# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 1, 2011

**TO:** JAMES BANKS, CITY ATTORNEY
FAROLL HAMER, DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND ZONING
LAURA TRIGGS, ACTING CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
LANCE MALLAMO, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

**FROM:** BRUCE JOHNSON, ACTING CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** ANALYSIS OF REPORT OF THE OCTOBER 30 CITIZENS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE WATERFRONT REPORT

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I have reviewed the October 30 report: "*Parks, the Arts, and Museums: The Key to Rediscovering the Alexandria Waterfront*" prepared and issued by the Citizens for an Alternative Alexandria Waterfront Plan (CAAWP). As a next step, I would like your three offices to review the report and to prepare a comparison and analysis of the report for use by the Waterfront Plan Work Group, as well as by Council and the community. While it is comforting that the CAAWP report agrees, or does not take issue, with the vast majority of the recommendations contained in the City's draft "Waterfront Small Area Plan" document, there are areas where the two reports differ. These include, but are not limited to, the following three key areas of concern:

1. The report advocates an alternative strategy that explicitly resists change to the waterfront to "safeguard the historic buildings, river quality, and public access" by minimizing redevelopment of privately owned parcels such as non-historic warehouse sites. For instance, it calls for locating new businesses in existing warehouse structures. I believe the forces of change will be pushing on the waterfront for years to come. Can we resist change to achieve a more vibrant, attractive and world class waterfront that provides benefits to all Alexandrians? Or can we use the opportunities presented by the forces of change to achieve these objectives?

2. The report makes assumptions about the cost to the City to acquire property and build and operate public facilities and spaces. It also makes assumptions about potential revenue available to the City from projected expenditures by visitors to new museums and additional open space. Are these assumptions realistic? Do costs exceed revenue and to what extent? To what extent would an increase in taxes or public debt, or reduction in other services, be required to pay for the amenities described in the report? Would such impacts be financially feasible in the short or long term?

3. The report may be proposing a downzoning or taking of current development rights without compensation to the owners of those properties. I would like an analysis to determine if this is a legally defensible proposition.

Given that the areas of differences between the draft Waterfront Plan and the CAAWP proposal focus in just a few areas, it would seem that a response to the issues the CAAWP report raises could be completed by November 15 as a single report document. I would ask that your staffs make this a first-in-line project, as it is one of the City's highest priority issues.

cc: The Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
Members, Waterfront Plan Work Group