

HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 20th, 2018

PRESENT:

John Dumsick	Laura Lieberman	Gail Rothrock
Shawn Eyer	Linda Lovell	Danny Smith
Martha Harris	Elizabeth McCall	Stephen Stuart
Bill Hendrickson	Maddy McCoy	Nancy Tingy
Elliot Bell-Krasner	Krystyn Moon	Tracey Tobin
Kelly Spradely-Kurowski		

EXCUSED:

Melinda Barnes
Jolande Goldberg
Keith Moore

ABSENT:

Stephen Damm

GUESTS:

McArthur Myers
Monica St. Dennis

CITY STAFF:

Gretchen Bulova, OHA
Al Cox, BAR
Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Elizabeth McCall at 7:01 p.m. at Lloyd House.

Approval of Minutes for January Meeting

On a motion by Martha Harris, seconded by Steve Stuart, HARC voted to approve the minutes from the January 16th meeting.

Chairs Updates and Announcements

Virginia Association of Museums Top 10 Endangered Artifacts Competition: Alexandria Archaeology received 2nd place and \$4000. Elizabeth McCall organized another fundraiser promptly after the contest ended to raise an additional \$1000 in local donations (the difference between 1st place and 2nd place in the contest. She dramatically exceeded that goal raising \$2000 towards the conservation of the ship.

Combined Sewer Outflow Update

Elizabeth McCall opened the discussion. Alexandria must reduce/eliminate the outflow of combined rainwater and sewage into the Potomac when the treatment plant cannot handle the volume. The options of using storage tanks or boring deep tunnels are under consideration. The next meeting of the Ad Hoc Combined Sewer System Stakeholder Group will be held on

February 22nd in the Sister Cities' room at City Hall. The City has accelerated this process and the last meeting could possibly be held in March; a decision will be made soon after. The Archaeology Department has been involved with the discussions. The boring process could possibly affect historic structures.

Danny Smith noted that engineers involved with similar boring projects have contributed to the discussion and reported that boring is unlikely to result in impacts and boring even nearer the surface than the proposed 80 feet should pose no threat to historic structures.

Freedom House Museum Update

To provide more visibility and assess community interest, OHA operated the museum each Saturday afternoon during Black History Month. In total, visitation totaled 502 people. On February 13th, City Council unanimously voted to give a \$63,000 loan to Freedom House. The short-term loan will cover the building's mortgage and part of their utilities. OHA will continue to manage the Freedom House Museum and collaborate with Northern VA Urban League to extend the regular operating hours of the museum to the public until September, 2018. From March 3rd to the 18th the museum will be open weekends from 1-5 p.m. Starting March 22nd, the museum will be open every Thursday - Sunday from 1-5 p.m. The significance of this African American historical site plus the City's effort to offer resources and financial support has gained national attention.

Ramsey Homes Update

February 9th and 10th, Alexandria and ARHA held an open house and led deconstruction tours of one of the four historic Ramsey Homes. The community event resulted in almost 100 visitors between both two-hour open houses. John Dumsick and Al Cox gave tours within the vacant unit.

John Dumsick gave a summary on the background of the Ramsey Homes and their historical significance. He also shared detailed structural explanations and diagrams of the home based on his observations:

Ramsey Homes is comprised of four buildings; three quadraplexes and one triplex. This was a U.S. Housing Authority Exploratory Program; using prefabricated reinforced concrete. The unit very closely resembles the 1939, FABCRETE patent. The unit was more structurally sound than the homes were described by ARHA. Because only one unit has been opened, it cannot yet be determined whether the other buildings were constructed in the same manner or with the same materials although it is likely.

Elizabeth McCall added to the discussion that this was an ongoing debate between preservation versus affordable housing. Overall, HARC members agreed that more could have been done in terms of preservation of these historic homes built between 1940 and 1942 for African American defense workers.

Al Cox shared that he repeatedly asked for the history report but, was not given any documents until after City Council had voted and approved the project. In 1943, after Ramsey Homes were constructed, the Journal of the National American Institute of Architects published very clear drawings of the structures. These were national examples of prefabricated housing. Al ensured photographs and measurements will be documented as the remaining houses are deconstructed.

Purvi Irwin, Vice Chair of the Parker Gray Historic District Board of Architectural Review was adamantly opposed to the buildings being torn down and has been a strong supporter through the section 106 process. Irwin has expertise with 3D modeling software and has volunteered to help create models of the homes which will be accessible to the public on ARHA's website. These models will allow an individual to walk virtually into the units and look at structural systems. Al is also working on obtaining a permit to fly a drone over the entire site which will allow for a complete 3D scan.

Elliot Bell-Krasner and John Dumsick both suggested that HARC advise the City Council about the outcome of the project. In the future, more transparency is needed with ARHA regarding the destruction of historic properties.

HARC recommended three different options to preserve the site. Elizabeth McCall noted that the option to save pieces of the buildings is still possible. There are certain sections that are manageable to take apart and store pending development of an appropriate way to display them.

ACTION ITEM:

Send suggestions/recommendations of which segments to save and send to Elizabeth McCall.

Museum Sustainability Discussion

Martha Harris organized a meeting with staff members from the National Trust for Historic Preservation which was held February 20th.

Marth Harris opened the discussion. As a member of the Advocacy and Preservation Sub-Committee, she is trying to look beyond the current agenda to issues on the horizon. The committee wishes to extend their reach beyond OHA to other organizations to identify needs/concerns and share resources. Twenty people attended the meeting, including four members of the National Trust's senior staff. The NTHP has a large agenda with a wide range of properties that they own or manage.

Meeting Highlights:

Do not be afraid of change. Must acknowledge what has worked in the past, but also be open to new models of stewardship.

Look ahead. Diversification in preservation strategies is important. Must be able to look at your constituents broadly; include the perspectives of millennials.

The NTHP is currently conducting a study on nine cities and their processes for historic preservation engagement. **The first step to expanding support is expanding engagement.** HARC will have access to this study as it progresses.

Alexandria is considered a model in the national community; Freedmen Cemetery and Freedom House specifically. Other cities have referenced and researched our projects.

Open Discussion/Meeting Highlights:

Krystyn Moon explained how listening to the perspectives, interests, concerns, etc. of community members outside of HARC is a necessary step before coordinating educational outreach activities and programs.

Linda Lovell spoke about volunteers. It is important to recognize an individual's uniqueness and utilize their skills. Guided tours are not the only way volunteers can contribute.

Elizabeth McCall emphasized that there should be redirection of emphasis on absolute preservation and towards managed preservation. There should be diversity in finances; multiple sources of revenue for a single property.

Elliot Bell-Krasner inquired as to whether the city could coordinate with other organizations to exhibit special collection items temporarily for the public, which could generate overall interest in historic Alexandria and specifically, the different museums/historical sites. Cited, for example, the National Archives displaying the Emancipation Proclamation for a limited time.

Historic properties must be dynamic and look at new ways to generate visitation and revenue. (e.g., incorporating technology with the museum experience). Temporary art exhibits and installations.

Addition to Agenda: Archaeology Department

Newly found materials:

Many different materials of different sizes; must find temporary locations to store them and ways to use for historical interpretation. The construction of a maritime history museum is currently being discussed. This structure would be used to hold the 18th century ship once it has been returned from Texas A&M University and other materials.

Al Cox gave an update on these various materials:

- Hooe's Warehouse - Field stones that are light enough to be picked-up by one person. Will be used for a 20 x 40 ft. sea wall on Strand Street.
- Pioneer Mill Stones – Very rare, 19th century quarried, dressed foundation stones. These stones are very large and about a third of them have been moved to a parking lot at Alexandria Union Station on Callahan Drive. The dressed foundation stones may be used along a pedestrian promenade connecting Duke Street to Prince Street.
- Unusually shaped early 19th century bulkhead along the waterfront that was used to connect the warehouses. These stones will be used at the Visitor Center for a sea wall and terrace. May also be used along Strand Street.

Addition to Agenda: OHA Updates

Gretchen Bulova opened the discussion. No cuts were made to the proposed OHA budget. The following was approved:

1. General operating support for the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House.
2. History programming for the interim King Street Park at the Waterfront.
3. Restored the new Assistant Director position at Gadsby's Tavern Museum.

Interim King Street Park at the Waterfront – There will be public programming to generate interest in museums and traffic to other historical sites. Need to discuss options to incorporate a

structural historical element.

Strategic Planning - Senior staff now meets every other week. Would like a smaller representative group from the Public Stakeholder Meeting to provide feedback. The next stakeholder meeting will be tentatively held in April.

Volunteer Appreciation Celebration, April 23rd. This will be the City's 2nd volunteer appreciation event.

Spring to Action, April 25th – a city-wide fundraiser for various projects including OHA projects.

Standing Sub-Committee Reports; Status of Chair Elections:

OHA and Planning Support:

Linda Lovell opened the discussion. Took a poll of HARC affiliated organizations that use volunteers: Carlyle House, Lee-Fendall House, and OHA. Will reach out to these museums for further discussions revolving around their volunteer base.

Advocacy and Preservation:

Tobin Tracey opened the discussion. Public meetings will be held on the evenings of Feb. 26th, 27th and 28th regarding affordable housing studies on Route 1 South. This topic should be of interest to HARC because of the involvement with Alfred Street Baptist Church. The Archaeology Department will be involved with the future construction.

Educational Outreach:

John Dumsick opened the discussion and volunteered to be the temporary chair. Jolande Goldberg has experience with partnerships and relationships within academia; will look into possible partnerships.

Waterfront History Plan – African American Heritage Trail:

Maddy McCoy opened the discussion informing HARC that the group is currently developing a map which will connect African American heritage sites within the city. They will be combining new research with previous examples to consolidate and create something comprehensive. They will start at the Waterfront and weave through neighborhoods. Multiple time periods will be incorporated (e.g., postbellum, antebellum, slavery, possibly the Underground Railroad up to Civil Rights). Elizabeth McCall added that this will be a layered process and geographic components will be incorporated.

Addition to Agenda: Commission Updates

Monica St. Dennis introduced herself as a representative of the Public Records Advisory Commission. It was noted that she is not yet an official HARC member. Monica is a Reference Librarian in the House of Representatives, Internal Library.

Elliot Bell-Krasner announced that the American Council of Young Political Leaders will be hosting a delegation from the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Elliot wishes to bring members of this delegation to the May HARC meeting as a formal introduction to local government.

Danny Smith brought attention to Maddy McCoy and the genealogical research assistance she provided to Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax. The Washington Post published an article about how Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax was able to trace his ancestry to an emancipated individual in Fairfax County.

Maddy McCoy explained that she researches slavery in the region. For the past twelve years, she has been creating a database which helps individuals and historic sites identify enslaved populations.

Danny Smith continued his announcements: April 14th, Gadsby's Tavern Museum will be holding their Annual Best Bib and Tucker Ball. The theme this year for the fundraiser will be, Springtime in Paris. A letter will soon be sent to the Ambassador of France, inviting him to send a delegation for the event.

McArthur Myers announced that The Lyceum will be holding a Meet and Greet for Veterans on February 24th. The focus will be on Post 24 and William Thomas.

Al Cox announced that the American Institute of Architects will offer free walking tours of Old Town on April 8th. Preservation Month will be held in May; announcements for events and workshops are on the way. The Alexandria Contemporary Architecture Symposium will be held June 8th and 9th.

The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA Staff to the Commission