

Approved Summary Meeting Notes
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT PLAN WORK GROUP
Wednesday September 21, 2011 Meeting
City Hall
8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

MEMBERS - Present

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 (CAAWP) 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.

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

Lt. Gen Bob Wood, (USA, Ret.). At-Large Member. Alexandria resident and business owner.

MEMBERS - Not Present

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

FACILITATOR - Sherry Schiller, Ph.D., (President, Schiller Center)

CITY STAFF:

James Banks, City Attorney;

Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning & Zoning (P&Z);

James Spengler, Director, RPCA; **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;

Ben Aiken, Urban Planner, P&Z;

PUBLIC ATTENDEES

Engin Artemel, **Gina Baum**, **Katy Cannady**, **Deena DeMontigny**, **Rick Dorman**; **Linda Hafer**,

Michael Hobbs, **Tony Kupersmith**; **Janice Magnuson**; **Skip Maginnes**; **Sandy Northrop**;

Kathryn Papp, **Ann Shack**, **Van Van Fleet**; **Boyd Walker**; **Christa Watters**; **Margaret Wood**;

Mike Young; **Patricia Ryan Branca**.

I. Opening

A. Welcome and Introductions – Councilman Smedberg convened the meeting at 8:00 a.m. and the Waterfront Plan Work Group (Work Group) introduced themselves.

B. Meeting Overview

- The meeting's focus is on public realm issues.

- Completing flood mitigation issues will be deferred to the next meeting when T&ES engineer Emily Baker can attend.

II. Organizational Items

A. Approval of 9/7/2011 Meeting Notes - The notes were approved by consensus with these corrections:

On page 7 (“Consideration should be given to more north-south bus and trolley service at the waterfront”), the notes should reflect that there was member concern that service to the north part of the waterfront planning area is underserved by DASH bus service.

Follow-up: A request was made to verify that there is DASH service to the north side of the waterfront area. *Staff note: The DASH AT2 route follows North Fairfax Street along the Waterfront Plan boundary from King Street to Second Street to Pitt Street to Bashford Lane, between 1 and 3 blocks from the river. The DASH AT3 route follows North Fairfax Street (and the Waterfront Plan boundary) from Prince Street to Pendleton Street, two blocks from the river. The DASH AT4 route follows North Fairfax Street from Cameron Street to Second Street (following the Waterfront Plan boundary from Prince to Second), two blocks from the river. The DASH AT3-4 Loop route also follows the Waterfront Plan boundary from Prince to Pendleton Street. Several of these routes connect the Waterfront area with either the King Street Metro Station, the Braddock Metro Station, or both.*

On page 9 (“Conduct a study of traffic and circulation on Union Street, including how it functions for users of all models of travel”), the notes should reflect that Mr. Olinger voted for it. Also on page 9, the comments on the proposed amendment to add Gibbon Street to the study should be amended as the reference to “Union Street” should be changed to “Gibbon Street” and the paragraph following should reflect that Mr. Olinger abstained on several votes because he had difficulty with the process of drafting what he considered overly generic placeholder statements for the report. The WPWG accepted the proposed changes.

B. Comment Board Summary - It was noted that the Comment Board summary for the period 8/9/2011 to 8/22/2011 was included in the day’s meeting packet.

C. Updated Meeting Schedule – The meeting schedule was updated as follows, reflecting WPWG’s practice of meeting on Wednesdays. Members discussed the possibility of their being advised in advance the Monday preceding a meeting if a new future meeting date is being added. No meeting is planned for October 5. Mr. Ely advised he will be at the September 28 meeting unless a problem develops with his planned return the evening before.

- September 28 – Meeting added; 8-11 AM at City Hall;
- October 12 – 5:30-8:30 PM, West End Community Meeting, Cameron Station Community Center
- October 19 – 8-11 AM, City Hall
- October 26 – 8-11 AM. Tentatively set at City Hall.

D. Drafting Committee - Mr. Smedberg reported that, in order to provide the Work Group with a draft report for discussion and amendment, he’d asked Mr. Macek and Gen. Wood to develop a draft report that the full Work Group will then consider as a group. Reflecting that the Work Group’s report to City Council is not expected to be a consensus product, members’ dissenting

statements will be included within the section topics as needed. The Work Group will discuss the report's development process further at its next meeting, including what the Work Group intends to provide as a value proposition to Council.

III. Road Map – Public Realm II

A. PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE

- Ms. Hamer introduced the briefing on public realm issues by explaining that, though recent attention has focused on the Plan's private realm issues, planners began their work on the Waterfront Plan by first developing a vision for the public realm within which private realm issues could be considered. Among the early steps was to take members of the public to visit successful public spaces in New York City, such as Bryant Park, the High Line, South Street Seaport, and Battery Park City.
- Suggested by members of the public, the Waterfront Plan proposes a pier and a large public plaza ("Fitzgerald Square") at the foot of King Street, providing the opportunity for an exceptional public space that connects King Street to the river and provides a hub of activity on the waterfront. As with many of the world's most successful public spaces, it will be important to pay careful attention to both the design of, and the activities in, the spaces. Among the square's key elements will be movable tables and chairs, food, a stage, and great programming.
- **General Questions and Answers with the Director:**
 - The importance of improved waterfront governance and maintenance was emphasized. Members mentioned a variety of concerns: the importance of active management and maintenance of the waterfront, such as by having revenues generated by waterfront activities used to maintain the waterfront or other mechanism to ensure that maintenance funding be at a level appropriate to the waterfront's upkeep needs.
 - It was pointed out that New York City's Bryant Park has both a management office and dedicated funding, to insure its proper management and maintenance.
 - Staff noted that they have begun to discuss internally ideas for consolidating responsibilities for the marina and waterfront in general. The Waterfront Plan includes a significant increase in maintenance funding. Plan implementation should include a role for volunteers and should consider creating a "Friends of the Waterfront" organization to help address maintenance needs within budget limits.
- **Briefing - Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z**

Mr. Moritz provided an overview of the waterfront public realm as it exists today, with challenges such as a lack of connectivity and barriers to access to the water. He reviewed recommendations for new and improved public spaces and improved connectivity. In public meetings for waterfront planning, Alexandrians highlighted their interest in more and varied public spaces and more family-friendly activities.
- **Questions and Answers Regarding Parks and the Public Realm** – A series of questions were raised and addressed during the presentation with a request for additional information from staff relative the following:

- Interest in assuring that the GenOn site, as it is eventually developed, be incorporated into the Plan's connectivity, including the possibilities for locating waterfront-related amenities, for example a bus turnaround site, waterfront maintenance facilities and/or history-related activities.
- Interest in the Plan further developing examples of the concept of "unique to Alexandria" as applied to the waterfront's arts and history elements,
- Interest in how "ideas" and "guiding concepts" differ and how were they blended together. *A: The goals began as a distillation of public inputs and were developed into guiding concepts that could be made operational within the Plan.*
- Interest in whether and how a "big idea" should motivate the Plan's concept, for example, "uniquely Alexandria". An example would be the Clean Skies Foundation's use of a big idea - renewable energy - to frame elements of its GenOn redevelopment proposal.
- Consideration of whether the Plan insures adequate public funding for implementing elements of the History Plan. *A: \$3.6 million is budgeted to implement the goals of the History Plan.*
- Consideration of how Rivergate Park might contribute to public space activities, and/or public art and historical interpretation. *A: The Plan calls for the recommendations of the art and history plans for Rivergate Park to be pursued but does not call for the essential character of Rivergate Park to be changed. Changes that would increase activities in the portions of Rivergate Park owned by the Rivergate homeowners association would likely require an amendment to the easement agreement with the City.*
- Understanding the possibilities for water-based activities in Oronoco Bay, including whether it had been considered as a possible marina site. *A: Oronoco Bay is impractical as a marina site due to its shallow depth and the fact it harbors a number of industrial chemicals from previous land uses. Instead, ideas for Oronoco Bay Park were developed to address public interest in more family-friendly activities, more attention to its environmental issues, more use for large events and restoration of the shoreline. Re-grading the park to provide a natural performance amphitheater is one of the ideas proposed for the park. Also, to offer increased family- and children-friendly activities the idea of creating non-generic children's play structures designed by local artists is part of the plan.*
- Consideration of how the City might improve Oronoco Bay's environmental quality to enhance the park, for example, could the City to move the stormwater outlet away from Oronoco Bay, perhaps extending the outlet further out into the Potomac. *A: Staff considered it, but anticipated that permitting officials might raise objections, but the City has not posed the question to them. To improve the water quality, the Plan proposes adding floating islands of plants that clean the water as both a design and environmental element.*
- Consideration of how or whether Robinson Terminal North's public spaces would follow a similar arrangement as Rivergate Park.
A: Details of public access/use would be renegotiated during the DSUP; a possible outcome might include public access, public approval for how it is used, but private maintenance.
- Consideration of how the public realm around the Charthouse and Food Pavilion might be improved, including the Food Pavilion's current under-utilization and poor maintenance. *A: The Plan offers several design and activity ideas for improving the areas*

around the public areas around the buildings. Ideas for changing the Food Pavilion's uses and/or structure will be discussed during the private realm briefing at a later meeting.

B. PIERS/MARINA

○ Briefing - Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z

Mr. Moritz provided an overview of the principles guiding the concepts for the piers and marina and how those concepts evolved during the planning effort, due to input from experts, stakeholders, and the general public. The anticipated challenge of the City's extending piers across the DC line, it was reported that DC has delivered an official letter stating that it considers Alexandria to have the right to extend piers beyond the current pierhead line.

- Questions and Answers Regarding the Pier and Marina – A Series of questions were raised and addressed during the presentation.
 - Concern over how the multi-jurisdictional authority over the Potomac River might affect Alexandria's ability to build the pier out into the Potomac past the DC jurisdictional line. *A: Environmental approvals will require Virginia Department of Environment Quality. The US Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers and DC officials will all have some involvement.*
 - Consideration of a variety of issues affecting the pleasure boat marina, including the fact that City Council had posed a number of economic and viability questions about the concept of the private marina and whether private boats might be able to remain in the current City marina. *A: An option is for the marina to develop as a public-private partnership, with an objective that the marina be built and operated without subsidy. The actual design will likely evolve over time..*
 - Options for converting the unit block of King Street to pedestrian use, including the possibility of barring tour buses from what would be a largely pedestrian plaza that would, however, be open to trolleys.
 - It was noted that the Plan's illustration on page 63 shows the Waterfront Park parking lot concept that has been eliminated from the Plan. *Staff will apply the same red X to that parking lot that is used in the other illustration on that page to show concepts that have been eliminated from the Plan.*
 - Consideration was given to how the Beachcomber site might be used, including the building's stability, the possibility of its housing an administrative office for the Point Lumley historic area, and how the fact that the City had bought the Beachcomber with Open Space funds would impact whether the building could be used for a commercial use such a restaurant. *A: An engineering study has confirmed the building's stability. The City will need to address the Open Space Fund issue if the Beachcomber property is not used for open space, such as if a restaurant were to be located there.*
 - Questions were raised about whether and how the Plan should reflect alternative options that reflect the City ongoing negotiations with the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) regarding its parking lot. For example, the Plan's sketch of the area near the ODBC does not show its parking lot or boat launching site, and no "Plan B" options are offered regarding other possible locations for Fitzgerald Square. *A: The Planning Commission decided that the diagram should show the City's preferred long-term vision for the area and the City and ODBC negotiations about the parking lot parcel are ongoing.*

- Consideration should be given to the potential impact of relocating commercial boats. A: *The Plan provides a general concept for commercial boat activities. The details are very important and will be addressed during implementation. The City's goal is to accommodate commercial operators' needs.*
- Members were interested in information to assure them that the proposed new marina would be feasible and that the details for implementing it – customer parking, docking, and bus unloading sites to support commercial boat operations at the ODBC site would address to commercial operators needs. Would there be adequate docking space and shore-side facilities to accommodate all these commercial boats – including boat, car and bus traffic, covering customer parking, tour bus drop-off space, how will this longer walk to the commercial boat-docking area be accommodated? Might the marina's parking needs overwhelm the neighborhood? A: *Staff reviewed how these issues are addressed in the plan at a level consistent with a small area plan.*
- Consideration was given as to how the Plan could create along the waterfront a sense of place for those arriving at Alexandria from the water, which is not now done, offering the Virginia Beach example of its King Neptune sculpture facing outward to the water. A: *Staff reviewed possibilities for the public realm, especially at or near the foot of King Street, such as the historic ship, public art, or a fountain.*
- Consideration should be given to alternative sites and uses for the new marina, including the possibilities of using the marina strip in the far north portion for commercial boat docking, of locating water taxis and other commercial activities at the new marina site, and of keeping the Dandy at an amenity-enhanced current city marina, and of locating commercial boats such as water taxis at the GenOn site.
- Concern was expressed whether the marina proposed by the Plan would offer enough amenities to boats for it to be commercially viable. A: *The Implementation chapter reviews a variety of amenities needed by a marina. There is a potential synergy of co-locating a hotel at the marina to provide services to marina users. Also, City marina does not now have a boat launch area or dedicated parking.*
- The question was raised, without agreement, about whether the marina's proposed location would be technically and economically viable, including a reference to testimony from a gentleman retired from the Army Corps of Engineers that he believes the proposed marina location and the extent to which it extends into the river might not receive Army Corps of Engineers approval. A: *Planners have consulted with the leading marina design and engineering firms operating in the DC area and, while construction would be more expensive, the feasibility of the location is not an issue.*
- A hypothetical question was raised about what uses, if an agreement to relocate the ODBC to another site were reached, the City might consider for the current ODBC site? A: *The Plan focuses on the ODBC parking lot and potential uses for its site, not the boat club building.*
- The possibility of considering other marina alternatives within the Plan was suggested, including ideas such as launching boats from Jones Point rather than the new pleasure boat marina, assuming security concerns could be accommodated, changing the current marina to a privately-run marina, and changing the current marina to a uniform rate schedule for commercial operators. A: *Rates are outside the scope of the small area plan; when considering the City's commercial rates, a factor to consider is the benefit to local businesses of having boats bringing potential customers to King Street and neighboring businesses.*

C. ART AND HISTORY FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

- **Briefing - Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z**
Mr. Moritz provided an overview of the arts and history plans and how they have informed the Plan's elements from the outset of the Plan's development. Credited Public Art Committee's proposal for Art Walk, first presented to planners and the public in 2009 and endorsed by the Waterfront Plan, and the Art Walk proposal provides detailed as well as thematic recommendations for each area of the waterfront. The Archaeology Commission's "Waterfront History Plan" provided the Plan's history elements for the public realm, including, for example, the design for Point Lumley Park reflecting the historic shoreline as well as the shipbuilding activities that are part of the history of that location.
- **Questions and Answers Regarding Art and History** A series of questions were raised and addressed during the presentation with a request for additional information from staff relative the following: Consideration was given to possible sites for hosting rotating public art, such as the public spaces outside the Torpedo Factory.

IV. Public Comment Period (Up to 3 minutes per speaker)

Rick DORMAN – Urged WPWG to move ahead with its decision-making on the Plan, and not delay decisions until every possible answer had been provided on every detail, said that decision makers need to balance the ideal and the practical when deciding how much information is needed before moving ahead.

Engin ARTEMEL – A Rivergate resident, Waterfront Committee member and former P&Z director who presided over the City's waterfront planning during the 1982-83 time period; urged that changes affecting commercial activities be approached with care to insure commercial vessels continue operating at the City's waterfront, and urged consideration of the view of the waterfront as seen by those approaching the City from the Potomac.

Katy CANNADY – Highlighted importance of understanding the details and their potential impacts, concern about ODBC-related issues and the need to have a plan that reflects Old Dominion Boat Club's title for their parking lot, and questioned why the expense of buying the ODBC parking lot was accepted as an option, but buying land for more open space was criticized for its expense.

Hugh VAN HORN – Urged Work Group to focus on a thorough review rather than a timetable.

Maria ROSS – (Dandy Cruises) – Noted City staff has been in good contact with them regarding how the plan would affect their docking location; their main concern is that the Plan's elements be implemented in a careful sequence order that would not, for example, eliminate parking for their customers before their new docking site might be ready.

Pat MILLER – As chair of the Commission of the Arts reviewed its process for developing the Art Plan over two years of public outreach and consultations and thanked City planners for having successfully incorporated the Arts Plan's elements throughout the Waterfront Plan.

Gina BAUM - Compared the ODBC parking lot assessment of about \$2.8 million with Robinson Terminal's likely sale price of a couple of hundred million dollars; expressed support for adopting a Waterfront Plan without including the GenOn site and noted that there are complex issues related to GenOn that will take a considerable period of time to work out.

Follow Up - Members requested that information about how possible environmental remediation actions might affect the availability of sites such as Robinson Terminal be included among environmental issues to be briefed to the Work Group.

V. Meeting Summary - Schiller

- Briefings were completed for each of the agenda's three public realm topics – parks and public space, piers/marina, and art and history.

VI. Next Meetings

A. Wednesday, September 28, 2011, 8:00 – 11:00 AM, City Hall.

- The Work Group will draft placeholder statements on the day's three public realm topics – parks, marina and pier, and art and history.
- The Work Group will finish its consideration of flood mitigation issues – begun at the August 10 meeting – and draft placeholder statements.

B. Wednesday, October 12, 2011, 8:00 – 11:00 AM, City Council Work Room

C. Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 8:00 – 11:00 AM, City Council Work Room