

Waterfront Plan Work Group Meeting
Wednesday, November 2, 2011
8:00 – 11:15 AM
City Council Work Room

MEMBERS

Christopher Ballard, At-Large Member. Principal at McWilliams/Ballard.

Bert Ely, At-Large Member. Head, Ely and Company; Board Member, Citizens for an Alternative Alexandria Waterfront Plan and Old Town Civic Association.

Mindy Lyle, At-Large Member. Vice President Client Development, Haley & Aldrich, Inc.; and President, Cameron Station Homeowners Association.

Nathan Macek, Waterfront Committee Chair and Representative; and Transportation Consultant.

David Olinger, Old Town Civic Association Representative. Realtor; and Senior Foreign Service Officer (Ret.) with a background in urban planning.

Elliot Rhodeside, At-Large Member. Principal, Rhodeside & Harwell, a firm offering urban planning and landscape design with a focus on revitalization and sustainability.

Councilman Paul Smedberg, Non-voting City Council Representative and Work Group Convener.

Lt. Gen. Bob Wood, (Ret.), At-Large Member. Alexandria resident and Business Owner.

FACILITATOR

Sherry Schiller, Ph.D., The Schiller Center .

CITY STAFF

Faroll **Hamer**, Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z); James **Banks**, City Attorney; Joanna **Anderson**, Assistant City Attorney; **Karl Moritz**, Deputy Director, P&Z; Barbara **Ross**, Deputy Director, P&Z; Tom **Canfield**, City Architect, P&Z; Al **Cox**, Historic Preservation Manager; P&Z; Nancy **Williams**, Principal Planner, P&Z; Ben **Aiken**, Urban Planner, P&Z; Emily **Baker**, City Engineer, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES); Sandra **Marks**, Chief of Planning, T&ES; Faye **Dastgheib**, Parking Planner, T&ES; Jack **Browand** Acting Deputy Director, Parks Operations, Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (RPCA); Jennifer **Harris**, Communications Officer, Communications; Sharon **Annear**, Aide to Councilwoman Alicia Hughes.

PUBLIC ATTENDEES (list of those who signed in)

Engin **Artemel**, Gina **Baum**, Katy **Cannady**, Susan **Cohen**, Deena **DeMontigny**, Michael **Jennings**, Tony **Kupersmith**, Dave **Levy** (Alexandria Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee), Andrew **Macdonald** (Citizens for an Alternative Alexandria Waterfront Plan), Skip **Maginnes**, Janice **Magnuson**, Kathryn **Papp**, Nina **Randolph**, Ann **Shack**, Carl **Smith**, Hugh **Van Horn**, Van **Van Fleet**, Boyd **Walker**, Margaret **Wood**.

MEDIA

Sharon **McLoone** (Old Town Alexandria Patch)

Michael **Pope** (Alexandria Gazette)

Patricia **Sullivan** (Washington Post)

I. **Opening**

A. **Welcome** – Smedberg convened the meeting at 8:05 AM, Waterfront Plan Work Group (Work Group) members introduced themselves, and Smedberg introduced Planning Director Faroll Hamer, City Attorney James Banks and Assistant City Attorney Joanne Anderson.

B. **Overview**

1. Organizational items
2. Continuation of Plan Statements
 - A. Redevelopment (continued from the October 26 meeting)
 - B. Funding and Implementation
3. Recommendations Discussion
 - A. Parking
 - B. Traffic/Circulation
 - C. Flood Mitigation
4. Public Comment Period
5. Meeting Summary

II. **Organizational Items**

A. **Approval of October 19, 2011 Meeting Notes** - On a motion moved by Macek and seconded by Rhodeside, the meeting notes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

B. **October 26, 2011 Meeting notes** – will be sent to Members shortly.

C. **Comment Board Summary** – It was noted that the most recent comments were included in the day's packet.

D. **Process Items - Schiller**

1. **Plan Recommendations** - Schiller reviewed information from a handout outlining a process to ensure the most efficient use of the Work Group's time in completing its discussions related to Plan Recommendations over the remaining meetings.
2. **Compromise Items** - When proposing compromise positions during its deliberations, Schiller suggested that the Work Group first consider whether the compromise is likely to be supported by opponents of that element of the Plan.
3. **Questions for Staff** – Members should provide questions to staff by the Friday before the next meeting; staff will bring answers to the questions to the next meeting unless there are questions which require more time to research.

E. Plan Recommendations Discussion by the Work Group

- 1. Cluster the Plan Recommendations around the topic areas (Plan Statements)** with each Work Group member identifying – before each meeting – the Plan Recommendations on which discussion should focus. Include new ones if necessary and new language for any Plan Recommendation where language modification is suggested. Also, include any desired changes to the Vision and Goals.
- 2. Generate a consolidated list of Plan Recommendations, and Vision and Goal statements, which the majority members of the Work Group want to discuss.** The Plan Recommendations submitted, that do not make the consolidated list, can be identified as minority statements in the Report.
- 3. Complete the Plan Recommendations discussion, with modifications as needed, and also finalize the Plan Statements with modifications as needed.**
- 4. Develop Work Group Recommendations as contemplated by the Report Outline:** (a) (1) Plan Refinements for City Council consideration; (2) Additional Actions for City Council consideration now or later outside the Waterfront Plan arena; and (3) Implementation Actions which may not need to be codified in the Plan or through City Council action but which the City still needs to be mindful of:

F. Timeline for Work Group's Report

- 1. Schiller indicated that the purpose of the process for discussing Plan Recommendations is to help keep the Work Group on track by preserving meeting time for substantive conversations** and to make sure everyone in the Work Group believes they can fully participate in the conversations.
- 2. A member stated that the timeline by City Council is not necessarily set in stone** and more time for completing the Work Group's work should be considered. Another member stated that the Council included the fall but also included the word *indefinite [unspecified]* in the resolution in referencing the meeting period for the Work Group.
- 3. Smedberg indicated that the City Council was clear that it would like the Work Group's product by fall and the majority members of the City Council believe that 5 months is sufficient.** The majority of the Work Group members responded stating they agreed that the Work Group should meet the fall deadline. One member indicated the Work Group is already taking additional time to complete its charge by switching from meeting every two weeks to meeting every week; another indicated that the Work Group should do its best to meet the deadline submitting everything it has done by that time; and another indicated that in agreeing to participate in the process members essentially agreed to the fall timeline established by the City Council.

G. Plan Statements

1. **Recordation of Member Positions** - Schiller reiterated that it was agreed by the Work Group that if a member was absent from a meeting and wants to incorporate his/her position on Plan Statements discussed at that meeting, he/she can do so. Schiller acknowledged that Elliot Rhodeside submitted his positions to her for the Plan Statements approved on October 26, 2011.
2. **Terminology** - Schiller also clarified that the language utilized in noting members' positions on the Plan Statements is "Agreed" or "Disagreed."

H. Questions regarding Foot of King Street (Responses in italics)

1. If the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) parking lot is taken off the table but in 100 years they decide they want to sell it or lease it to the city, how does the Plan address that? *Regardless of what happens at the foot of King Street, improvements to the nearby area, namely the area bounded by Robinson Terminal South, The Strand, and the south side of the ODBC parking lot can move forward. For instance, the Point Lumley Park area, the redevelopment of The Strand block, and improvements to Waterfront Park, including placement of a pier, can occur even if there is a delay on redevelopment to the ODBC parking lot for an indefinite period of time.*
2. What would be done in terms of working with the ODBC on the beautification of the foot of King Street if the parking lot stays? *Some things that might be helpful would include pruning/removing the evergreen trees, paving the surface of the parking lot and putting in a new fence.*
3. A member stated that while he is not speaking on behalf of the ODBC, ODBC is always willing to work with the City to make things look as attractive as possible.

I. Carr Hospitality – Indigo Hotel

A member indicated that a statement was made during the previous meeting's public comment period that Indigo has several properties in bankruptcy. The member clarified that, in the cases cited, it is the developer, not Indigo, that was involved in bankruptcy and moreover Carr Hospitality has written a letter – included in today's meeting packet – that indicates it is not involved in any bankrupt properties. The member requested staff to post the Carr letter to the website.

III. Continuation of Plan Statements

A. Redevelopment (continued from the October 26 meeting)

- **Architecture and site design could be ~~contemporary design~~ inspired by historic precedent while maintaining compatibility with nearby neighborhoods. Contemporary design that meets these standards is acceptable.**

Agreed: Wood, Rhodeside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

Note: Staff explained that “contemporary design”, a phrase taken from the Alexandria Archaeology Commission’s “Waterfront History Plan”, is designed to recall Alexandria’s history but not to replicate historic structures. Staff also indicated that this statement is consistent with BAR guidelines.

Discussion:

- Rhodeside: It should be noted that while the intent is not to impose architecture that is faux looking, contemporary design is an acceptable treatment along the waterfront.

- **New development must make significant contributions to on-site and off-site public amenities, including parks, streetscapes, other public spaces, and art and history elements of the plan.**

Agreed: Wood, Rhodeside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

Discussion:

- Ely: Asked how the word *significant* is defined and staff responded by stating that it is not possible to say exactly what new development will contribute now but it is a clear expectation that it will not be something small.
- Wood: Changed the word *should* to *must*.
- Olinger: Noted increased density has not been fully discussed.

- **Parking for new buildings will be accommodated on-site below-grade.**

Agreed: Wood, Rhodeside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

Discussion:

- Ely: Believes a plan is being developed on a premise that is economically infeasible. Expressed concern whether below-grade parking is financially viable and, if not, whether at some point in the future the City may be requested by a developer to grant an exception to the requirement for below-grade parking.
 - Lyle: Offered to arrange for an engineer from her company, experienced in below-grade parking, to answer Ely's questions. Indicated that Cameron Station includes levels that are below grade and in some cases at the water table.
 - Macek: Developers came in and did not raise issues with underground parking.
 - Wood: Underground parking was only discussed in the context of one project when the developers were here.
 - Rhodeside: The statement should include both new and renovated buildings.
 - Ballard: Expressed concern about adding renovated buildings.
- **(New statement) Parking for new commercial buildings will be accommodated on site below grade. New parking should not be visible from public spaces.**

Agreed: Ballard, Ely, Lyle, Macek, Olinger, Rhodeside, Wood.

Discussion:

- Several issues were highlighted for future discussion:
 - The Planning staff was requested to come back with more information in response to the following concern: Work Group members are concerned that renovation of existing properties -- because they are currently underutilized -- may generate more parking demand once renovated. This concern was particularly stressed given the buildings are grandfathered under the Zoning Ordinance.
 - A member inquired as to whether below-grade parking for new buildings preclude a museum or a public-use building from being built because of the expense of below-grade parking. This was addressed by incorporating the word *commercial* in the statement.

B. Implementation and Funding

The following statements were considered and approved, modified, deleted, or deferred for future consideration.

- ~~The general timeframe for implementing a plan should be 20-25 years. [deleted]~~

Discussion:

- After discussion, it was generally agreed by the Work Group that this statement is not needed since the timeline is already included in the Plan.
- Ely: Noted that the GenOn site fits within this timeframe.

- **Flood mitigation and parking are two of the highest priority initiatives for City action – *Deferred.***

Discussion:

- After discussion, it was generally agreed to defer discussion relating to priorities to a later time.
- It was noted, however, that parking and flood mitigation had been the most often-mentioned concerns expressed by the public; that the statement identifies these matters as “City” priorities; and that when it is time to discuss this again, perhaps parking should be supplemented by pedestrian congestion within the context of “City priorities”.

- ~~Implementation of a plan should not place an undue financial burden on the City.~~

Note: This statement was deleted due to duplication.

- **The revenues from increased economic activity should pay for as great a portion of the costs of the plan as feasible in an effort not to place an undue financial burden on the City.**

Agreed: Wood, Rhodeside, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

Abstained: Olinger

Discussion:

- Ely: Stated he believes that when discussing revenues to cover Plan elements (amenities), revenues generated City-wide should be considered, not only those generated by commercial activities east of Lee Street.
- Macek: Added "*financial*" before the word "*burden*."

Notes:

- Olinger said he abstained because he felt (a) the wording implied that Plan costs should be covered by funds generated east of Lee Street and because (b) public costs of the Plan's public elements have been "inflated" by including as Plan elements previously announced City budget items - such as flood mitigation and Windmill Hill Park bulkhead repairs which should be considered as City capital improvements.

- **The City should pursue federal, state, and other governmental/non-governmental grants and funding programs to support the construction, maintenance and operation of the waterfront.**

Agreed: Wood, Rhodeside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

- **Individuals, groups and cultural institutions should play a strong role in implementing the all aspects of a plan.**
~~a. Advisory participation in the design, planning, and implementation of public projects [such as flood mitigation and new parks and guiding implementation programs, such as parking,]and~~
~~b. Raising funds or otherwise supporting the retention, expansion and establishment of museums, cultural and education institutes, and related elements (such as historic ships) in the waterfront area.~~

Agreed: Wood, Rhodeside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Wood.

Discussion:

- The Work Group generally agreed to consider at a later meeting adding specific statements regarding the Plan's implementation since the Plan does not now include implementation recommendations.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS DISCUSSION

A. General Discussion:

- **Process:** See Items IID (page 2) and IIE (page 3) of these notes.
- **Environment:** The Work Group added one topic – environment – to its list of topics about which recommendations should be discussed and asked staff to include it on a future agenda.

B. Parking - Statements Review

In preparation for the Work Group discussion on November 9 of its recommendations regarding parking, members reviewed their previous statements about parking, and modified two.

Discussion about parking highlighted the following:

- Nothing included in a Work Group statement should be taken to support the use of eminent domain.
- Issues related to parking statements will be discussed in more detail when considering the Report's recommendations.
- Consideration should be given to how the Plan addresses current parking problems and whether it may exacerbate them.
- **New surface parking lots will be prohibited ~~discouraged~~ along the water's edge in favor of parks, plazas, and public spaces.** (modification of a previous statement).

Agreed: Wood, Rhodesside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

Discussion:

- Rhodesside would like to see wording eventually strengthened to include prohibiting surface parking lots as a long-term goal.
- Ely disagreed with this as part of the vision.
- **(New statement added) Current parking that is displaced must be accounted for in the plan.**

Agreed: Wood, Rhodesside, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ely, Ballard.

- **Surface parking lots will be discouraged along the water's edge in favor of parks, plazas, and public spaces.**
- **New development will provide the parking it needs onsite and below grade.**
- **City will implement initiatives to encourage visitors to park in both public and privately-owned garages, including making it easier for visitors to find garages.**

- **City will take steps to manage parking garage capacity – through valet parking programs, technology, and by opening private garages – when monitoring shows that garage use is approaching capacity.**
- **Upon adoption of a plan, the City will use a Stakeholder Group to help implement the plan’s parking recommendations including evaluating increased residential parking protections.**
- **The City will make parking outside the core area more desirable and accessible through steps like pricing differentials, shuttle service, added signage, and technology applications.**

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Van **VAN FLEET** – Indicated that the Waterfront Plan’s 15-20 (25) year implementation timeframe supports including consideration of the GenOn site within the Plan; expressed concern about parking and circulation; urged the City to complete a traffic study now for Old Town’s Union Street corridor; opposed the Work Group adhering to a strict deadline for its work; urged that the Historic District line be moved from Oronoco to Pendleton to include Robinson Terminal North and rejected the idea that below-grade parking along the waterfront would be feasible.

Katy **CANNADY** – Indicated that Fitzgerald Square has always been included as the Waterfront Plan’s centerpiece; the ODBC parking lot is unlikely to be available for redevelopment as a public square in the near future; that either other waterfront sites should be considered as a location for the public square or that the Plan’s proposed density be lowered to reflect that land would not be available in the foreseeable future for the City to create a public waterfront square. Opposed spending \$6 million for a flood mitigation plan that only addresses nuisance flooding.

Deena DeMONTIGNY - As the owner of a historic house on Prince Street without parking, and an architect who has designed museums and parking garages, highlighted her concerns about parking; and the impact of underground parking; questioned the Plan’s parking count, the assumption that hotels don’t operate at full capacity, and whether the Plan adequately reflects the area’s tiny historic streets and limited parking. She urged that the parking plan, including improved parking signage, be implemented immediately to address current parking problems.

Kathryn PAPP - Highlighted existing parking problems faced by small businesses whose customers are unable to find parking close to their shops; supported the Work Group’s plan to consider environmental issues in greater detail; recommended that the Work Group invite the “Potomac Green Group” to address it regarding waterfront environmental issues; and urged the City to

implement the parking plan now to determine how well it works, and whether modifications might be needed.

Margaret **WOOD** – Urged the Work Group to listen to and discuss alternatives proposed by the CAAWP report, including its analyses of successes and failures of other waterfront redevelopments; highlighted concerns about the Plan’s impact on parking; supported Lyle’s suggestion that an engineer from her firm who is familiar with below-grade parking address questions related to underground parking; and urged that more attention be given to West’s Point and its 18th century significance. Regarding her concern expressed the previous week about Hotel Indigo sites that have been reported to be in bankruptcy, she suggested that those experiences might be relevant to understanding whether hotel developers for the City’s waterfront sites might encounter financial problems that would prevent them from completing their own redevelopment plans.

VI. Meeting Summary and Next Meetings

A. The following agenda items were deferred until the next meeting:

Traffic/Circulation and Flood Mitigation.

B. As preparation for the November 9 Work Group Discussion of Recommendations:

- Work Group members will review Plan Recommendations for (A) Parking (B) Traffic and Circulation (C), and Flood Mitigation for next week.
- Work Group members will submit to staff by Monday 9 a.m. any Plan Recommendations they want the group to discuss, and suggest specific modifications, including any suggested language changes.
- Staff will consolidate the information into a format to share with the Work Group to further its discussion.

C. Next Meetings:

- Wednesday, November 9, 2011, 8:00 – 11:00 AM, City Council Work Room
- Wednesday, November 9, 2011, 7:00 PM, City Council Meeting – Status Report to City Council
- Wednesday, November 16, 2011, 5:30 – 8:30 PM, City Council Work Room .

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.