

--WPWG Email Communication regarding the WPWG Roadmap – 8/1/2011 – 8/9/2011--

On 8/1/11 2:45 PM, Paul Smedberg wrote:

Dear Waterfront Work Group Members,

I want to thank each of you for your attendance last week at our first meeting. I am very encouraged by the excellent progress we made and how well we seem to be working together. I further would like to compliment the group on the crafting of a clear and understandable vision statement. I am attaching information regarding the vision statement and a proposed road map organized into the topical areas you suggested. There is also a list of organizations that have expressed an interest in the waterfront and that have testified at previous hearings. You may want to hear from a select few from the list, as well as representatives of the major landowners and developers: Robinson Terminal North and South; Cummings/Turner, and Carr Hospitality. Please indicate to me which groups you feel would be beneficial to ask to speak with our group and a suggested order for inviting them to speak. Also included in the attachment is information regarding future meeting dates. I would like to hold the next meeting on August 10. Please let me know if this is convenient.

Please let me know of any changes you would like to the road map and your availability regarding future meeting dates listed on the schedule.

Thank You.

Paul Smedberg
Alexandria City Council
Convener WPWG

From: Bert Ely

Sent: Wednesday, August 03, 2011 11:26 AM

To: Paul Smedberg; Nate Macek; Elliot R. Rhodeside; Bob Wood; Mindy Lyle; Chris Ballard; David Olinger

Cc: Faroll Hamer; Nancy Williams; Sherry Schiller; Karl Moritz

Subject: Re: Waterfront Plan Work Group/Schedule, Roadmap, etc.

Paul:

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed road map for the work of the Work Group over the coming months.

First, some of the topics cannot be disposed in just one meeting. Instead, questions and concerns raised by Work Group members at one session undoubtedly will lead to requests for additional information for staff to present at a subsequent meeting -- I do not see how discussion of many of these issues can be fully resolved in one meeting. For example, Work Group members in addition to me may have questions at the proposed August 10 meeting about the technical feasibility of the flood mitigation, marina, and environmental impacts of the proposed waterfront plan that cannot be answered at that meeting. The same may be true of the circulation, transportation, and parking issues that are also supposed to be discussed on August 10 as well as

cost and revenue estimates which form the justification for many elements of the proposed waterfront plan. If the Work Group is to be more than a rubber-stamp, it is going to have to dig into these matters to a great depth than perhaps the proposed timetable will permit.

Second, the Work Group should hear from more just a "select few" from the list of organizations you provided. All of the organizations listed in Section III should be permitted to testify as well as others who are not listed, such as the Founders Park and NOTICE civic associations and the Harborside homeowners association. Civic associations from elsewhere in the City should be able to speak to the Work Group, too, since the waterfront belongs to all Alexandrians. In the interest of inclusiveness and transparency as well as building citizen support for the Work Group's recommendations, it is vital that the Work Group hear from far more than a "select few." While it will be useful to hear from property owners, too, that group should be expanded to include the Old Dominion Boat Club (of which I am a member) as well as property owners in the King/Union/Strand area who could be adversely affected by elevating streets, as proposed in the flood-mitigation aspect of the proposed waterfront plan.

Third, the timetable for Work Group meetings is too ambitious given the complexity of the issues the Work Group must discuss and the alternatives it must consider. As was discussed at the Work Group's first meeting and as members of Council stated during meetings leading up to the creation of the Work Group, it is vital to take the time needed to get the plan right, even if that means more than six or seven Work Group meetings. A rushed review of the proposed waterfront plan is neither necessary nor desirable.

Bert

At 11:13 PM 8/7/2011, Bob Wood wrote:

Paul,

I believe the roadmap set out in this email suggests a work plan that is too general and cursory to accomplish the tasks we've been assigned by the City Council. Of course, we have yet to discuss the details and amend this suggested roadmap. But, as a framework for our discussions, this "first cut" is too simplistic. While I appreciate the need to keep a sense of urgency about our work, without some up front rigor analyzing our tasks and building this work plan, I worry we will rush to failure.

I developed a potential work plan and attached it to this email. It is simply another approach to organizing what we must get done. I hope it will lead to a more complete roadmap. I worked directly from the Council Resolution which assigned us our mission and objectives. You will recognize the words. But, I've gone from the general to more specific on what we've been asked to do, how we might approach the task, and what we must provide as final product. There is more than enough assumption (and presumption!) here, but I believe it's important to hammer out a plan for ourselves before we offer any recommendations on the Waterfront Plan itself. Rather than debate and compose in public on August 10, I'd suggest we work on a more concrete, albeit draft, work plan.

I've also built a calendar in this document that puts our timeline and roadmap in better

perspective with Council work sessions and public comment meetings. In this next meeting, I hope we grapple with the amount of work we choose to do, how we will phase that work, and how much time we believe it will require. With the help of the City staff, we can use a developed calendar to anticipate the expertise we need to call, the stakeholders we must hear, the documentation we may need, and the critical reporting deadlines we face.

I've also attached three supplemental documents to this suggested work plan. The first is extracted straight from the July version of the Small Area Plan. It provides the full statement of goals and objectives derived from the public sessions. If, as required by the City Council, we must provide recommendations regarding alternatives for the Waterfront Small Area Plan, I believe it's important for us to do much more than simply sort facts from assumptions or agreements from disagreements. One of the most serious flaws in the current plan is a failure to assess the alternatives against any success metrics. As the City Council resolution makes clear - "...our objective is to achieve a Waterfront that is welcoming to and for the benefit of all City residents and visitors and be compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhoods." We may want to start the build of our measures of success using these goals.

The other two supplements come from the Project for Public Spaces. This organization has many years of experience helping communities build great waterfronts. Their website (www.pps.org) is a remarkable reference site. I added two documents from this website, "10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination" and "9 Steps to a Great Waterfront." I believe they are worthwhile to keep in our Group's digital set of references. And, I think this group could play a very useful role in our work.

I have no pride of authorship here. In fact, I think we need to collectively build our Group's work plan, analytical framework, and agenda. If this analysis gives us a headstart, all the better. But, I'm ready to pitch in on any other alternative work plan, but the roadmap and the plan suggested in this email is just not sufficient.

A final, related point on our timeline...I don't know, nor do I need to know, the details of the City's contract with Sherry. She's a terrific asset, in my opinion. But, we should not be constrained by any term of her contract. I'd suggest that we consider scheduling her as a resource who we call to specific meetings where her special skills would be most helpful. For example, stakeholder hearings and expert testimony may not require her integrating ability. But, alternative assessments or building our findings and recommendations could better use her talents.

Looking forward to our discussions, either before the meeting or on August 10th. All the best.

Bob

From: Bert Ely

Sent: Monday, August 08, 2011 1:06 PM

To: Bob Wood; Paul Smedberg; Nathan Macek; Elliot Rhodeside; Mindy Lyle; Chris Ballard; Dave Olinger

Cc: Faroll Hamer; Nancy Williams; Sherry Schiller; Karl Moritz

Subject: Re: Waterfront Plan Work Group/Schedule, Roadmap, etc.

Paul:

I am writing to endorse Bob's recommendations, especially with regard to the Project for Public Spaces. I have recently become familiar with PPS's work and am quite impressed by it. Given the importance and long-term impact of the waterfront plan, it is not too late for the Work Group to involve PPS in the waterfront planning process.

Bert

On 8/8/11 9:13 PM, Paul Smedberg wrote:

Dear Bob,

You have presented the Work Group with a very thoughtful proposal and I appreciate the care that you gave it. As you point out, the purpose of the “road map” or work plan is to accomplish the tasks that we’ve been assigned by the City Council. We discussed this a bit at our first meeting but as the Council’s representative to the work group, I think I can add *additional* clarity.

In the Council’s resolution, the work group’s assignments are:

1. Identify issues for which there is general agreement and where there is disagreement
2. Where there is disagreement (“outstanding issues”), help clarify what the various positions are. If the work group sees an opportunity for narrowing the differences among positions, the work group should convey those to the Council.
3. Categorize outstanding issues into (a) those that should be addressed in the Plan and (b) those that can be addressed during implementation.
4. Report back to the Council in the fall of 2011.

The Council is seeking the work group’s assistance in *defining the issues*, a very valuable service but very different and far more complex than determining and exploring the facts behind those issues and developing recommendations for resolving them. The Council is not asking us to take a position on something without all the facts – they’re asking us what the positions are and if consensus and compromise can be achieved and if not what would accomplish consensus and compromise.

What you propose is in fact a thorough and analytical approach to a planning process and very much approximates the steps taken by the City in the planning of the current Plan before us. The

Council was clear: we're not to create a new Waterfront Plan but rather select the agreeable elements of the current Plan that will accomplish the desired mission. The composition of this work group reflects the relatively narrow assignment – the size of the group is small and the work group never was intended to represent all of the major stakeholder groups.

I'm happy to discuss this when we meet on Wednesday. What I'd like to do is focus the discussion on how we can start working through the Council's stated assignments, categorizing plan elements into those for which we think there is general agreement, those we think there is not agreement, and those where it is not clear if there is agreement or not. I believe the approach of starting with the public realm, with which the group seemed agreeable, makes sense. If there's a better way to examine and understand the elements of the plan in order to simplify the process, let's talk about that on Wednesday.

I think that while Project for Public Spaces material is generally very good, it does not specifically address the charge that Council put before us, which is to help clarify those major issues and positions that are creating controversy and discontent. I think that is the best possible starting point for our work; once we have identified and clarified the "sticking points", we might well want to consider recommending that the Council utilize the PPS material as guidance in resolving the issues of continued contention. We can also use some of the PPS material ourselves as we continue our deliberations.

Again, I must remind the Work Group that we are strictly a Committee, tasked with a finite and contained agenda and we have not been asked to initiate an entirely new plan for the Alexandria Waterfront.

Paul

From: David Olinger

Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 7:18 AM

To: Paul Smedberg

Cc: Bert Ely; Bob Wood; Chris Ballard; Elliot Rhodeside; Faroll Hamer; Karl Moritz; Mindy Lyle; Nathan Macek; Sherry Schiller; Nancy Williams

Subject: I'm still on the "vision" thing

Paul;

Put simply, I want a waterfront that all Alexandrians can take pride in and enjoy. Since no one has cited it yet, here are the famous words of Daniel Burnham:

"Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big."

Looking forward to tomorrow.

David

From: Bob Wood
Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 4:39 PM
To: Paul Smedberg
Cc: Bert Ely; Nathan Macek; Elliot Rhodside; Mindy Lyle; Chris Ballard; Dave Olinger; Faroll Hamer; Nancy Williams; Karl Moritz; Sherry Schiller
Subject: Re: Response to Work Group Road Plan Memo

Paul,

Thanks for looking this over and providing your perspective. Couple things....

We are not a body of stakeholders. We do not come to this task with full knowledge of what has transpired to date nor do we speak as advocates from a specific group. Many stakeholder bodies have been involved to this point in the development of the Waterfront Plan. We have the results of their deliberation and inputs incorporated in the plan before us. This plan is not sufficient, acceptable, complete, understood...you choose the adjective...to the Council, so they have chartered us to help resolve the problems. I'd point to the very first sentence of the Resolution in which it says that the work group is established to "provide recommendations to City Council regarding alternatives for the Waterfront Small Area Plan." Later in the resolution, it says we can "greatly assist in exploring alternatives..." This does not mean develop a new plan. It does mean to examine alternatives as they may resolve issues or improve the plan.

I have simply proposed organizing our efforts around four steps...understand the plan and the planning process and the fundamental elements influencing the waterfront, understand the stakeholder views and their issues, assess the alternatives, make recommendations to Council that clarify or resolve issues or narrow differences. All this effort supports the Council's stated objective of creating a Waterfront that is "welcoming to and for the benefit of all City residents and visitors and compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhoods."

It is fundamentally not possible to get to issues before we understand the background behind this plan and the details of the stakeholder positions. This will take time. As I said before, we are not stakeholders. How do you propose sitting in our chambers and divining the issues on, for example, zoning without sufficient knowledge on river zoning, the plan's approach, and stakeholder input? We are not stating our personal positions. We are examining each component of the plan in sufficient detail to understand where common ground may or may not exist. Getting to "balance" requires understanding the elements to be balanced.

Once we understand the issues with one alternative, we need to examine how these issue are resolved or not by a different alternative. As I said before, this is not developing a new plan. It is answering the Council's first charter, "provide recommendations to City Council regarding alternatives, etc..." This alternative review is the third phase of my proposal. In this review, we will certainly answer the "missions and expectations" of the Council's resolution (see 5a). And, we may, as a group discover some additional means of analysis that we collectively feel provide the best feedback to the Council.

In the fourth phase of my proposed work plan, we will assuredly answer the missions and expectations requirements to identify, prioritize, resolve, balance issues (see 5b). It is a short

step to phase our recommendations into plan changes and plan implementation requirements (see 5c).

I hope you understand I am attempting to be constructive, not disruptive. This is an opportunity for us to help the city and the Council. We cannot cede our efforts to “common practice” or “routine review.” As we discussed and agreed at the last meeting, our worth will be measured by the quality of our report back to the City Council. The Council has asked for our time and our best efforts. Neither should be wasted.

Again, thanks for considering these suggestions. I look forward to our discussions tomorrow as we set our path forward.

Bob

On Aug 9, 2011, at 4:58 PM, Mindy Lyle wrote:

I believe that all of these notes going back and forth between this group should be posted to the website. This is continuing the discussion we had last week and I believe this could be in violation of open meetings laws.

Mindy Lyle

From: Bert Ely

Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 5:02 PM

To: Mindy Lyle; Bob Wood; Paul Smedberg

Cc: Nathan Macek; Elliot Rhodeside; Chris Ballard; Dave Olinger; Faroll Hamer; Nancy Williams; Karl Moritz; Sherry Schiller

Subject: RE: Response to Work Group Road Plan Memo

Mindy:

That is a good question to pose to Jim Banks.

Bert

From: Bob Wood
Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 5:07 PM
To: Mindy Lyle
Cc: Paul Smedberg; Bert Ely; Nathan Macek; Elliot Rhodeside; Chris Ballard; Dave Olinger; Faroll Hamer; Nancy Williams; Karl Moritz; Sherry Schiller
Subject: Re: Response to Work Group Road Plan Memo

Great suggestion.
Will follow Jim's Banks lead.
Bob

From: Mindy Lyle
Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2011 5:21 PM
To: 'Bob Wood'
Cc: Paul Smedberg; Bert Ely; Nathan Macek; Elliot Rhodeside; Chris Ballard; Dave Olinger; Faroll Hamer; Nancy Williams; Karl Moritz; Sherry Schiller
Subject: RE: Response to Work Group Road Plan Memo

I'll ask him tomorrow morning.

Mindy Lyle