

January 14, 2026

**To:** Waterfront Commission

**From:** Agnès Artermel

**Subject:** Review of Commission Charter and Membership; Development of Commission Bylaws

The following background information provides useful context to our review of the Commission's current charter and membership. It also provides information that should be included in bylaws for the Commission, which the City's clerk's office has asked that we develop. Finally, it lays out the next steps on proceeding with this effort.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WATERFRONT COMMISSION**

05/23/1989 Waterfront Committee established by ordinance (Title 2, Chapter 4, Article E of the City Code)

06/28/2011 Waterfront Work Group appointed by City Council in conjunction with preparation of Waterfront Small Area Plan; Group includes one member of the Waterfront Committee

2011-2012 Work on the Waterfront Small Area Plan

01/21/2012 Waterfront Small Area Plan approved by City Council; in a statement to the Alexandria City Council during the public hearing, the Chair of the Waterfront Committee stated that the Waterfront Committee supports adoption of the draft Waterfront Small Area Plan contingent upon incorporation of the recommendations of the Waterfront Plan Work Group and staff recommendations dated January 17, 2012.

02/25/2012 Waterfront SAP incorporated into City Master Plan by ordinance

03/01/2012 Special Meeting of the Waterfront Committee to discuss changes to the Alexandria Waterfront Committee Functions and Membership

03/05/2012 Letter to the Mayor requesting modifications to the legislated function and membership of the committee

03/21/2012 Memorandum from City Manager recommending changes to the composition and functions of the Waterfront Committee to assist with implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

“Staff recommends that the Waterfront Committee become the waterfront “implementation advisory group” to the City. *While the City has a number of boards and commissions that look at a relatively specific set of issues such as art, history, transportation, the environment, for the entire City, the Waterfront Commission would focus on a relatively narrow geographic area but consider a broad spectrum of issues for that geographic area...the Waterfront Commission will help to coordinate waterfront-related issues that involve more than one board or commission.*”

04/04/2012 City Council passed an ordinance on first reading April 10, 2012 and second reading and final passage on April 14, 2012 to amend and reordain Article E of Chapter 4 of Title 2 of the City Code to change the name, composition, and function of the Waterfront Committee. (Ordinance 4757)

### **INTENT OF THE CHARTER LANGUAGE**

The function of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee specified in the City Code, section 2-4-54, was:

“The functions of the committee shall be to advise City Council, the City Manager, and appropriate City departments on matters pertaining to the use of the Alexandria Waterfront by commercial and private vessels.”

On March 1, 2012, the Waterfront Committee deliberated and suggested that “implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan” should be part of its charter. The Committee explained that “subjects about which the Waterfront Committee could be asked to review and advise the City Council, City Manager, and staff could include the following:

- Public improvements, including flood mitigation, new parks and improvements to existing parks, utilities, piers and the marina, and shoreline improvements
- Design guidelines or standards for new buildings and for the public realm (including parks, plazas, and other public spaces).
- Recommendations related to implementation of the waterfront public art and history plans
- Proposals for commerce, private redevelopment, and public-private partnerships
- Studies and recommendations related to transportation, parking, and circulation, including vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and marine travel
- City management, maintenance, operations, and programming of new and existing Waterfront facilities, including the Alexandria City Marina
- Operating budgets, capital improvement programs, and funding for new and existing infrastructure, including phasing of planned improvements

- Public safety and security issues
- Environmental quality of the Potomac River, along its shores, and on adjacent land in Alexandria
- Governance and/or fundraising organizations or activities, such as they affect the Waterfront

*“This detailed list is not appropriate for including in the ordinance itself, but the Waterfront committee could have administrative rules, procedures or by-laws that specify this level of detail. Notably, the Committee already advises in most of these areas.” (Waterfront Committee paper of March 1, 2012)*

The City Manager’s docket memo of March 21, 2012 repeated these line items, with the exception of the item relating to environmental quality of the Potomac River, and with the addition of details to two items: “private redevelopment and public-private partnerships such as the Beachcomber and the Food Court/Chart House” and “a waterfront arts and history foundation” within the bullet on governance and fundraising.

ORDINANCE No 4757 established the Waterfront Commission consisting of 21 members appointed by the City Council with the functions of “Advise the City Council, the City Manager, and appropriate City departments on matters pertaining to:

- The use of the Alexandria Waterfront by commercial and private vessels; and
- Implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.”

The Implementation line item was understood to include detailed items based on the Waterfront Committee’s recommendations that an advisory group could be asked to review and advise on, as cited in the City Manager’s memo of March 21, 2012.

## **EVOLUTION OF MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION**

The Waterfront Committee consisted of 15 members:

- 1) One representative from the Alexandria City Council
- 2) One representative from the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association
- 3) One representative from the Alexandria Parks and Recreation Commission
- 4) One citizen representative from the Old Town Civic Association
- 5) One citizen representative from the Founders’ Park Community Association
- 6) One citizen representative who resides east of Washington Street and south of King Street
- 7) One citizen representative who resides east of Washington Street and north of King Street

- 8) One citizen representative who resides **east of Washington and north of Pendleton Street**
- 9) From the Old Town Business Association
- 10) One representative from the **Alexandria Chamber of Commerce**
- 11) One representative from the **owners of pleasure boats leasing space** at the Alexandria Marina
- 12) One representative from the **Alexandria Archaeological Commission**
- 13) One representative from the **Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission**
- 14) One representative from the **Alexandria Seaport Foundation** and
- 15) One **at large-citizen** representative other than from any group or area listed above.

Upon recommendation of the Waterfront Committee, four positions were to be added:

- One representative from the **Alexandria Commission for the Arts**
- One citizen representative from **Park Planning District I**
- One citizen representative from **Park Planning District II**
- One citizen representative from **Park Planning District III**

The three representatives of Park Planning Districts were to replace the original “at-large citizen representative” position.

In his March 21, 2012 memo, the City Manager recommended adding:

- One representative from the **Alexandria Planning Commission**
- One representative from the Alexandria Traffic and Parking Board (not included subsequently)

In his April 4, 2012 memo prepared for the April 10 and April 14 City Council meetings, the City Manager endorsed the recommendation to add:

- A representative of the Commission for the Arts
- Representatives of the three Park Planning Districts

and retained the At-Large citizen position, with a definition change.

On April 6, 2012, the **Historic Alexandria Foundation** requested a designated member representing the interests of Alexandria’s historic preservation community, namely HAF. City Council approved this addition as part of its action at the April 14, 2012, public hearing. The newly formed Waterfront Commission now had 21 members.

With the closure of the Old Town Business Association, the Commission currently has 20 members, highlighted in **yellow** above.

## TERM OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

Commissioners are appointed for a 2-year term. City Council has set term limits for all appointed positions at 10 years and recently approved a recommendation to increase the term limit to 12 years but has not yet codified this change in the City ordinances.

## BYLAWS

The City Clerk maintains the [records](#) of mission, composition, and bylaws of the City's network of Boards and Commissions. Not all boards and commissions have bylaws, and the Clerk is requesting that all work toward having bylaws governing their operations. Bylaws make clear the mission, composition, activities, and operating rules of the organization both to ensure that all is in order internally, and that external entities understand what the organization does and how it proceeds. This is a more formal expression of things that have been done informally for some time. There are many ways to write bylaws, but there are also certain standard topics to be addressed.

The Waterfront Commission does not yet have written bylaws.

## CONCLUSION

When the Waterfront Commission was created in 2012 as a successor to the Waterfront Committee, the legislative history indicates that the term "implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan" was a summary of a broader intent, and that City Council agreed with the broader points, specifically —

- The Commission is intended to deal with a broad range of issues under the umbrella of the Small Area Plan, including parks, arts, flood mitigation, partnerships, capital investments, etc.
- The Commission is specifically designed to coordinate issues to involve one or more boards or commissions; that is, a mission that is cross-cutting, not duplicative.

## NEXT STEPS

Two Commission members will tackle each of the following between the January and February meetings of the Commission:

- Charter: Deb Roepke, Melissa Kuennen
- Membership/Terms: Charlotte Hall, Stuart Fox
- Bylaws: Agnès Artemel; Jan Abraham

The groups should report back to me with recommendations for my review. I'll compile the proposals for the Commission's consideration at its February 17 meeting.