

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Alexandria Beautification Commission
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 12, 2019
7:30 PM
Durant Arts Center
1605 Cameron Street

Attendees: Kathryn Chiasson (Chair), Joseph Crowell, Cathleen Curtin, Mary Enschede (Secretary), Monica Murphy, Mellenie Runion, Denise Tennant (Vice Chair), Geoff Montross, Kevin Dunne, Donald Kent, Richard Dorrier

Excused Absences: Dana Holmstrand, Eleanor Quigley, Christina Mazukevich

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM.

- 1) **Approval of January 10, 2019 Meeting Minutes** – A motion to approve the updated minutes was made by Mr. Montross and seconded by Mr. Crowell. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes.
- 2) **Membership Updates** – Donald Kent and Richard Dorrier introduced themselves to the Commission. At present, there are 2 vacancies: architect and citizen. Dana Holmstrand will not be continuing.
- 3) **Commission Business -**

A) Presentation from 2019 Sub-committees and their Priorities

- i) **Awards (meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7pm):** Ms. Murphy presented the sub-committee. When looking for potential awardees the sub-committee looks for exceptional efforts contributing to the beautification of Alexandria through architecture, landscaping and sustainable practices. Awards are presented in six categories: Excellence in Architecture, Excellence in Sustainable Design, Green Practices in Beautification, Community Beautification, Residential Beautification, and Commercial Beautification. The Mayor and members of the City Council present the winners with their award certificates. Prior to the event, the sub-committee begins the full Commission's involvement in awards season by distributing nomination assignments to each of the Commissioners, along with maps and criteria for

nomination (e.g. plant material sustainable practices, neighborhood context, and overall maintenance). The sub-committee also asks City residents to send in their nominations and descriptions. After the nominations are in, some of Commissioners attend a van voting tour. Each year the ceremony takes place at the Lyceum Museum around the end of September/ early October. Nomination will take place in May of 2019.

(1) **Potential Theme for 2019:** History. History is part of the City's identity.

Anything related to beautification on a historical basis, or for future generations, could be incorporated into this year's theme. Ms. Murphy shared that she spoke to Joan Honeyman who is helping redo the historic Ramsay House garden, Alexandria Visitor Center on King Street. The renovation features a new garden design by Joan Honeyman of Jordan Honeyman Landscape Architecture and includes an accessible garden entry and terrace, native and sustainable plantings as well as seating to welcome the thousands of residents and tourists who visit the Ramsay House garden each year. One aspect of the renovation is that it's a historical site. Anything that affects the structure of the building goes through a specific historical commission.

ii) **Outreach (meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 7pm):** Mr. Crowell and Mr. Dunne presented on this sub-committee. It's a new sub-committee that started as advocacy. Originally the sub-committee's goal was to provide input on matters under the Commission's purview and express the Commission's position on issues and appreciation of beautification efforts. Now named "outreach" because the sub-committee cannot advocate. The sub-committee met a month ago to figure out what is interesting and see how they can meaningfully engage on a variety of issues, some rolled over from last year. Sub-committee members are hoping to do more social media campaigning and have more open communication with the other commissions.

(1) Review guidelines that the city is updating and work closely with other commissions (e.g. Review WasteSmart Strategic Plan, and work with the Waterfront Commission).

(2) Look at ways to improve the City. For example, the lights being replaced that are non-LED and improve lights near street signs. If you see something that needs improvement, let the Outreach Sub-committee know.

iii) **Sustainable Landscaping (meets on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30pm):** Ms. Murphy presented the sub-committee. The sub-committee members reviewed the 5-year goals. One current project is to install native and sustainable plant material in three medians at the heavily trafficked intersection of King St., Quaker Ln and Braddock Rd. The Commission initiated the pilot median improvement project in Oct of 2017 to make the City's medians both more attractive and more sustainable. The Sub-committee would like to do similar projects down the road. Ms. Chiasson shared that she met with two DASH employees. Maintenance is

an issue around some of the bus stops; very localized on City property and could use improvements.

(1) Median improvements (choose locations)- Need to create criteria for choosing the next median to beautify.

(a) High visibility, high traffic. The sub-committee will look at a traffic report to help identify figures and determine what high visibility means.

(2) Sponsorships- Focusing on a “adopt a median/garden” or partnership program. Partnership means the sponsors sign a contract with the City.

(3) Market Square collaboration- Continued project (currently on 2nd and or 3rd year).

(4) Continue to work with the city to identify priorities and come up with a cohesive plan. For instance, the City is also looking at Washington St.

Action item: Ms. Chiasson will share list of DASH areas.

iv) **Vacant Lots (meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00pm):** Ms.

Runion presented on the sub-committee. She said there was lots of progress this year. The sub-committee worked with Del Ray Citizens Association and with landscape designers and received feedback. The sub-committee applied for the City’s matching funds with the idea of raising funds for Simpson Triangle, grant program of \$22,500.

(1) Recently completed another fundraising and brought in around \$2k; around \$9k from the goal. The City will match the sub-committee if it can raise that much.

(2) There is also a GoFundMe page which has raised \$100. The goal of the beginning of this year is to finish fundraising and plant in the fall.

(3) Ms. Runion and Ms. Tennant will be going to the Arts Commission for phase II and hear about the Commission’s work.

b) New SharePoint Open for Commission Business

Ms. Chiasson shared that the Commission can use SharePoint now. It will be a file repository of all Commission material. Meetings should be posted on the City calendar. Please provide her with feedback re SharePoint.

Action item: Pass around FOIA presentation to circulate. Mr. Mendoza will resend SharePoint invite and add new people.

c) Review of the City’s Updated Landscape Guidelines and Vote on Endorsement

Mr. Crowell shared the updates of the City’s Landscape Guidelines. At the November ABC Meeting, Beth Znidarsic, from the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities presented to the Commission the planned updates to the City’s Landscape Guidelines. Ms. Znidarsic gave an overview of the changes, which included formatting and eliminated some content (i.e. invasive plants list, ad canopy coverage allowance). Originally drafted in 1997, the guidelines were updated in 2007 and again in 2019 to incorporate modern best practices. The updated guidelines had to go through the City Council. On Feb. 2nd, the guidelines were

presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission. On Feb 23, the guidelines will be presented to the City Council.

Specific items updated:

- i) Penalties for damaged trees were rather severe, however, in the latest version there is a sliding scale of penalties based on the type of tree.
- ii) The guidelines also consider soil and climate zones. There used to be 300-mile range requirement, however, the new guidelines have now designated a certain set of states. Provenance of plant material must be from within the following states: Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, West Virginia, North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee (east of Knoxville).
- iii) Mr. Dunne reiterated that the new guidelines are more user friendly, streamlined and contain a stringent set of requirements.

A motion to endorse the updated City Landscape Guidelines was made by Ms. Tennant and Ms. Murphy seconded. Mr. Dunne abstained, and no one opposed.

d) Sub-committee Updates, as Needed

- i) **Bylaws:** On March 7th at 7pm the Bylaws sub-committee will meet. Please send feedback to Mr. Crowell by March 5th
- ii) **Outreach:** Mr. Chiasson expressed that Councilwoman Amy Jackson is interested in what the Commission does. Outreach should brainstorm.

4) New Commission Business- None

5) Staff Report – Mr. Mendoza shared that he is in communication with Jim Holloway, Facilities Coordinator at the Lyceum Museum. Mr. Mendoza and Mr. Holloway will be redoing the spreadsheet for the award ceremony and throw out Oct. 8th as a potential date for when it's due. Mr. Mendoza stated that he can also reach out to Bob Williams about having him present again. Bob Williams is the Division Chief of Natural Resources, Dept of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities.

6) Next meeting will be on March 14, 2019

7) Public Comment/ Discussion - None

Meeting adjourned at 8:33pm.