

MINUTES

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

PRESENT:

Jolande Goldberg
Martha Harris
Susan Hellman
William Hendrickson
Vanessa Herndon
Laura Lieberman

Linda Lovell
Ann Marie Maloney
Elizabeth McCall
Carolyn Meza
McArthur Myers
Gail Rothrock

Danny Smith
Anna Stillner
Nancy Tingen
Tobin Tracey
Richard Webber
Margaret Wood

EXCUSED: Eliot Bell-Krasner, Michael Commisso, Dennis Hensley, Allen Schirmer, Patricia Washington

UNEXCUSED:

CITY STAFF: Al Cox, J. Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria

GUESTS: Deputy City Manager Emily Baker,
Department of General Services Al Coleman and Stephanie DeFreitas
City Archaeologist Fran Bromberg

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hendrickson at 7:30pm

The minutes from the January meeting were approved with the following correction: Under Alexandria Waterfront Plan, the word ‘prefixed’ was replaced by ‘prefaced’.

Report on Alexandria Historic Structures

Deputy City Manager Emily Baker, who oversees the Livable, Green and Prosperous City Focus Area Team, which includes OHA among other City departments, discussed the FY17 budget process with the Commission, and the City Manager's proposed budget which will be presented at the next City council meeting. The staff from various departments within each Focus group have worked to prioritize funding, and the LGPC team made specific recommendations concerning OHA. The group particularly discussed the recent artifacts found during archaeology excavations along the waterfront. Funding is needed to provide for the conservation of these items and any future finds during the waterfront development.

Additionally funding is needed to repair and maintain the integrity of the city-owned historic sites. Ms. Baker stated that the City is aware that a fund-raising development program is needed to offset city funding. Al Coleman from the Department of General Services addressed the commission of the recent study of the integrity of city-owned buildings. Thirty-six buildings were assessed, twelve of which are historic sites. Each was assigned a grade from A-F using the Facility Condition Index. Gadsby's Tavern and City Hall were given a grade of F. An F grade means that the infrastructure of the building is past its useful life – beyond the industry standard. The grade is not an indication of a life safety issue. Danny Smith noted that when the report was presented to the City Council, the council appeared to be using the FCI to suggest the sale or demolition of certain sites. He was assured that there is no discussion of demolishing historic sites. Ms. Baker stated that the study was done to triage the buildings – what is in the worst condition? – what has to be repaired now?

Martha Harris asked if the "F" buildings will receive priority. The money will be placed in the most critical areas. Elizabeth McCall stated that a 200 year old building cannot be approached in the same manner as a 50 year old building. She also voiced concern that there is not a deliberate plan to restore the buildings in the proper order. Ms. Baker stated that they will present to the City Council the funding needed for the next ten years. Elizabeth stated there should be an in-place repair cycle. This is a continual process and the logical funding should be for 15-20 years. The question was asked if the City had a specific plan for historic sites. Mr. Coleman noted that this is the type of study the city has undertaken. It is a starting point to begin the repair process. Once a building is repaired, a maintenance schedule will be developed. McArthur Myers asked if this maintenance schedule has been addressed in the budget proposal. Lance noted that this is included in the FY 17 OHA budget. Chairman Hendricks while pleased that the city conducted this study, expressed concern over the structural integrity of a wall in City Hall mentioned in the report. The wall in question does not have a structural issue but needs to be repointed. Danny Smith stated that repair and maintenance cycles are critical. We must not allow our historic buildings to reach a point where they are beyond repair. He also recommended a less inflammatory grading procedure so that the thought of selling our historic buildings is not raised. Elizabeth asked if the fact that these buildings were not built to the same code was used in the evaluation. Al Cox noted that the structures were grandfathered in.

Chairman Hendricks inquired about the funding of artifacts, noting that most of the waterfront redevelopment is not funded particularly the art and history aspects. Some money in the OHA Administration special revenue account budget has been directed toward the hiring of a consultant with expertise in fundraising. This will be presented to the public and HARC in the future.

Ramsey Homes

Chairman Hendricks stated that a large turnout of citizens opposing destruction appeared at the hearing. He feels that a number of people feel that ARHA is receiving special treatment. Neighbors will distribute a petition requiring a super number vote from City Council on this issue. The City does have a tax credit consultant study that area of the discussion. Lance received a letter stating that ARHA had begun the required Section 106 process. The HPRC has agreed to become corresponding consultants. Susan Hellman moved that HARC become a consulting party for the Section 106 process. Motion seconded by Elizabeth McCall and approved by all present. McArthur Myers noted that three options are before the council: 1) tear down all properties; 2) tear down four buildings, leave two – one each on Pendleton and Wythe Streets with town houses in the middle; 3) Preserve one building on Wythe Street, perhaps to be expanded and incorporated into the Black History Museum. Al Cox replied that ARHA had rejected all proposals except complete demolition. AHRA requires at least 38 units. Susan Hellman moved that HARC advise the Council to defer a decision until all options are examined fully and that the decision needs to recognize the historic significance of the buildings in the Section 106 review, the scale of the replacement structures and affordable housing. Elizabeth McCall seconded. The Motion was approved unanimously.

OHA Update/Strategic Plan

Lance Mallamo distributed a handout detailing Objective 6.1 of the budget – Increase Fund-Raising and Development Opportunities. He asked that members to review the handout for a discussion at the next HARC meeting in March. The handout discusses the best business practices of the museums. There will be a continued commitment to the City to offset the budget by increasing volunteer hours, grants and donations. 35% of funding was raised this way last year. The Deputy Director will be responsible for fundraising, increasing shop sales and museum events. The use of FY 2016 funding for a consultant to assist with establishing an OHA endowment to provide a stream of funds using the interest earned is now being implemented.

The current items needing funding are restoration of a 19th century fire pumper and the recently excavated boat section. Fran Bomberg gave an update on the conservation measures being taken for the boat. Archaeologists from the US Navy, Britain and the Netherlands have expressed interest in the artifact. Thunderbird, the archaeology firm hired by the site developer, is currently conducting dendrochronology on the boat. Fran was happy to report that this year all city owned historic sites will join together to raise funds for the boat preservation during Spring2Action. Martha Harris congratulated Fran and OHA on this combined approach. Margaret Wood noted that we must continue to inform the public of the need for funds. Prior to the HARC meeting, she attended a meeting on the proposed development of Fitzgerald Square. She suggested that the Old Dominion Club boathouse not be torn down but used to temporarily house artifacts being excavated.

Member Reports

The next meeting of the Fort Ward Advisory Group will be March 30.

Carlyle House will be conducting special behinds the scenes tours

Lee-Fendall House will holding a soiree to fund much-needed repairs to the chimney.

Elizabeth McCall stated that she had attended two meetings of the commission studying the renaming of Alexandria city streets.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on March 15, 2016, 7:30 p.m. at Lloyd House.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hendricks adjourned the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Lovell, member of HARC
J. Lance Mallamo, Director, OHA