

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Lee Center

1108 Jefferson Street

7:30 AM

Summary Minutes – Approved

MEMBERS PRESENT

Susan Pettey, Chair
Doug Gosnell, Vice-Chair
Jay Atkinson
Mel Fortney
Michael Geissinger
Peter Pennington
Pete Petersen
Willem Polak
Councilman Paul Smedberg
Robert W. Taylor
Jim Dorsch (former Waterfront Committee Chair)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Engin Artemel (excused)
Henry Brooks (excused)
Nathan Macek (excused)
John Renner (excused)
Chuck Hamel (excused)

STAFF

Roger Blakeley, RPCA
Kathleen Beeton P & Z
Aimee Vosper, RPCA
Jim Hixon, RPCA
Mark Penn, Emergency Services
Julie Rasmussen, RPCA
Laura Seidler, RPCA
Paul Sever, General Services
David Huchler, Police
Donald Dodson, General Services

GUESTS

Burt Ely (OTCA)
Linda Couture (OTCA)
Susan Cohen (Public Art Committee)
Harry Harrington
Joanne Platt
Sarita Schotta, (Waterfront Alliance)
Van Van Fleet
Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet

1. Welcome and Introductions

- The Chair, Susan Pettey, opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, thanked Vice-Chair Gosnell for having chaired the March meeting in her absence, and recognized Jim Dorsch, former chair of the Waterfront Committee, who attended representing Founders Park Community Foundation in place of member Chuck Hamel..
- **Chair Pettey reported City Council's response to her letter and her in-person remarks to the Council urging an expedited start of the City's Waterfront Study.**
 - City Council agreed the Study should be given higher priority.
 - Mayor asked P & Z to advise what resources are needed to expedite the study.
 - Councilman Krupicka had discussed the Committee's concerns with the Council.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the March 18, 2008 Meeting

- **Action:** By voice vote the Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. **National Harbor Task Force**

Update: City Staff – Ameer Vosper and Kathleen Beeton

- The majority of planned actions were in place by April 1, including new kiosks, operation of King Street Trolley, and installation of new lighting to brighten the Marina area
- Some actions still being worked on, including:
 - Actions to insure adequate signage and wayfinding information,
 - Upgrading light standards and fixtures, and
 - Discussions with Police about possible short-term and long-term solutions to the problem of trolleys and motor coaches circulating on the Unit block.
- Parking spaces have been removed from service on the 300 block of King Street to free up space for motor coaches
- April 23 City Forum
 - Solicit ideas and volunteers from the general public for addressing Unit Block issues.
 - Time/place: 7 p.m., location not yet finalized; likely at City Hall.
- **Discussion Highlights:**
 - **Chair Pettey:** Kudos to all those working to implement the Task Force actions.
 - **Ms. Pettey** reported comments from **Member Macek:** Impressed with signage and historical timeline; enhanced lighting; and King Street Trolley that is already very popular.
 - Reported some side windows not yet been removed to enable air to circulate).
 - **Member Geissenger:** A good beginning for whole Waterfront Plan, urging that it be used it as a barometer against which to measure actions as they proceed.
 - Recommended:
 - Providing additional take-away print information to visitors.
 - Training Trolley drivers to provide more informed answers to riders' questions about Alexandria.
 - A: (Vosper) Trolley cards and info, and ACVA guides expected to be on Trolleys and Water Taxis within a week or so.
 - Proposed that private sector information be available on the Trolley in addition to ACVA information - such as the Alexandria Guide which he publishes but has not been approved for distribution on the trolley.
 - **Member Polak:** Discussed the Water Taxi.
 - One water Taxi is running on schedule.
 - A ticket booth to be constructed on the Gaylord Pier to be closer to Taxi point of departure.
 - Groups have begun arriving in Old Town from Gaylord.
 - City hotel bookings are up.

- **Member Pennington:** Urged that planned Torpedo Factory improvements on the water-side be made, noting that some exterior improvements have been made, such as fixtures and awnings.
- **Member Geissenger:** Encouraged RPCA to monitor pedestrian traffic to learn where people are walking once they depart the trolley.
 - **A: Ms. Vosper** Pedestrian counters have been tracking traffic numbers, not routes, during the month before and after National Harbor's opening.

4. **Old Town Civic Association Waterfront Standards**

Presenters: Linda Couture and Burt Ely

- **Hand-out:** OTCA Printed standards as approved on January 2008
 - Minutes Attachment 1
- **Overview:**
 - Information about Standards and OTCA survey on which the standards are based is available on the Association's Web site: www.oldtowncivic.org.
 - Standards being offered for use as a template when the City begins its Waterfront planning process.
 - OTCA sent out 540 questionnaires to its members and received 176 responses, many including detailed suggestions.
- **Discussion:**
 - **Member Gosnell:**
 - Suggested the Standards had been presented without a conceptual framework being offered as a basis to engineering and spec standards that had been approved by OTCA members.
 - Zones are actually mixed areas, thus perhaps a more appropriate approach to developing standards would divide the Waterfront into quadrants reflecting the mixed use. Waterfront development has evolved over the centuries from an operational seaport to a mixed use area with residential neighborhoods.
 - **OTCA overview of Standards:**
 - Not drawn up as a document planning the Waterfront;
 - Offering standards that can be used during Waterfront planning, with the goal to provide open and visible waterfront views and access one of its priorities.
 - Following a process analogous to that of the Washington Street standards,
 - Consistent with process followed by BAR, NPS guidelines and Washington Street standards – avoiding a large departure from existing practice.
 - Recommended that Committee members look at the Washington Street Standards for a frame of reference.
 - Used Fairfax Street as the demarcation line rather than Royal Street to avoid neighborhoods further from the Waterfront.
 - Big parks such as Oronoco Bay are not included in these OTCA standards.
 - Linda Couture will be visiting Hoboken to discuss how they had re-done their own waterfront.

- OTCA had worked with Pam Crescy (City Archeologist), who discussed different architectural standards and history and archeology.
- **Member Geissenger:** Standards need to be considered in the context of what currently exists.
- **Member Gosnell:** Waterfront standards should be consistent with historical standards and value, and include inputs from Ms. Crescy, re: how, for example, to create a walkway that reflects the area's history.
- **Member Polak:** OTCA standards would rule out a Waterfront development such as building a boutique hotel along the waterfront: setting by setting a 35-foot height limit, ruling out building in a flood plain, and requiring buildings to be set back at least 75 feet.
- An OTCA member reported that OTCA members do not like the area's black metal benches.
- A guest at the meeting reported that the OTCA standards were similar to – but more specific than – the proposals of the Waterfront Alliance.

5. Marina Security

Update: General Services – Paul Sever and Donald Dodson

- Discussion was prompted by recent break-ins at the marina during previous weeks.
- Issues discussed included:
 - Unauthorized late night usage of the piers, including unauthorized boarding and attempted break-ins of private boats.
 - Reference to other marinas not affording unrestricted night-time access to piers.
 - Options for measures that might be taken by the City to improve Marina security, including (**Gosnell** suggestion) installation of Marina gates or cameras.
 - City liability exposure created by people having open access to the piers at night.
 - Concerns of Waterfront neighborhood residents re: Marina petty crimes occurring almost every weekend. (**Atkinson**)
 - Whether Marina resources are adequate to implement enhanced security.
 - Security Measures - Current and Potential
 - Guards - Current:
 - A: Mr. **Sever** - Guard on-duty 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Guards, who are not trained police, call Alexandria Police when they discover an incident.
 - Option: Installing a security gate to control unauthorized pier access
 - A: Mr. **Blakeley** - A 6-foot ornamental gate (with boat owners having key access) has been considered. RPCA is appealing a BAR decision to restrict a Marina security gate to a 4-foot height.
- **Follow-up Action:** Council Member **Smedberg** to discuss with Mr. **Blakeley** and Ms. **Beeton** options for addressing Marina security.
- **Follow-Up Action:** Discussion to be continued at May Committee meeting.

6. Land Flood Prediction Modeling Project

Presenter: Mark Penn, Emergency Management Coordinator

- **Hand-outs:** Pictures and descriptions of City sensor sites for the On-land Flood Inundation Project.
 - Minutes Attachment 2
- Project is a joint project of Alexandria, Annapolis, University of Maryland, College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, Chesapeake Observation Systems, and National Oceans and Atmospheric Administration.
- The absence of a good predictive model for on-land flooding that the City could use at the time of Hurricane Isabel's flooding prompted the City to undertake the project.
- About a year ago the National Weather Service partnered with the project's now-partners a new computer modeling system, using supercomputers to study the on-land effects of flooding.
 - Goal: To create a predictive computer model of what the effects of an 8-foot storm surge would mean today.
 - Isabel flooding model was run, including the wind in the Bay, sensor readings in Bay and Ocean, and other information and predicted almost precisely which on-land flooding would occur.
 - Goal: Accelerate current 12-hour predictive model to a 4-hour predictive model.
- **Actions to facilitate the project:**
 - Place sensors in a several locations throughout the City to provide readings.
 - Annapolis and Alexandria are both doing this to predict ocean-Bay-river flooding patterns.
 - In a couple locations where there are timbers or piers, there will be permanent brackets placed into which sensors will be installed a couple days before a predicted storm's arrival
 - Note: "Site 7" at Ford's Landing will not be implemented; private owner has not yet granted permission to use the site. Placement will instead be in park next door.
 - Timeframe: Data to be collected over the next 3 years.
 - Task: To build a predictive on-land model.
- **Discussion:**
 - Project's data to be given to the City Department of Planning and Zoning as it is gathered.
 - District flooding has created a whole new planning scenario.
 - FEMA has not yet responded to City requests for updated predictive data of FEMA's flood plain along the Alexandria Waterfront.
 - If FEMA's flood plain is changed, the required and recommended protective steps could then be taken by the City, including those eventually

recommended by the flood mitigation measures study whose interim results were briefed to the Committee at its March meeting.

- Total study over 5 years will cost about \$5 million.
- City has obtained some grant funding from the State and from National Weather Service - and is continuing to seek grants.
- Additional grant funding would accelerate the study's progress.

7. Announcements

- **Member Smedberg:** In response to the Chair's letter and in-person comments to the Council urging an expedited start to the City's Waterfront Study, Council members are very interested in moving the plan's start up. Start date has been accelerated by about a year. Initial planning could start as early as December 2008 or January 2009.
- **Member Pennington:** Encouraged Members to attend the Eco-City Summit to be held May 10, 9 a.m. at T. C. Williams High School.
 - Chair: Committee has provided written recommendations.
- A guest at the meeting requested that more detailed reporting of petty break-ins around the Waterfront be provided to the neighborhood.
 - A: Capt. **Huchler** - Crime statistics are updated daily on the City's Web site (www.alexandriava.gov).
 - Police continue to work on larcenies of items from cars, actively review crime neighborhood trends, and work with RPCA staff on Waterfront security.
 - The importance of boat owners reporting all crimes, even petty ones, was emphasized: police use reported crime statistics when deciding how deploy the police force.
 - Environmental design such as security gates is important to crime prevention.
 - A: Ms **Seidler** (RPCA) reported that when a boat has been tampered with, Marina staff notifies the boat owner, and writes up an incident report;
 - Boat owner is responsible for calling the police.
 - In response to Member **Atkinson's** question, Mr. **Blakeley** reported that data on all incident reports is kept by the Marina.
- **Follow-up Action:** May Committee briefing on Waterfront security
 - At Chair's request, Police will brief re: boat crimes at the Marina and crime trends for neighborhood around the Waterfront.

8. Adjournment – 9:15 a.m.

ATTACHMENT 1: Agenda Item 4
“Waterfront Area Planning Standards”, Old Town Civic Association.

ATTACHMENT 2: Agenda Item 6
“Land Flood Prediction Modeling Project”