

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

for

FISCAL YEAR 2007, JULY 2006 – JUNE 2007

SUMMARY

The Commission had another very active year pursuing 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 2007, the AAC was involved in:

- Discussing and making recommendations regarding Jones Point and its significant archaeological and historic resources;
- Continuing development of the AAC's strategic plan;
- Discussing issues concerning the Alexandria waterfront;
- Participating in the Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial Design Steering Committee and discussing issues related to the Freedmen's Cemetery;
- Discussing archaeological storage issues; and
- Creating a Ben Brenman award and soliciting nominations for such award to recognize individuals and businesses who help to promote and preserve Alexandria's archaeological past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission recommends:

- Continued active involvement in proposals involving the Alexandria Waterfront, which contains several historic structures;
- Working with other City organizations or groups that are interested in historic preservation and the waterfront for greater co-ordination on issues concerning the waterfront;
- Incorporating archaeological and historic resources into discussions and planning, involving tourism and economic development;
- Planning for future storage needs for the City's archaeological and historic resources begin before existing storage space is exhausted.

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Ben Brenman Award: The Commission discussed and implemented the Ben Brenman Award, which is named in memory of Colonel Bernard “Ben” Brenman, long-time Chair of the Archaeological Commission and active proponent of archaeology in Alexandria. Members recommended giving the award to individuals, families, or organizations or developers for their significant contributions to archaeology in Alexandria. The criteria for the award as well as the nomination process and selection of awardees was discussed and approved. The members set as a goal to present the first awards in October during Alexandria Archaeology Month. Adron Krekeler presented a design concept for the award that members approved.

THE NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Jones Point: The AAC continued discussions and made recommendations regarding Jones Point and its significant archaeological and historic resources. The Commission supported Alternative 1 of the various Jones Point Park plans and objected to having an athletic playing field south of the larger Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The members believed that the proposed athletic field would encroach upon the area designated for passive use, detract from the enjoyment and interpretation of the area's archaeological and historic resources due to the crowds which would gather to watch or participate in athletic activities, adversely affect the park user's appreciation of the 10,000 year history of the site, and preclude interpretation of the 19th century ropewalk due to the placement of the athletic field. The members also believed that the placement of permanent goal posts into archaeological sensitive areas would disturb this area. The AAC disagreed with the National Park Service's statement that Alternative 4 of the proposed plans would have negligible effect on the southern – historic – part of Jones Point and recommended that the Park Service re-examine this issue. Members were encouraged, as private citizens, to submit comments during the notice-and-comment period.

ECONOMY/TOURISM

Waterfront: The AAC addressed issues regarding the waterfront including the waterfront planning process and how it related to archaeology and historic preservation. Members discussed the draft “Preservation Perspectives on Alexandria Waterfront” that had been prepared by the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) and made recommendations for changes that were forwarded to HARC for action. The members were in general agreement with the document. The Commission also discussed the impact of Maryland’s National Harbor project on the waterfront and the Mayor’s task force on National Harbor. Members agreed that, without history and preservation being represented in the waterfront planning process and response to the National Harbor development, Alexandria would be just another city with a shoreline.

DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Freedmen’s Cemetery: The AAC discussed the development of the Freedmen’s Cemetery Project at length and noted with great appreciation that this project is the result of hard work and perseverance by long-time Commission member Lillie Finklea. The Commission will continue to be actively involved in this project. A draft brochure on the archaeology of the cemetery was presented and members made recommendations for changes. The members also discussed and made recommendations for the dedication ceremony and expressed general approval for the plans. Commission members Lillie Finklea and Chair, Kathleen Pepper, were selected by the Mayor and City Council to serve as co-chairs of the Freedmen’s Cemetery Memorial Park Design Steering Committee, which will develop the criteria and guidelines for a design competition. Kathleen Pepper will represent the AAC on that committee and Lillie Finklea will represent the Friends of Freedmen’s Cemetery.

Other Issues: The Commission was involved in discussions regarding other issues of archaeological and historic preservation interest including the proposed memorial at the site of the Burin Slave Pen, the Braddock Small Area Plan, the Washington Street corridor design concept, the proposed Hunting Terrace development, and the Alexandria Heritage Trail. As part of the Commission’s commitment to outreach, AAC meetings were scheduled at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum and the Alexandria Black History Museum. A joint meeting was held in April 2007 with the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology (FOAA).

EFFICIENT, COMMUNITY-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

Alexandria Archaeological Commission Strategic Plan: The AAC continued development of a strategic plan for the Commission that would tie in with the City’s Strategic Plan which was recently adopted and amended by City Council. The emphasis on the AAC’s strategic plan was on working together with City organizations and commissions involved in history and preservation. The members initially discussed utilizing the City’s Strategic Plan goals to develop

action items for the AAC strategic plan. After much discussion, the members decided to use the City's goals as the Commission's guiding principles and would instead develop separate goals and action items for the Commission. The Commission's goals in its strategic plan were linked to specific City Strategic Plan goals. Vice-chair Vincent LaPointe developed a master tracking document to record the status and progress on the specific action items.

Archaeology Storage Issues: The Commission addressed the need for expanded storage for Alexandria Archaeology. Members discussed the fact that, within the next seven years, Alexandria Archaeology would likely run out of storage space in the existing storage facility on Payne Street. Members noted that the closing of the City Print Shop would create additional space in the Payne Street facility that could be used. Members recommended that a joint letter with the Public Records Commission be sent to the Mayor and City Council expressing mutual support for the use of this space for expanded storage.

GOALS FOR FY 2007-2008

- Participate in City hearings and seminars that impact archaeological and historic resources either directly through development or indirectly through short- or long-term planning.
- Finalize a strategic plan for the Alexandria Archaeological Commission that will operate as a planning tool so that the Commission can work more effectively in identifying areas and issues of concern, responding to on-going and proposed actions and activities in the City, and fulfilling its mission.
- Identify and address archaeological and historic preservation issues concerning the waterfront, including participation in any fora or hearings regarding proposals for the waterfront.

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC or Commission) 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, 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 member Vincent C. LaPointe during the year and said goodbye to Vice-Chair Sandra Nail who moved out-of-state. The following people served on the Commission during all or part of Fiscal Year 2007:

MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Ann Davin
Lillie Finklea
S. Kathleen Pepper, Chair
Peter Petersen
Tim Peterson
Ted Pulliam
Bill Tabor

PLANNING DISTRICT MEMBERS:

Planning District I: Lillie Finklea; Vincent C. LaPointe, Vice-Chair
Planning District II: Donald Kent, Jr.
Planning District III: Janice Magnuson

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES:

The Alexandria Association: Diane Riker
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce: Adron Krekeler
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