

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Alexandria Beautification Commission (ABC)
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 10th, 2022
7:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

Present: Steve Cohen (Chair), Julie Chapman (Secretary), Kathryn Chiasson, Richard Dorrier, Eleanor Quigley, Denise Tennant, Chirag Mapara, Thomas McChesney, Monica Murphy, Michael Budinski, Kathryn Hartka.

Excused Absences: None

Unexcused Absences: None

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM.

1. **Virtual Meeting Legal Requirements** - The Chair read the State of Emergency Declaration.
2. **Approval of the January 13, 2022 Meeting Minutes**
 - a. Motioned to approve the minutes, Julie seconded, unanimous approval.
3. **Membership Updates**
 - a. Four open positions remain on the ABC, and no further Membership updates.
4. **Commission Business**
 - a. Tonight's Speaker: Council Member, Alyia Gaskins
 - i. Current priorities:
 1. To spark conversations around community development and economic development — what are we asking for and what are we getting out of it.
 2. To conduct a policy evaluation to see how policies align with the health of our community.
 3. To evaluate how to engage communities throughout the City.
 4. To evaluate improvements needed in our current internal/external communication structure.
 - ii. View of how the City will support sustainable landscape practices.

1. The new City Manager and Council are mapping out ideas for establishing new standards for sustainable landscaping. The budget discussion happens on 2/15.
- iii. Definition of beautification, in Aylia's words
 1. How one feels when experiencing the City. Beautification contributes to creating the feel of a space and it affects our mental health, safety, etc.
 2. An area in downtown Pittsburgh is an excellent example of good City planning: clean and well-kept waterfront area, well lit, diversity of people, safe walking spaces, art, interactive installations, etc.
- iv. City's interest in public/private/nonprofit partnerships to help achieve beautification goals.
 1. The City hired a staff person to focus on collaboration, and they're currently looking closely how to create new partnerships to affect needed changes on various issues. Aylia offered to make an introduction.
 2. Julie presented about the ALX Dog Walk and its representation of an excellent example of public/private/nonprofit collaborations.
- v. Richard suggested incorporating the idea of impacting public health in the ABC mission.

5. Subcommittee Updates

- a. Architectural Awards and Outreach
 - i. Thomas thanked all on the Commission who toured the City and reviewed all Award nominations. He noted the Award recommendations represent: top three votes (including a tie), geographic diversity, diversity of use and building types (large, multi-family development; small residential renovation; and, a commercial building).
 - ii. The Committee recommended the following Awards, and listed here in the order of most to least votes: 1. Robinson Landing (commercial, residential-single); 2. 1208 Trinity Drive (residential-family); 3. 128/128A East Walnut (residential/multi-family); 4. 2901 Eisenhower Avenue (commercial).
 1. Robinson Landing: Mike shared how the condo building facing the water has distinct architecture from anything else in Old Town. The rebuilt waterfront is beautiful, attracts visitors, provides new and valuable green space, and connects the North and South ends of the Waterfront Walk. While developing the area, ships were discovered, and the archeological findings can be seen at the Torpedo Factory.
 2. 1208 Trinity recommendation: Monica shared how the residence was a complete rebuild, and the new structure blends into the neighborhood really well, has lots of open spaces, and feels very inviting and warm.

3. 128/128A East Walnut recommendation: Richard shared that this duplex was a complete rebuild and contains new and interesting details such as balconies, and it blends well into the neighborhood.
 4. 2901 Eisenhower recommendation: Denise discussed how the property added interesting architecture to a plain roadway stretch with large scale sculptural artwork, green open spaces, etc.
- iii. Other discussion about the Awards.
 1. Kathryn noted that no West-end Award has been recommended.
 2. Richard suggested that the Awards process consider Awards for buildings that dramatically change and beautify a space, for example the Goodies ice cream building. Denise suggested to include a commercial beautification award cycle. Steve noted the 2022 award cycles consist only of Architecture, Residential and Community. It was agreed a Commercial award cycle in 2023 will work.
 - iv. Eleanor moved to approve the Architecture Award recommendations, and Michael seconded, all were in favor, and the award recommendations for 2022 were accepted.
 - v. Thomas discussed that moving forward the Subcommittee will coordinate communications, and at the March ABC meeting, we will hear about the next round of Awards and a schedule for communication. He also addressed the topic of what success looked like for the Subcommittee:
 1. Quantifiable goals: 1. Execute on three Award cycles; 2. Commit to once monthly article of Committee news; 3. Increase communication to the community.
 2. Qualitative goal: Challenge the Committee with improving practices overall.
- b. Sustainable Landscaping
 - i. Richard presented that the Committee continues to work on educational literature for workers and others to inform on topics of landscape planning, native plants, and planting processes. The educational materials will be bilingual for Spanish-speaking people in the community.
 - c. Vacant Lots
 - i. Denise presented on the Committee's goal of moving the Flagpole project forward by the end of June. Fundraising will begin, and if secured, we can begin implementing beautification by year-end.
 - d. Open Spaces
 - i. Met at the end of January and discussed how the City acquires open space and criteria used.

6. **New Commission Business**

- a. ABC Chair Goals Presented by Steve

- i. Engage City representatives to help advance the Commission's priorities.
Steve asked for feedback about the current speaker series initiated, thus far.
- ii. Develop a communication plan, deliver consistent messages to the community, and provide for an evaluation process.
- iii. Have fun!

7. Agenda Items for March ABC Meeting

8. Public Comment/Discussion

- a. None

9. The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 8:50 PM.