



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

July 10, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
Jim Parajon, City Manager

Subject: Recommendations to Improve Recreational Boating and Paddling Access Along the Alexandria Waterfront

The Potomac River is one of Alexandria's greatest assets, and the waterfront is the crown jewel of our City enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. While significant investment has been made in the land-side experience of the waterfront, access to and from the river itself, particularly for small recreational watercraft such as kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards, remains limited. The Waterfront Commission believes that the following targeted, achievable improvements would increase recreational boating and paddling access and significantly enhance the vitality, appeal, and inclusive enjoyment of our waterfront.

1. Advocate to the National Park Service to Repair the Jones Point Kayak Launch.



The existing kayak launch at Jones Point Park, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), has long been in a state of disrepair and is effectively unusable. Jones Point represents a significant opportunity for public water access at the southern end of the City's waterfront. The Commission strongly urges the City to formally and persistently advocate to the NPS to restore this facility to a functional condition. A kayak/paddleboard locking post would further enhance the use of this site. The Commission has previously engaged the NPS on improvements in the Old Town North waterfront corridor and is prepared to support similar outreach regarding Jones Point.

2. Add Signage, River-Facing Wayfinding, and a Locking Post at the Existing Boat Ramp at the North End of Windmill Hill Park Near the Fishing Pier.

The boat ramp near the fishing pier at the north end of Windmill Hill Park is an underutilized public asset. Visitors arriving by water have no signage to orient them to available amenities or to indicate they are welcome to land there. The Commission recommends the City add appropriate land-facing and river-facing signage to raise visibility of this access point, as well as a locking post to allow kayakers and paddleboarders arriving by water to secure their craft while they explore the area on foot. These are low-cost improvements with meaningful impact on the visitor experience for those arriving by water.

3. Allow Kayak and Paddleboard Use on the Protected Portion of the City Pier Near Barca Pier & Wine Bar.



There is an unused, sheltered portion of the City Marina pier adjacent to Barca Pier & Wine Bar that is well-suited for kayak and paddleboard launching and landing. The Commission recommends that the City amend applicable rules to permit small non-motorized watercraft to use this protected area, and that appropriate signage be installed to direct users to it. The Commission further recommends the installation of a paddle-assist float to facilitate safe entry and exit from the water, making this access point usable by a broader range of skill levels and abilities.

4. Utilize the Waterfront Park Seawall for Dine-and-Dock and Festival Boater Parking.

The sea wall along Waterfront Park represents an untapped opportunity to welcome boaters arriving from the river. The Commission recommends that the City explore designating portions of the river frontage sea wall for “dine-and-dock” use, allowing boaters to temporarily tie up while visiting waterfront restaurants and shops, and for festival event parking for boaters during major waterfront events. This would strengthen the connection between the water and the land-side commercial and cultural offerings of the waterfront, consistent with the goals of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

5. Enforce Residency Requirements at the City Marina.

The City Marina exists primarily as a public amenity for Alexandria residents, and existing City policy provides that Alexandrians receive priority on the waiting list and at slip renewals. However, the Commission understands that a meaningful number of current slip holders are not City residents — and that some are not even area residents. The Commission recommends that the City conduct a thorough audit of current slip holder residency and enforce the existing policy, ensuring that Alexandrian boaters receive the priority access to which they are entitled. Greater availability of slips for City residents would both honor the intent of the policy and increase the marina’s value to the community it serves.

6. Add Kayak Access, a Locking Post, and Signage Near Robinson Terminal North for Visiting Boaters.

With the redevelopment of Robinson Terminal North underway, the Commission recommends that provisions be made to accommodate visiting boaters arriving by kayak, paddleboard, or small non-powered vessel at or near the Robinson Terminal North site. Specifically, the Commission recommends the installation of a kayak-accessible landing point, a locking post for securing non-motorized watercraft, and appropriate signage visible from the river. This would allow day visitors arriving by water to enjoy nearby waterfront dining and retail offerings, enhancing economic vitality and the sense of Alexandria as a destination accessible from the river.

7. Add Kayak and Paddleboard Rentals At or Near the Dee Campbell Rowing Center.

The publicly owned Dee Campbell Rowing Center is an existing waterfront facility with river access and a natural fit for expanded recreational programming. The Commission recommends that the City explore adding a kayak and paddleboard rental facility and launch area near this location, in either Oronoco Bay Park or Rivergate Park. Such a facility would allow Alexandrians and visitors who do not own watercraft to experience the Potomac River directly, broadening the appeal of the waterfront.

8. Ensure Meaningful River Access and Rental Opportunities at the PRGS Development.

The redevelopment of the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) site by the HRP Group presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform a significant stretch of Alexandria's waterfront. As we noted in our October 21, 2025, letter to you, we are pleased that HRP Group's plan includes a pier for non-motorized watercraft; however, the distance from where a car can drop off a kayak or paddleboard and the significant elevation drop to the water would make it challenging to bring a personally owned watercraft to and from the pier. Also, people who are on the river in their kayak or paddleboard and want to stop at this site and explore the area would have no place to temporarily store their watercraft while they do so. Nearby residents would also benefit from having a longer-term storage area near the pier for their kayak/paddleboard. We believe adding a kayak/paddleboard rental kiosk near the pier and small watercraft storage would greatly enhance the usability of the pier and would ensure that the PRGS site becomes a true public waterfront amenity, accessible both from the land and from the river.

9. Evaluate Long-Term Public Access for the 206 Strand Street Kayak Launch.



There is an existing dock with a kayak launch at the parking lot for 206 Strand Street near Point Lumley Park. The Commission understands that the Old Dominion Boat Club has temporarily leased this dock from the City. The Commission recommends evaluating whether this dock would be a suitable location for a public kayak launch after the completion of the waterfront flood mitigation project.

10. Alexandria Water Trail Map

The Commission recommends that the City develop a waterfront interpretive map—a visitor-facing wayfinding resource that highlights recreational access points, historic sites, and public amenities along Alexandria's waterfront—to enhance the visitor experience and promote active use of the City's waterfront public spaces.

The Commission believes that these recommendations, taken together, would meaningfully advance Alexandria's goal of making its waterfront an accessible and welcoming destination not just for those approaching from land, but for the many boaters, kayakers, and paddlers who could be arriving from the Potomac River.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these recommendations with you or with relevant City staff. We greatly appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Louise L. Roseman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Louise" and last name "Roseman" clearly legible.

Louise L. Roseman
Chair

c: Members of the Waterfront Commission

Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager

Alethea Predeoux, Deputy City Manager

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