

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

For

FISCAL YEAR 2005

SUMMARY

The Commission celebrated its 30th Anniversary and during a very active year pursued its three-fold mission of preservation, education, and advocacy for Alexandria's archaeological and historical resources as they arose regarding issues involving development, the natural and historic environment, transportation, economy/tourism, diversity of community, and efficient, community-oriented government. During Fiscal Year 2005, the AAC was involved in: discussing and making recommendations regarding Jones Point, Gunston Hall Apartments, the Old Dominion Boat Club and Waterfront development, the L'Ouverture Hospital, and Freedmen's Cemetery as well on the City's Open Space Plan and Strategic Plan; production of a brochure on the AAC that provides information to state and local government officials, community groups, and individuals who inquire about the AAC's mission, activities, and accomplishments; and continued involvement in planning as it impacts and relates to the City's archaeological and historic resources, particularly regarding the Small Area Plans. In addition, the AAC, along with the City and Alexandria Archaeology, were collectively the recipient of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) Mary Mason Anderson Williams award, and \$1,000 prize for sustained achievement in the preservation field over the past 30 years.

STRUCTURE OF THE ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council on matters relating to the City's archaeological resources and related issues within the City. Included among the AAC's responsibilities are the establishment of goals and priorities which contribute to the history and heritage of colonial, federal and historic Alexandria; propose local ordinances and state statutes to the City Council and the City Manager which promote the goals and aims embodied in Ordinance No. 3733; plan, develop and recommend short-, mid- and long-term archaeological plans and programs for the City; encourage the integration of archaeological and historical information and site preservation into master plans and development efforts; study and make recommendations to City Council with respect to additional activities involving the City's archaeological program and artifacts; promote the use of the highest professional standards by Alexandria Archaeology staff; and enhance the visibility of the City of Alexandria as a leader in archaeology throughout Virginia, the United States and the world.

AAC meetings are held at least 10 times per year, on the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, or occasionally at other sites of interest to the Commission. The fourteen (14) members of AAC include five (5) members at large, three (3) citizen members representing each of the City's three planning districts and six (6) members representing various City organizations.

Elections are held in October of each year. The Commission officers consist of a Chair, First and Second Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Due to changes in membership and elections, persons serving on the Commission may be listed in more than one representative or leadership capacity. The Commission welcomed new members Janice Magnuson and Diane Riker during the year. The following people served on the Commission during all or part of Fiscal Year 2004-2005.

MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Ann Davin
S. Kathleen Pepper, Vice-Chair,
Acting Chair, Chair
Pete Petersen
Tim Peterson
Ted Pulliam
Bill Tabor

PLANNING DISTRICT MEMBERS:

Planning District I: Lillie Finklea
Planning District II: Donald Kent, Jr.
Planning District III: Janice Magnuson

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES:

The Alexandria Association: Diane Riker
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce: Vacant
Alexandria Historical Society: Bill Tabor, Secretary
Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage: Samuel Lang
Friends of Alexandria Archaeology: Sandra Nail, Vice-Chair
Historic Alexandria Foundation: Walter Hall

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL

The Commission recommends that:

- Any waterfront planning taken into account the history of the waterfront as there are only about a dozen historic structures remaining on the waterfront and all are located in this central core of waterfront from the Potomac River to Union Street. Preserving these structures and enhancing the environment around them is an important factor, which should be included in any discussion regarding the development of the waterfront, particularly since the waterfront is within the boundaries of a National and State Historic District and Alexandria's maritime heritage is the symbol of the City.
- A "people's history" of the waterfront be prepared which would provide a brief history of the waterfront in an easy to read format so that all persons involved in any discussion of the development of the waterfront are aware of the history of the area so that history can be meaningfully incorporated into any discussion of development plans.
- The Old Dominion Boat Club building be preserved on its present location as an important resource in the Alexandria Historic District.
- Small Area Plans and development of parks or open space within the City reference and incorporate the history within the boundaries of the Small Area Plans, parks, or open space so that the City's past becomes a living, visible part of the present and future.
- Archaeological assessments for open space mid-term action properties, such as Monticello Park and the George Washington Masonic Memorial, be conducted if plans for those properties change.
- Funding the general maintenance and capital improvements budget for the City's historic properties be increased and set for the remainder of the 5-year plan to ensure responsible stewardship of the properties which will attract and retain visitors to the properties and the City.

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission actively worked on a variety of activities that supported the City of Alexandria 2004-2015 Strategic Plan:

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Waterfront: At the October 16, 2004, public hearing, the AAC recommended that, given the high priority ranking of waterfront property on the Open Space Proposed Action Plan, the history of the waterfront provide the framework for any waterfront planning process. The AAC noted that there are only 10 historic structures remaining on the waterfront and that preserving these structures and enhancing the environment around them is an important factor. The Commission discussed the need for the preparation of a “people’s history” of the waterfront which would provide a brief history of the waterfront in an easy to read format.

The Commission also stated that the waterfront portions of the Mount Vernon Trail have good potential for Native American sites as indicated by the proximity of the Trail to Jones Point Park which has known Native American sites within its boundaries.

Old Dominion Boat Club: The AAC toured the Old Dominion Boat Club facilities. The Commission recommends that the history of the Old Dominion Boat House, currently the oldest known building on the waterfront, should be researched and the building’s significance determined before any decisions are made regarding its future use. Such research would contribute to a greater understanding of the area’s, and the City’s, maritime heritage and the key historic events that occurred in the area. The AAC supports the preservation of the Old Dominion Boat Club building on its present location as an important resource in the Alexandria Historic District.

Gunston Hall Apartments: The Commission wrote letters to City Council and spoke at the October 16, 2004, public hearing against the proposed demolition of the Gunston Hall Apartments on Washington Street. The AAC stated that the Gunston Hall Apartments are an important part of Alexandria’s history and were designed by noted architect Harvey Warwick to fit the street and landscape requirements of the then newly built George Washington Memorial Parkway and adjoining St. Mary’s and Freedmen’s cemeteries. The AAC agreed with the Board of Architectural Review that the mass and scale of the proposed new development was inappropriate for the setting, threatened other similar historic properties on Washington Street, and would not protect or add to the charm of the Old and Historic District in which the Gunston Hall Apartments are located.

Small Area Plans & Potomac Yards Development: Members of the AAC attended the public meetings on the proposed revisions of the Mt. Vernon and Braddock Metro Area Small Area Plans, as well as the proposed further development of Potomac Yards as these areas include sites or structures of historical importance.

Carlyle Development Park: The Commission had a member attend the community public

comments workshops regarding the proposed development of a park/community space on the site of what was the Virginia Glass Company. Incorporation of the history of the site or signage interpreting the history of park were some of the suggestions made during these workshops.

THE NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Open Space: A member of the Commission sits on the Open Space Committee and provides input to that committee regarding issues involving archaeology, history, and preservation as related to open space. The Commission spoke at the October 16, 2004, public hearing regarding the Open Space Committee's Proposed Action Plan which set priorities for the acquisition of properties as community open space. The AAC approved of the Open Space Committee's inclusion of historic resources as one of the criteria for assessing the importance of a property for potential acquisition. The Commission also recommended that archaeological assessments for mid-term action properties, such as Monticello Park and the George Washington Masonic Memorial, be conducted if plans for those properties change.

Jones Point: The Chair of the Commission was appointed by the Mayor and City Council to serve on a Jones Point Working Group to re-visit the uses of the park since the Department of Homeland Security has stated that no activities can take place under the Woodrow Wilson Bridge or within 20' of either side of the bridge. As this affects the previously approved plan for the park, the Working Group is to examine the best uses of the park, including passive areas for enjoyment of historic and natural environment portions of the park as well as active areas for various recreational and sports uses. The park has significant archaeological and historic resources dating back over 7,000 years. The Commission voted to approve a tri-partite plan which preserved the southern portion of the park for passive uses due to the significant historic and archaeological resources in that portion of the park, reserved the northern end of the park for passive environment enjoyment, and placed immediately north of the bridge, two full-sized multi-purpose athletic fields. The AAC wrote to City Council and spoke at public hearings in favor of this plan, which is essentially, in all major aspects, the same as that approved in the original plan in 1999.

ECONOMY/TOURISM

Historic Sites Maintenance Budget: The Commission wrote a letter to City Council and spoke at two public hearings recommending an increase in funding the general maintenance and capital improvements budget for the City's historic properties. The AAC stated that the educational programs and exhibits at the City's historic properties would suffer if needed maintenance and capital improvements were not funded which, in turn, would adversely affect tourism if the City's visitors' experiences were negatively impacted.

DIVERSE COMMUNITY

L'Ouverture Hospital: The AAC discussed the history, and issues surrounding the proposed development, of 1323 Duke Street property on which sat a portion of the L'Ouverture Hospital during the Civil War and accordingly is one of the most significant archaeological sites in the City. It is also located near the former Bruin slave pen and the African-American Heritage Park as well as other African-American historic sites. The site owners want to build an addition and convert the property to affordable senior housing and have stated that they are willing to provide a plaque or sign on the property explaining the history and background of the site and the developer will pay for the archaeological excavations required by the City. The Commission's concern regarding this proposed development lay with ensuring that the important archaeological and historic resources were not overlooked.

Freedmen's Cemetery: Two descendants of persons buried in Freedmen's Cemetery have been located. Lillie Finklea has worked to identify descendants and attempts have been made to encourage descendants to participate in the oral history project. The Commission continues to monitor the progress of plans for this site.

EFFICIENT, COMMUNITY-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

APVA Award: The AAC, along with the City and Alexandria Archaeology, were collectively the recipient of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) Mary Mason Anderson Williams award, and \$1,000 prize for sustained achievement in the preservation field over the past 30 years. The Chair of the Commission along with Pam Cressey, City Archaeologist, and Jean Federico, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria, attended the Richmond ceremony to accept the award. Also in attendance to present the award were Senator Patsy Ticer and Delegate Brian Moran, of the General Assembly, both of whom represent the Alexandria area.

AAC 30th Anniversary: City Council issued a proclamation in February 2005 recognizing the AAC on its 30th Anniversary for its decades of service. The Commission's April 2005 meeting included over a dozen past or founding members of the Commission who shared their experiences and recollections of preservation in the City over the past 30+ years.

AAC Brochure: As part of its 30th Anniversary celebration, the Commission designed and printed a brochure describing the Commission and its mission, achievements, and goals. The brochure is available free to interested members of the public.

**ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION
GOALS FOR FY 2006**

- Participate in City hearings and seminars, which impact archaeological and historic resources either directly through development or indirectly through short- or long-term planning.

- Develop an AAC “tool kit” of information and resources for state and local governments, or other interested persons and organizations, interested in developing a community-based preservation, archaeology, or history program. This “tool kit” will build on the information that the AAC has provided in the past two or three years to interested government officials, community groups, and individuals, such as state officials from Delaware, as well as from local government officials from Frederick, Maryland, and from Prince William and Arlington Counties, Virginia.