA funds should be able to cover these improvements. Long-term improvements will need CIP funding. Council will consider parklet fees March 8.

Commission Comments – 100 Block of King St.

Funding - Will the improvements be paid by Federal funds? Or will restaurants have to pay for part of it?

A: Federal funds should cover it.

- Parklet fees – Has City consulted affected restaurants? A: Yes.
- King/Union intersection – At least one parking space, on each side of Union Street, both north and south of King Street, east and west, should be removed adjacent to the intersection to improve pedestrian visibility in this busy intersection.

- King Street walkway – A sidewalk walkway needs to be restored on the north side of the 100 block of King Street in front of the restaurants where dining currently is.. A: Staff is developing ideas to open up the sidewalks, including design options that encourage pedestrians to use the center of the block rather than areas that have dining tables.
 - Hall reported that OTBA and merchants on the 100 block have met with City staff and the Fire Department about reallocating the five foot walkway along the sidewalk. Merchants are awaiting new applications for outdoor dining on the 100 block of King Street so that each merchant can meet with staff to discuss how to implement this.

ITEM No.4 - PROPOSED TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF UNIT BLOCK OF KING STREET/ NORTHERN PORTION OF STRAND – Christopher Ziemann, (T&ES)

A three-month pilot will close the unit block of King and northern portion of Strand Street to vehicles from Memorial Day to Labor Day The proposal will be presented to the Traffic and Parking Board in February for approval.

Commissioner Comments

- Where would restrooms be located? A: During the pilot project there will probably be port-a-johns. RPCA and T&ES are considering an appropriate spot for portable restrooms after the pilot ends.
- Concern that pedestrians would be forced into crosswalks. Consider adding a wide pedestrian crosswalk at King/Union Street
- Can additional movable bike racks be added in the area of the pilot?
- S. Union St is crowded with delivery trucks in the morning, e.g. 9 a.m. or so. Can time limits be added for deliveries on S. Union Street so trucks don't block the street? A: The situation will be monitored.
- Hall reported that Old Town Business Association members have concerns about limiting deliveries on Union & Lee Street to mornings.
- Better APD enforcement is needed at King/Union for vehicles and bikes.

Motion: Macek moved and Reid seconded that

- the Commission supports the proposed pilot to close the unit block of King Street subject to it being refined to optimize conditions related to auto parking, bicycle parking deliveries and crosswalks and encourage study of the pilot for further refinement to optimize pedestrian movement. The Commission's position will be conveyed to the Traffic and Parking Board.

Motion passed by show of hands, with no votes opposed and one abstention. Council Member Bagley abstained because Council will be considering the proposal.

Commissioner Announcements/Reports

- Boes reported on actions related to the Environmental Policy Commission's Environmental Action Plan (EAP) 2040. Three Commissions - Planning, EPC and Transportation - sent a joint letter to Council urging that actions be taken to support the EAP 2040 recommendations.
- Boes recommended that the Waterfront Commission hear from a representative of the recently formed Energy and Climate Change Task Force.

City Updates

PUBLIC SAFETY - No report.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS – Jack Browand (RPCA)

- Waterfront Park - public art installation starts in early March.
- Windmill Hill Park - Shoreline maintenance and landscaping will begin soon.
- Robinson Landing –. EYA has submitted a plan to address ponding at the south side.
- Robinson Landing – City has assumed full management responsibility for the pier and EYA and the City are discussing plans for installing railings there. No timeline has been set yet.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

- Macek reported that Hilco (GenOn redevelopment site) - Macek announced Hilco is holding a community meeting on Thursday February 24 focused on environment and sustainability issues.

Public Comments

Comments were invited. There were none.

Next Meeting

Date - March 15, 2022

Topics Proposed - OHA update on storage of historic ship hulls; TFAC update

Adjournment

At 9:42 a.m. Macek moved and Roseman seconded that the meeting adjourn. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.