

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

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 10, 2022
7:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

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

Excused Absences: Denise Tennant, Eleanor Quigley.

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 February 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes**
 - a. Michael Budanski motioned to approve the minutes, Kathryn Hartka seconded, unanimous approval.
3. **Membership Updates**
 - a. Four open positions remain on the ABC, and no further Membership updates.
4. **Commission Business**
 - a. Guest Speaker: Ellen Eggerton, Sustainability Coordinator, Eco-City Academy
 - i. Overview: The 2019 Environmental Action Plan serves as the City's current roadmap. Key metrics, goals and facts presented include:
 1. Key City Sustainability Goals
 - a. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030.
 - b. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80%-100% by 2050.
 - c. Create energy efficiency in all new buildings.
 - d. Increase tree canopy from 36% to 40%.
 2. Sectors of City Greenhouse Emissions
 - a. Commercial buildings: 36%.
 - b. Residential buildings: 21%.
 - c. Transportation: 36%.

- d. Solid waste: 2%.
 - e. Other: 5%.
 - 3. Achievement Highlights
 - a. The City has a public dashboard that tracks key indicators annually.
 - b. The dashboard shows the progress of achieving goals overall.
 - 4. Lens of Sustainability When Beautifying an Area
 - a. Evaluate areas for potential change elements such as solar, replacing grass with native plant/shrubs/trees, etc.
 - b. When assessing for beautification, be sure to consider use and purpose of the space.
 - 5. Transportation and Air Quality
 - a. City strives to reduce single use vehicles.
 - b. DASH Bus is free, 24/7, and has 15 new electric buses.
 - 6. Energy/Climate
 - a. City is actively upgrading street lights to LED; updated traffic lights in 2018.
 - b. Conducts an annual solar campaign for homes.
 - c. City has map of heat islands on website.
 - d. Thermal cameras can be borrowed for the library to evaluate energy efficiency.
 - 7. Electrification of the City
 - a. City is evaluating its electric vehicle strategy to determine locations for charging stations, etc.
 - b. Alternate Fuel Policy adopted in 2020 to prioritize purchase of electric vehicles; City has used hybrid vehicles since 2004.
 - c. City is evaluating electric efficiencies in new buildings, for example, asking developers to discontinue gas fireplaces in residences (except for common areas).
 - b. Subcommittee Updates
 - i. Awards and Outreach
 - 1. Awards
 - a. Discussion
 - i. The Awards letters for the Architectural Awards have been mailed and receipt confirmed.
 - ii. A media release will go out the week of March 21st to local media, civic organizations, business organizations, and the public.
 - iii. Asking local officials to communicate through their networks.
 - iv. Residential Awards process to begin in April and mimic the timeline of previous Awards cycles.

- v. The Historic Virginia Gardens Week begins April 23.
- vi. Thomas and Steve, and others, have begun working on a broader ABC communications plan.
- vii. Request for media contacts.

ii. Sustainable Landscaping

1. Discussion

- a. Monica discussed the challenge of engaging the City in discussions about beautifying the gateways.
- b. Oscar offered to identify a City official to facilitate the process of determining budgets, etc.
- c. The educational materials are moving forward. Eleanor created a list of native plants by season along with maintenance requirements; Richard prepared a corresponding slide show providing step-by-step instructions; and, Michael is preparing a “white paper” for the presentation to the City.

iii. Vacant Lots

1. Discussion

- a. Charig discussed the Committee’s intent to meet with the neighborhood community and gather feedback.
- b. Katie shared that she and Denise met with Anna/City Rep who will help develop a community survey (similar to the one used for Kettle Park’s project).
- c. There could be a Resource Protection Area in the park, and Anna is exploring this potential issue.

5. New Commission Business

- a. Steve discussed updating the ABC mission statement, and he explored the best process for undertaking the effort.
- b. Kathryn shared that the document was originally created through a sub-committee. Since there’s a sub-committee working on the effort in the Awards sub-committee, it was agreed that they would continue taking the lead.
- c. Steve asked everyone to submit any comments/ideas about the ABC mission to him by end of March.

6. Agenda Items for the Thursday, April 14, 2022 Meeting

- a. None.

7. Public Comment/Discussion

- a. Oscar mentioned that our virtual meetings are close to ending, and he wanted us to be prepared for in-person meetings in the coming months.

8. The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 9:01 PM.