

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

for

**FISCAL YEAR 2009
JULY 2008 - JUNE 2009**

I. 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 2009, the AAC:

- Sent a letter the Planning and Zoning Department regarding the Archaeological Commission's recommendations and concerns regarding waterfront planning and spoke in support of the those comments at a waterfront planning public forum;
- Sent a letter to the Recreation and Parks Department expressing the AAC's concerns and recommendations regarding the historic cemeteries at Fort Ward and the need for planning and preservation of the cemeteries and the post-Civil War African-American settlement ("The Fort") which are located at Fort Ward and negatively impacted by the maintenance yard and nursery;
- Sent a letter to City Council opposing a developer's proposed amendment to the Old and Historic District which would remove a land parcel at Hunting Terrace from the district in order to allow planned construction on the parcel to exceed the district's height restrictions;
- Sent a letter to City Council, in response to the proposed FY10 budget, recommending reinstatement of the City's Research Historian position and an increase in the staffing and hours at the Barrett Library Local History Special Collections, and spoke in support of the letter at the budget public hearing;
- Sent an email response to the Environmental Policy Commission with the AAC's recommendations to add references and actions regarding history and

green building impacts on historic structures to the proposed draft action plan from the Eco-Summit.

- Responded to the City Council Committee on Boards and Commission report with the AAC's concerns regarding that Committee's recommendations for term limits for members of Boards and Commissions and deadlines regarding the filing of Annual Reports from the City's Boards and Commissions;
- Presented Ben Brenman Archaeology awards to recipients T. Michael Miller, Chan Mohney, the Friends of Freedmen's Cemetery, and the Historic Alexandria Foundation.
- Refined the nomination and selection process for the Ben Brenman Archaeology Award, which recognizes individuals and businesses who help to promote and preserve Alexandria's archaeological past;
- Updated and finalized the Archaeological Commission's Strategic Plan;
- Finalized an issue paper which was sent to the Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria to begin a discussion regarding the building of a modern archaeology museum that would increase tourism and local support for historic and archaeological interests; and
- Discussed drafts of a letter to be sent to Manchester, England, to see if they would like to become an archaeology sister city.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY 2010

The Commission recommends:

- Working with other City organizations or civic groups which 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;

III. GOALS FOR FY 2010

The Archaeological Commission set as its goals for July 2009 - June 2010:

- Continued active involvement in proposals involving the Alexandria Waterfront, which contains several historic structures;
- Working with other City organizations or groups which 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;
- Conducting information meetings or “history chats” in various neighborhoods in order to bring history to City residents.
- Submission of history related articles written by members to various newspapers, such as the Alexandria Times.

IV. AAC ACTIVITES CONDUCTED IN FY 2009

The Archaeological Commission conducted a variety of activities during FY 2009. These activities are set forth below and are organized within headings taken from the City’s Strategic Plan in order to facilitate an understanding of how the Commission’s activities relate to the vision, goals, and objectives of the City.

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

Waterfront Planning: AAC members attended a waterfront tour, conducted by City Archaeologist, in order to better understand the history and issues involved in the waterfront planning process. A member from the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission also attended. Members also were present at the April 23 public meeting and Katy Cannaday presented the AAC’s recommendations and concerns regarding development of the waterfront. The AAC also submitted a written statement on its recommendations and concerns for inclusion in the Waterfront Planning website. AAC members also participated in the June 27th public roundtable forum on the waterfront and attended the April 30th presentation by consultants on various waterfront planning issues.

Ben Brenman Archaeology Awards: The Commission selected four recipients for the second annual Ben Brenman Archaeology Awards, which were presented in October 2008 during Alexandria Archaeology Month. The award winners were: T. Michael Miller, City Historian; Chan Mohny, former AAC member and primary mover behind the creation of the Alexandria Heritage Trail; the Friends of Freedmen’s Cemetery, and the Historic Alexandria Foundation. The awards are given to individuals, families, or organizations or developers for their significant contributions to archaeology in Alexandria. In addition, members refined the nomination and selection process and timeline for the Ben Brenman award.

Old and Historic District Proposed Amendment: Katy Cannaday briefed the members on a developer's proposed amendment to the Old and Historic District which would remove a section of land at Hunting Terrace from the district so that the developer's planned construction for the property could exceed the City's height restrictions in the district. It was noted that the height restrictions were endorsed by the National Park Service. The members discussed and approved sending a letter to City Council opposing the amendment.

Small Area Plans: Several AAC members attended and spoke about history related to areas within those Small Area Plans that Alexandria is updating, including Landmark/Van Dorn, Braddock Metro, and Potomac Yard.

THE NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Fort Ward: Members discussed the proposed planning for Fort Ward and the fact that the historic, post-Civil War African-American settlement ("The Fort") and related cemeteries were not mentioned in the planning. Members expressed their concerns that the City had a maintenance yard and nursery on the site of the cemeteries, which still contain a gravestone, and probably many graves. They adversely impact the graves but also prohibit people from visiting the cemeteries. Members approved sending a letter to the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department recommending that any Fort Ward plan include a stewardship plan for cemeteries, historical and archaeological work on the cemeteries and "The Fort," and removal of the maintenance yard and nursery as inappropriate uses.

Eco-City Environmental Action Plan: The AAC discussed the draft action plan from the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) which arose from the City's Eco-Summit and is part of Alexandria's Eco-City endeavor. The members noted that there was no mention of history or historic structures in the action plan. Members approved drafting a letter which set forth the Commission's recommendations for action items which recognize history and the confluence of green building initiatives on historic structures. The AAC sent an email response to the EPC which set forth the Commission's recommendations.

ECONOMY/TOURISM

Archaeology Museum: Vince LaPointe drafted an issue paper to begin discussion with the Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria regarding the building of a modern archaeology museum that would increase tourism and local support for historic and archaeological. Members discussed this before approving the final issue paper.

Sister Cities: Vince LaPointe drafted a letter to Manchester, England, to see if they would like to become an archaeology sister city. Members discussed this before agreeing that a further draft letter would be needed.

DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Freedmen's Cemetery: The AAC continued to be keep abreast of the issues regarding the Freedmen's Cemetery and the Contraband's and Freedmen's Cemetery Design Steering Committee. The Steering Committee selected a winner, second, and third place from the three finalists. The Committee also discussed the proposed design as re-drafted to address budget concerns and the Committee's recommendations. This Committee will not meet again until there is a final design for the public art sculpture, which is to be placed in the cemetery, since the public art sculpture has a separate selection process. AAC Chair, Kathleen Pepper represents the AAC on that committee and Lillie Finklea represents the Friends of Freedmen's Cemetery and both serve as co-chairs of the Steering Committee.

Coffee Chats: Vince LaPointe organized and conducted several informal "coffee chats" at various locations in the Old Town area, including Freedmen's Cemetery, for residents to tour nearby historic or archaeological sites and talk about history and archaeology topics relevant to the neighborhood. These "coffee chats" are outreach efforts to residents to help them learn more about their neighborhoods and to ask questions about history and archaeology.

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 Bruin Slave Pen, the proposed Hunting Terrace development, the Potomac Yards parks design, the Wayfinding Sign committee, and the Alexandria Heritage Trail. The AAC also participated in honoring the work of Archaeology Museum volunteers and hosted a joint meeting with the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology, a volunteer organization supporting Archaeology Museum activities.

EFFICIENT, COMMUNITY-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT

Alexandria Budget for FY2010: The members discussed the proposed City budget for FY2010, including the proposed staffing and hours reduction for the Barrett Library Local History Special Collections and the proposed elimination of the City Historian (Research Historian) position. Members approved sending a letter to City Council recommending that the City Historian position be retained, particularly given the Waterfront Planning and other major endeavors that are on-going, and increasing the staffing and hours of use for the Special Collections.

Alexandria Boards and Commissions Committee Report: The Commission discussed the report from the Alexandria Boards and Commissions Committee which made several recommendations, including the setting of term limits for members of some Boards and Commission and of deadlines for the submission of Annual Reports from the various Boards and Commissions. Members approved sending a letter to City Council regarding their concerns that term limits were not to be applied equally to all Boards and Commissions or to all members of a Board or Commission. In addition, the letter also

expressed the Commission's comments regarding a summer deadline for the submission of Annual Reports.

Alexandria Archaeological Commission Strategic Plan and Goals: The AAC finalized its refined strategic plan by setting goals and actions items. 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. Kathleen Pepper, Chair, recommended that the Commission revise the setting of its goals from a calendar year basis to a fiscal year basis in order to conform the goals to the period needed for the Annual Report. Members approved this change.

Alexandria Archaeological Commission Off-Site Meetings: The Commission members met at the Virginia Theological Seminary in July. At that meeting, member Dave Cavanaugh introduced Elizabeth Douglas, a long-time resident of the Seminary area, and presented background information on the history of the Seminary Hill area, including the Virginia Theological Seminary property. Dave Cavanaugh also led a brief tour of the Aspinwall Hall and discussed its use as a hospital during the Civil War and as a place of refuge and work for former slaves and their families. At that meeting, the Rev. Robert Prichard, Professor of Christianity in America and Instructor in Linguistics at the Seminary, provided information to the AAC members on the Seminary's plans for a visitors' center and a self-guided tour of the Seminary campus.

STRUCTURE OF THE ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

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. in City Hall, 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 members Seth Tinkham, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, and Tom Fulton, representing the Alexandria Association, and said goodbye to Diane Riker, who represented the Alexandria Association. The following people served on the Commission during all or part of Fiscal Year 2009.

MEMBERS AT LARGE:

James Clark
Ann Davin
Lillie Finklea
Peter Petersen
Ted Pulliam

PLANNING DISTRICT MEMBERS:

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

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES:

The Alexandria Association: Diane Riker; Tom Fulton
Alexandria Chamber of Commerce: Adron Krekeler
Alexandria Historical Society: Katy Cannaday
Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage: S. Kathleen Pepper, Chair
Friends of Alexandria Archaeology: Dave Cavanaugh, Secretary
Historic Alexandria Foundation: Seth Tinkham