

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

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 9, 2022
7:30 PM

Present: Steve Cohen (Chair), Kathryn Chiasson (Vice Chair), Casey Clark, Richard Dorrier, Chirag Mapara, Alexander Mcelya, Laura Norfolk, Eleanor Quigley, Denise Tennant

Excused Absences: Julie Chapman, Michael Budinski, Monica Murphy, Katie Hartka

Unexcused Absences: N/A

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM.

1. Approval of the May 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- a. Laura motioned to approve the minutes, Chirag seconded, unanimous approval.

2. Membership Updates

- a. This is Alexander Mcely's first meeting.
- b. Thomas McChesney and Katie Hartka has resigned from the commission.

3. Commission Business

- a. Subcommittee Updates

- i. Awards and Outreach

- a. Awards

- i. Residential Winners

- a. We had 29 nominees and the subcommittee proposes 9 winners reflecting the highest scoring properties in East, Central, and west.

- b. Denise motioned to approve the winners, Alex seconded, unanimous approval.

- ii. Discussion

- a. Traditionally we have done this as a tour with everyone in a van together, this year people voted on their own. There are positives and negatives to this approach.

- b. Downsides of this approach include:

- a. Understanding the difference between invasive and non-invasive plants is challenging in nominations and voting.
- b. We lose an opportunity for commissioners to interact outside of standard meetings.
- c. Upsides of this approach include:
 - a. Inclusivity and scheduling flexibility.
- d. Suggestions to consider for the future:
 - a. Go back to the standard van tour
 - b. Keep this year's structure
 - c. Have the van tour, but people can also vote on their own separately if they want
- e. Other suggestions for future improvements:
 - a. Instead of focusing on representing West/Central/East, focus on the different housing types.

ii. Sustainable Landscaping

a. Discussion

- i. Richard, Monica, Oscar, and Steve met with Ellen Eggerton, Maureen Sturgill, Ryan Knight, Jesse Maines from the City.
- ii. Primary question: where are we on getting the City to plant more natives?
- iii. Takeaways:
 - a. Ellen proposed The Commission should identify other areas for native plantings.
 - b. The City should set metrics on the City's landscape requirements (such as percentage of plantings that are native, or money spent).
 - c. Richard made the observation that no department or individual in the City really owns the medians. They aren't a park, they aren't a road.
 - d. Denise proposed that we send a letter to Council identifying this gap. Our charter specifically calls out medians. She also pointed out "if we call out a problem, we should propose a solution".
- iv. Next steps:
 - a. Oscar will schedule a follow-up call discussion with Ellen prior to her retirement.
 - b. Ellen is retiring. The City has not established a plan for her replacement. How can we advocate for the right choice here?

- c. Denise and Richard will draft a letter to Council on this topic.

- iii. Vacant Lots

- a. Discussion

- i. Flagpole park is part of a larger stormwater plan that will be complete a minimum of 2.5 years from now. After the construction is complete it would benefit from our efforts, but right now there's not much we can do.
 - ii. Denise proposes that we push the City to fully fund these improvements, instead of needing outside dollars.

- 4. **New Commission Business**

- a. None

- 5. **Agenda Items for the August 11, 2022 Meeting**

- a. Commission to take off July
 - b. Steve proposes an August retreat to discuss where we go from here. Topics to discuss:
 - i. How can we take what we learned from the guest speakers and evaluate our priorities?
 - ii. Can we define our goals?

- 6. **Public Comment/Discussion: None**

- 7. **The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 8:58 PM.**