RESULTS OF CONSTRUCTION MONITORING OF THE
1300 BLOCK OF DUKE STREET,
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

By

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ABSTRACT

Archeological monitoring of construction was conducted within the property located at the 1300 block of Duke Street within the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The monitoring was required by the City of Alexandria and was based upon a Scope of Work dated May 5, 2006 and provided by Alexandria Archaeology. The purpose of this monitoring was to identify any significant cultural resources that may have survived 20th century disturbance of the property.

Three brick features were located during the monitoring. Two of the features consisted of the remains of brick foundations thought to be associated with the John Emerson house constructed on the parcel in the 1840s. The Emerson house was demolished in 1953 during the construction of a service station which was present in this location until 2007. The foundations had been disturbed and partially destroyed prior to the monitoring. The foundations were photo-documented.

The third brick feature exposed was a filtration cistern, which was similar in construction to other filtration cisterns that have previously been discovered and excavated in Alexandria. The feature was found to have been previously disturbed and contained mixed late 19th and 20th century fills. The feature was documented at the request of Alexandria Archaeology.

No further archeological work is recommended for these features or within the project area. Alexandria Archaeology concurred with these recommendations.
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of archeological construction monitoring within the property located at the 1300 block of Duke Street in the City of Alexandria, Virginia (Exhibit 1). Thunderbird Archeology, a division of Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc. conducted the study described in this report for Van Metre Companies of Burke, Virginia. The fieldwork was conducted in September through November of 2007.

Tammy Bryant and John Mullen served as Principal Investigators on this project; they were assisted by Field Supervisor Edward Johnson, who conducted the archeological monitoring and authored much of the letter report. Fieldwork and report contents conformed to the Archaeological Standards set forth by City of Alexandria, dated January 1996 as well as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation (Dickenson 1983).

The archeological monitoring was required by the City of Alexandria, and was detailed in a May 5, 2006 Scope of Work provided by Alexandria Archaeology (Attachment A). The purpose of this monitoring was to identify any significant cultural resources "that could provide insight into domestic activities of free African Americans in the early 19th century, activities on an urban estate during the middle of the century, and most importantly, activities of free African Americans and soldiers during the Civil War".

The Scope of Work was based on recommendations from a Documentary Study that was conducted in anticipation of the planned development of the project area. In addition to compiling detailed information concerning the ownership history of the property and of its occupants, the study revealed extensive subsurface disturbance resulting from the current use of the property as a petroleum fuel depot, specifically from the installation of several fuel storage tanks and the removal of the two historic structures on the property.

Thunderbird Archeology, who conducted the study, did not recommend archeological monitoring in the northeast, southeast, or southwest quadrants of the property; nor the monitoring of the removal of any contaminated soils, as the areas containing the contaminated soils had already been excavated to 15 feet and backfilled. However, disturbance was believed to be less severe in the northwest quadrant and along the western side of the project area. Construction monitoring of this area of the property was recommended as it was possible that deep features, such as privies or wells associated with the former historic occupation of the property, may have survived the later disturbance.

Archeological monitoring was required for all ground disturbing activities in Area 1 and occasional monitoring was required within Areas 2 and 3 in order to confirm the levels of disturbance (Exhibit 2).
Disturbed & Contaminated Areas with Current & Historic Structures Overlay
Alexandria, Virginia
1300 Duke Street
WSSI# 21371.02
Scale: 1" = 45'

Legend
- Project Area
- Contaminated Area
- Historic Structures
- 2004 Structures
- Existing and Former Underground Storage Tanks
- Area 1: Disturbed at least to 3 feet deep
- Area 2: Excavated 8-10 feet deep
- Area 3: Excavated 13-15 feet deep

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Exhibit 2
RESULTS OF MONITORING

The initial ground disturbance within the project area was soil removal to a depth of approximately 10 to 15 feet below the original ground surface to facilitate the construction of an underground parking garage. The excavation plan called for the removal of contaminated soil first, followed by the uncontaminated soils.

Several test trenches that were systematically excavated across the site in order to determine the level of contamination were archeologically monitored. Following this, field conditions often dictated the excavation, which was not confined to specific areas and changed locations frequently.

The largest area of contamination appeared to be present in the central portion of the project area, so the soils from this section were removed first (Plate 1). At the same time, trenches were excavated along the eastern, southern and western property boundaries to allow the construction crew to install shoring (Plates 2 and 3). The soils in the remaining sections of the project area were then removed, based on the amount of contamination present. It was often not safe to closely observe the excavation of the contaminated soils because of the intense fumes that were present.

Three potentially significant cultural features were exposed during the excavation (Exhibit 3). Two of these features were small sections of brick walls which were uncovered during the excavation of the initial shoring trench along the northern property boundary. The third feature was a brick-lined water filtration cistern which was discovered during the excavation of a trench designed to locate contaminated soil. Decisions regarding the significance of the features and the level of documentation required were made in consultation with Dr. Steven Shephard of Alexandria Archaeology.

These features were present in the northeast section of the project area which was felt to have been disturbed to depths of 8 to 15 feet below ground surface. The presence of these features, only a few feet deep, revealed that the level of disturbance in this area was less than was surmised; therefore, continual monitoring of excavation in these areas was necessary.
Location of Historic Structures and Features
Found During Monitoring
Alexandria, Virginia
1300 Duke Street
WSSI# 21371.02
Scale: 1" = 50'

Legend
- Project Area
- Historic Structures
- Approximate Location of Foundations
- Approximate Location of Cistern

Historic Structures digitized from:
1877 "Alexandria, Virginia" G.M. Hopkins
1865 "Map of U.S. Military Railroad Station at Alexandria, VA"

Photo Source: City of Alexandria GIS, Spring 2004.

Exhibit 3
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**Brick Wall Features**

Two small sections of a brick foundation were uncovered along the northeastern property boundary (see Exhibit 3 and Plate 4). The first section was aligned north/south, was approximately 10 inches wide and extended approximately 3.5 feet below the ground surface; this portion of the foundation slumped to the west (Plate 5). The other brick wall feature was discovered approximately 15 feet west of the first section; this section of the foundation was aligned east/west along the excavated trench wall. The foundation measured approximately 4.5 feet in length and also extended approximately 3.5 feet below ground surface (Plate 6). These features were resting on what appeared to be sandy subsoil (C horizons). The areas immediately surrounding these features were excavated, using both a shovel and a trowel, and no other features were discovered.

**Cistern Feature**

A brick lined water filtration cistern was uncovered, approximately 50 feet south of Duke Street and 80 feet west of Payne Street, during the systematic trenching for contaminated soils across the site (Plates 7-9 and see Exhibit 3). The test trench in this location had been excavated directly into the cistern and six feet of fill had been removed before the feature was observed. Twentieth century cultural materials, including bottles, ceramics and bricks were observed around the feature and within the excavated backdirt.

Alexandria Archaeology was immediately notified upon its discovery on September 12th 2007. After visiting the site and examining the features, Dr. Steven Shephard of Alexandria Archaeology requested that the cistern be removed with the backhoe in roughly two-three foot increments until the base was reached. Dr. Shephard requested that samples of artifacts from each level of the fill within the cistern were to be examined in the field to determine if intact 19th century artifact deposits were present. If intact 19th century deposits were present, the artifacts from these levels were to be collected, analyzed and cataloged in the report. Finally, if an anticipated filtration box at the base of the cistern was present, it was to be documented.

Under the direction of Dr. Shephard, a backhoe trench was excavated along the outside of the cistern feature in order to determine its approximate depth. The trench was excavated to an approximate depth of 14 feet, the maximum depth that could be excavated by the backhoe. The soil in the trench consisted of unstable sand which made it unsafe to enter the trench, but it appeared that the brick cistern was still present at the base of the trench. In addition to the unsafe depth of the trench base, the overwhelming gasoline fumes prohibited close examination of the feature. The 14 foot depth was used as a guide during the excavation of the cistern interior as it was felt that the base of the cistern and a filtration box may be present at or just beyond this depth.
After the initial discovery of the cistern, it was left untouched for five weeks while other portions of the property were excavated. Once excavation of the feature resumed, the cistern was leveled off at approximately six feet below the level of its initial discovery. Excavation then proceeded in 2-3 foot increments, as requested by Dr. Shephard; measurements were frequently taken to insure that the excavation depths did not exceed 14 feet, which was the anticipated level of the cistern base.

Unhealthy levels of petroleum fumes were present in the soil surrounding the cistern during its excavation. Unsafe air quality conditions were also present during the documentation of the base of the cistern. On-site environmental air quality specialists instructed the supervisor to limit exposure to the fumes to one minute increments in order to avoid becoming sick.

The artifacts noted within each excavated increment were examined in the field to determine temporal affiliation. The majority of the artifacts noted during the excavation were glass bottles which had been manufactured by a fully automatic bottle machine and dated from the 20th century. Because of the late temporal range of the artifacts, they were not collected. However, a sample of artifacts from the base of the cistern was collected and catalogued.

The homogeneity of the soils and the contemporaneity of the artifacts indicate that the cistern was likely filled during a single episode. The fills were a dark brown, dry, ashy sandy silt and approximately 50% of the fill matrix was comprised of 20th century refuse including bottles, construction debris, wooden boards, a tricycle, unidentified metal objects, and ceramics. Identical refuse was recovered from within all levels of the cistern, including the base.

Artifacts recovered from the base of the cistern included one chilled iron mold bottle sherd (1880-1930s), one cylindrical bottle sherd with a crown cap closure (post 1890); one cylindrical bottle sherd embossed with “URIC SOLVENT”; one glass pressed, flower vase basal sherd; one automatic bottle machine sherd (1910-present); a bottle embossed “McCormick & Co./Manufacturing Chemists/Baltimore, Md.” (post-1889); a multi-sided bottle embossed with “PEPTO MANGAN (GUDE)/CONTENTS…FLUID OUNCES…” (late1800s-early 1900s); a chilled iron mold bottle sherd embossed with “W.C./U.D. CO./5” (1880-1930); an automatic bottle machine jar sherd with a continuous threaded closure (post 1924) and a whiteware creamer dish with decal decoration (1890-1930+, Miller 1992).

The artifacts examined from the base of the cistern indicated that the cistern was filled no earlier than the very late 19th century and probably during the first quarter of the 20th century. The base of the feature was reached at approximately 12 feet below the street level without finding intact 19th century fill horizons.
The cistern measured 10 feet 4 inches in diameter and was constructed of brick stretchers (Exhibit 4). The interior was lined with approximately one inch thick plaster and was divided just off center (with the smaller portion on the northern side) by a brick wall that ran the length of the cistern. The top of the cistern appeared to have been previously disturbed, but it was apparent from the inward curving walls that the top of the cistern was domed (Plate 10). The base of the cistern was constructed of two courses of brick and mortar, which rested on alternate bands of sandy and clay subsoil (Plates 11-14).

Although the photographs appear to indicate that only the northern side of the base was mortared, both sides were mortared. The backhoe teeth scraped slightly into the top of the mortar lining on the southern portion of the base, removing portions of the mortar in the teeth lines. The base of the cistern was reached at approximately 12 feet below street level slightly shallower than the anticipated 14 foot depth recorded earlier during the exterior trench excavated with Dr. Shephard.

A rectangular shape, measuring 2 by 1.8 feet, was outlined by mortar and plaster on top of the northern half of the base. This suggested the presence of a box which had likely been removed prior to the filling of the cistern with refuse and debris (Plates 15-18, see Exhibit 4). The area within this rectangle appeared to have been recessed and likely contained a filtration box; mortar did not cover this area, providing some confirmation that a filtration box was present at one time. The mortar on the cistern floor in the northern half where the potential filtration box was located was stained dark gray. This was felt to be a possible indication of the color or type of filtration agent that was used; possibly charcoal. A dark reddened stain, which appeared almost blackened or burned, was observed in the center portion of the former box location. In addition, the bricks within the hypothesized box location were laid in a different pattern than those observed outside.

In contrast, the construction of the southern portion of the box appeared to be different, even given the disturbance caused by the backhoe teeth. Mortar covered the area where a filtration box (if one was present) would have been located. There was also no evidence of a recessed area or difference in the brick patterning as was observed on the northern side. Faint evidence of a similar red stain was noted in the logical position for a filtration box within the southern portion of the cistern, but this was considerably smaller and less pronounced.

Based on the evidence observed during the cistern excavation, it appears as if the filtration box (or boxes) was removed prior to the infilling of the cistern. Inadvertent removal of the boxes during the cistern excavation would have left some trace of the feature such as evidence of a mortar outline. It is possible the boxes were removed at the same time the filtration materials were removed; no evidence of gravel, charcoal or burned tree branch pieces, which were commonly used as filtration materials, were observed in the base of the interior or in the backdirt piles during the cistern excavation.
Plan View of Base of Cistern Feature
1300 Duke Street Property - WSSI #21371.02
Scale: 1" = 2'

Bricks are not drawn to scale but represent approximate pattern

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Exhibit 4
The base of the cistern was shifted from its original setting by the backhoe after the archeological documentation was complete and during excavation below the base of the feature. Plates 19 and 20 present profiles of the base after it was damaged during removal of the base.

**FEATURE DISCUSSION**

Construction monitoring within the 1330 block of Duke Street revealed the presence of three features; two foundation walls and the remains of a brick cistern.

The two foundation walls located along the northeastern property line may be associated with John P. Emerson house, which is documented in this location in historic records and maps (Exhibit 5). By 1844, John Emerson owned three quarters of the block and, by 1847, he had built a substantial house in the northeast corner of the property, which he and his family then occupied. The foundation sections appeared to have been partially destroyed prior to the current construction within the project area. Records show that the Emerson house was demolished in 1953, shortly before the construction of a service station which stood in the same location until its demolition in 2007.

The third brick feature exposed was a water filtration cistern. According to Dr. Steven Shephard, of Alexandria Archaeology, this cistern was similar in construction to other filtration cisterns that have previously been discovered and excavated in Alexandria and may have potential archeological significance. One cistern was excavated in 1977 from the backyard of Robert H. Miller, who was a leading Quaker merchant and the first president of the Alexandria Water Company:

The round plaster-lined cistern was six and a half feet deep with an inside diameter of eight and one half feet. The outer wall was constructed of header laid bricks bonded with whitish gray sandy mortar. The floor was two brick courses thick, with a layer of mortar covering the inside surface. A brick partition wall divided the interior, forming two chambers – one containing one third of the interior volume, and the other the remaining two thirds. Attached to the lower portion of this wall were two additional brick walls, forming a brick vault on each side of the partition wall. These interiors of the two vaults were connected by means of a hole in the base of the partition wall. Each vault was filled with well-defined alternating layers of gravel, charcoal and sand. These layers acted as a filter, the water in the larger chamber flowing down through one filter vault, through the partition wall, then percolating up the other filter to the small chamber from which the cleansed water could be drawn [Shephard 1989].
1877 G.M. Hopkins Map
Alexandria, Virginia
1300 Duke Street
WSSI# 21371.02
Scale: 1" = 200'


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Exhibit 5
In November of 2002, another water filtration cistern was discovered at 909 Cameron Street, in the backyard of a private residence. The construction, size, and temporal range of the artifacts within the Cameron Street cistern fill were similar to the one on the Duke Street property. However, the Cameron Street cistern exhibited a dissimilar fill at the base and the position of the filtration box was slightly different:

“...Mr. Hudgins called Steve Shephard on November 14, 2002...that the laborers had dug out the filtration box fill...Steve and Fran went to the site and did a complete recording of the cistern...The filtration pebbles and coal were visible, piled apart from the main back dirt and were hosed off with water and photographed. The partition wall was pierced with three holes at its base inside the two filtration boxes and the holes were still filled with the pebble and charcoal filtration materials...” [Shephard 2002].

Based on research on water filtration systems conducted in 1980 by Melissa McLoud in 1980, she was able to date the cistern at 909 Cameron Street:

“The fact that the interior of the cistern seems to have been successfully sealed with plaster coating, would suggest the date of the construction is post-ca.1820. McLoud found that the double filtration system (water going through two filtering chambers), as is found here, was common between 1824-1836 (p.14). She also learned that before 1836 multiple layers for filtering were used and after that, only one or two layers, as in this cistern (p.14). The research however indicates that charcoal was used for filtration unmixed with sand or gravel after 1825 and the charcoal is mixed with the pebbles in this cistern. However, the majority of the evidence, that is: that the cistern is lined with plaster, uses two filtration chambers and the filtration medium is apparently a uniform mixture of rounded pebbles and charcoal, rather than multiple layers points to a post 1836 construction date...Most likely the cistern would not have been built after 1852, since that was the year the water company was established and it would have been known that a direct source of piped water would be available very soon” [Shephard 2002].

It is possible the cistern found at 1300 Duke Street was very similar to the one discovered at 909 Cameron Street. There is evidence of at least one filtration box on the floor of the cistern. However, the excavation methods utilized and the soil contamination present at Duke Street precluded a close examination of the cistern's center wall. Layers of filtration material were not observed in the base of the cistern or in the back dirt piles as was seen by Dr. Shephard during the recordation of the Miller cistern in 1989. In contrast, the cistern at Duke Street contained a homogenous 20th century fill, ashy in texture and color,
and mixed with construction debris; post 1910 bottles were observed on the cistern floor. However, it is possible that the dark staining of the mortar observed on the base of the cistern floor in the northern portion of the Duke Street cistern may have derived from the uniform mixture of rounded pebbles and charcoal used as the filtration medium, as described above by McLoud.

Based on the historical documentation by McLoud and the observed characteristics of the feature, it may be inferred that the Duke Street cistern was similar to that found at Cameron Street. This would place the construction date after 1836 and before 1852. Historical research indicates that, between 1832-1844, Richard Staunton owned the portion of the property where the cistern was located. Richard Staunton is described in the 1834 City Directory as a brick layer and is taxed $1000 for a brickyard in 1836. Between 1840-1844, Mr. Staunton is taxed for a brickyard, house, and lot. It is possible the water cistern was built sometime during the period from 1836-1844 to service the house and brickyard (Bryant 2007).

In 1844, the property was sold to John Emerson who owned it until 1884. Between 1846 and 1847, Mr. Emerson built a large dwelling over the brickyard and it is equally possible that the cistern was constructed by Mr. Emerson at the same time he built the dwelling. In 1900, Prudence Emerson, John Emerson’s widow, left the estate in 1/5 equal portions to their children and grandchildren. A Chancery Court record indicates that the property was sold to Edward Hughes in 1905 and, by 1919, the property was sold to Mary Annie Williamson. At some point during the Hughes or Williamson ownership, the cistern appears to have been cleaned out and used as a repository for refuse (Bryant 2007).

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Archeological monitoring of construction was conducted within the property located at the 1300 block of Duke Street within the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The monitoring was required by the City of Alexandria and was based upon a Scope of Work dated May 5, 2006 and provided by Alexandria Archaeology. The purpose of this monitoring was to identify any significant cultural resources that may have survived 20th century disturbance of the property.

Three brick features were located within the northeastern corner of the property, in an area thought to have been previously excavated to a depth of 8-10 feet below surface. Two of the features consisted of the remains of brick foundations thought to be associated with the John Emerson house which was constructed in the 1840s. The Emerson house was demolished in 1953 during the construction of a service station which was present in this location until 2007. The foundations had been disturbed and partially destroyed prior to the monitoring. The foundations were photo documented at the request of Alexandria Archaeology.
The third brick feature exposed was a filtration cistern, which was similar in construction to other filtration cisterns that have previously been discovered and excavated in Alexandria. The feature was found to have been previously disturbed and contained mixed very late 19th and 20th century fills. The cistern did not contain a filtration box, which limited the research value of the feature. The feature was documented at the request of Alexandria Archaeology. No further archeological work is recommended for these features or within the project area. Alexandria Archaeology concurred with these recommendations.
REFERENCES CITED

Bryant, Tammy

Shephard, Steven J.

Shephard, Steven J.
2002  A Nineteenth Century Water Filtration Cistern at 909 Cameron Street, Alexandria, Virginia, MS on file, Alexandria Archeology
PLATES
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Excavation of Central Portion of Project Area
View to the West

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Shifted from Original Position, View to the Southeast

PLATE 20
Cross Section of Base of Water Filtration Cistern
Shifted from Original Position, View to the Northeast
ATTACHMENT A
Scope of Work
Introduction

The goal of this scope of work is to determine if significant archaeological resources are present on the property located at 1300 Duke Street, Alexandria, Virginia. Plans call for the development of the site of the Fannon Oil storage facility into a townhouse-condominium community with 18 units. While there has been considerable disturbance on the property, including the burial of numerous oil tanks, and there is evidence that contaminated soils are present, the significance of the potential resources is high enough that archaeological monitoring is required to insure that information about the City’s past is not lost as a result of the development project.

The primary significance of the site stems from its use as an urban estate and its occupation by the Union army during the Civil War. Tax records indicate that at least one house was present by the early 19th century. There is evidence for the presence of a free African American household on this street face in 1810 and 1830, but the exact address is unknown. For much of the period from 1813 into the 1840s, there was also a brickyard on the site. John Emerson owned most of the block from about 1844 into the 1870s, and lived on the property. During the Civil War, the property was just outside of the large 12-block area stockaded for defense by the U. S. Military Railroad. The western third of the lot was part of Soldier’s Rest, and at the southern edge, the Union army built structures labeled on the Quartermaster’s map as “Contraband Quarters,” “Quarters,” and “Watchman’s Room.” The development lot therefore had potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities of free African Americans in the early 19th century, possible brick-manufacturing, activities on an urban estate during the middle of the century, and activities of free African Americans and soldiers during the Civil War.

Thunderbird Archaeological Associates has demonstrated that previous disturbance has occurred on this block. Oral historical accounts have indicated that deep disturbances are present in the northeast and southern parts of the site (delineated as Areas 2 and 3 in Thunderbird’s May 2, 2006, analysis). In the western section (Thunderbird’s Area 1), ground disturbance was shallower. To insure that significant information about the history of this important City block is not lost as a result of development, archaeological monitoring will be conducted during the construction activities.
All aspects of this investigation will adhere to OSHA regulations and will comply with the City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards dated January 1996 and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Miss Utility must be informed before excavations are made.

**Archaeological Monitoring**

An archaeologist will monitor all the ground-disturbing activities in Area 1, the section on the site where previous disturbance is thought to have been only 3-feet in depth. The monitor will be on site during all ground disturbance: removal of the asphalt or concrete, bedding material foundations, slab, and utilities, fill, etc. until natural soil is observed. The goal of the archaeological monitoring will be to identify significant archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities of free African Americans in the early 19th century, activities on an urban estate during the middle of the century, and most importantly, activities of free African Americans and soldiers during the Civil War.

In Areas 2 and 3, monitoring does not have to be continual, but an archaeologist shall make periodic site visits to confirm the levels of disturbance described in the oral historical accounts. The construction crews must be notified that the archaeological consultant must be called if natural soils are reached in the excavation of these areas or if concentrations of artifacts or evidence of buried foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, etc. are observed during construction activities. Work must stop in the area of these finds until the consultant is on-site to evaluate their significance. If significant archaeological features are discovered during the archaeological monitoring, a separate scope of work will be written to deal with their excavation. The requirements for any additional investigation will be determined in consultation with Alexandria Archaeology.

**Letter Report**

The consultant will prepare a letter report summarizing the results of the archaeological monitoring. The letter will be submitted to Alexandria Archaeology for review. If significant archaeological features are discovered during the archaeological monitoring, a Resource Management Plan and scope of work to deal with their excavation will be included in the letter report. The requirements for any additional investigation will be determined in consultation with Alexandria Archaeology.

**Tasks**

The following is a summary of the tasks to be completed:

1. Notify Alexandria Archaeology of the start date for archaeological monitoring of ground disturbing activities.

2. Conduct the monitoring activities. Consult with Alexandria Archaeology if potentially significant archaeological features are discovered.

3. Prepare and submit the letter report with the Resource Management Plan and Scope of Work, if needed.