



Alexandria Waterfront Commission

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

**FY 2012 Annual Report
July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012**

Adopted August 14, 2012

Introduction

The purpose of the Alexandria Waterfront Commission is to advise the City Council, City Manager, and City staff on matters pertaining to public, private, and commercial uses of Alexandria's historic Potomac River Waterfront and on implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. The Commission is composed of 21 members, each representing a particular neighborhood, community organization, or City committee. The Waterfront Commission was established by City Council on April 14, 2012, and replaces the Waterfront Committee, which was founded in 1989.

This report covers the activities of the Alexandria Waterfront Commission, and its predecessor, the Alexandria Waterfront Committee, for the period July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012, City of Alexandria Fiscal Year (FY) 2012. It begins with a listing of FY12 membership, followed by a statement of its mission and functions. Next are summaries of the Commission's principal activities in FY12 and anticipated activities in FY13. Finally, the report concludes with discussion of the Commission's recruitment and leadership plans and community outreach activities.

FY12 Membership*

Councilman Paul Smedberg, City Council Representative
Nathan Macek, Chair – Citizen, At-Large
Peter Pennington, Vice-Chair – Environmental Policy Commission Representative
Engin Artemel – Citizen, East of Washington St., North of Pendleton St. (partial term)
Dennis Auld – Citizen, ***Park Planning District II*** (partial term)
Kent Barnekov – Alexandria Seaport Foundation Representative
Gina Baum – Park and Recreation Commission Representative (partial term)
Christine Bernstein – Founders Park Community Association Representative
William Cromley – Park and Recreation Commission Representative (partial term)
Morgan Delaney – ***Historic Alexandria Foundation*** Representative (partial term)
Stewart Dunn – ***Planning Commission*** Representative (partial term)
Art Fox – Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Douglas Gosnell – Pleasure Boat Lease Holder Representative
Linda Hafer – Old Town Business Association Representative
Charlotte Hall – Alexandria Chamber of Commerce Representative
Trey Hanbury – Citizen, ***Park Planning District I*** (partial term)
Melinda (Mindy) Lyle – Citizen, ***Park Planning District III*** (partial term)
Jody Manor – Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association Representative
James McCall – Alexandria Archaeological Commission Representative (partial term)
Patricia (Pat) Miller – ***Commission on the Arts*** Representative (partial term)
Pete Peterson – Alexandria Archaeological Commission Representative (partial term)
Stephen Thayer – Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St. (partial term)
Townsend Van Fleet – Old Town Civic Association Representative
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St. (partial term)

*The Commission's six new constituencies, approved by City Council in April 2012, are in ***bold italics***.

City Staff

James Spengler, Director – Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, Park Operations – RPCA
Cheryl Lawrence, Acting Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events & Waterfront – RPCA
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster – RPCA
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner – Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

Commission Mission and Functions

The mission of the Waterfront Commission is to advocate for a vibrant Waterfront for Alexandria citizens and visitors that promotes Alexandria's maritime heritage. Its objectives are to advise City Council and staff on matters pertaining to public, private, and commercial uses of the Waterfront and implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, including:

- Public improvements, including flood mitigation, new parks and improvements to existing parks, utilities, piers and the Marina, and shoreline improvements.
- Design guidelines or standards for new buildings and for the public realm (including parks, plazas, and other public spaces).
- Recommendations related to implementation of the Waterfront public art and history plans.
- Proposals for commerce, private redevelopment, and public-private partnerships.
- Studies and recommendations related to transportation, parking, and circulation, including vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and marine travel.
- City management, maintenance, operations and programming of new and existing Waterfront facilities, including the Alexandria City Marina.
- Operating budgets, capital improvement programs, and funding for new and existing infrastructure, including phasing of planned improvements.
- Public safety and security issues.
- Environmental quality of the Potomac River, along its shores, and on adjacent land in Alexandria.
- Governance and/or fundraising organizations or activities, such as they affect the Waterfront.

Principal Activities in FY12

This section summarizes the principal activities of the Alexandria Waterfront Commission (and, prior to April 14, the Waterfront Committee) during FY 2012.

Waterfront Planning – The Waterfront Committee was actively involved in the development of a new Waterfront Small Area Plan for the City of Alexandria, which was approved by City Council on January 21, 2012. The Waterfront Committee discussed the Waterfront Plan at each of its meetings during the year. On November 15, 2012 the Committee received a presentation on an alternative Waterfront plan developed by a citizen group and held a workshop meeting on November 29, 2011 to discuss the citizen plan. Waterfront Committee members participated in other public meetings throughout the year, including a City Council and

Planning Commission joint work session on January 10, 2012 and the City Council public hearing on January 21, 2012.

In addition, the Committee's chairman, Nathan Macek, served as the Committee's delegate to the Waterfront Plan Work Group, which held 15 meetings during the summer and autumn of 2011 to identify Waterfront Small Area Plan consensus areas and categorize and narrow differences on concerns raised by residents. The Work Group resulted in findings and recommendations on 11 thematic topics contained in the plan.

The Committee articulated its views on the Waterfront Plan in multiple correspondence over the course of the year, including a [letter to City Council](#) dated January 18, 2012 and [testimony before Council](#) on January 21, 2012 that supported adoption of the draft Plan contingent upon incorporation of the recommendations of the Waterfront Plan Work Group and staff recommendations.

The Committee noted in May 2011 that there were several important issues to be resolved prior to Plan adoption, including: retaining the original Fitzgerald Square concept; re-considering the proposed Waterfront extension and Marina design; activating the parking implementation plan; dedicating new revenues generated from Waterfront redevelopment to the maintenance and improvement of Waterfront amenities; mitigating the impacts of proposed Waterfront hotels on residential neighborhoods; retaining the Waterfront's existing cultural institutions; and incorporating Alexandria's history.

The Committee found that the deliberations of the Waterfront Plan Work Group produced recommendations that adequately addressed each of the issues that it had previously raised. Specifically:

- Support for a public plaza at the foot of King Street is reaffirmed, emphasizing the importance of a negotiated agreement with the Old Dominion Boat Club.
- Marina policies de-emphasize relocating pleasure boats to the Robison Terminal South site and incorporate the tenets of the Waterfront Committee's March 16, 2010 [Marina Vision Statement](#).
- Implementation of the Parking Implementation Plan is now underway.
- There is a commitment to reinvest revenue generated by new development along the Waterfront, to include arts and history contributions and improvements.
- Controls over Waterfront restaurants and hotels would be the most stringent in the City.
- Support for existing (and attracting new) cultural institutions has been strengthened.
- Alexandria's history has been better incorporated into the plan.

The Waterfront Committee also supported recommendations of the Waterfront Plan Work Group for two important early implementation activities immediately upon adoption of the Plan:

- Completion of a Union Street corridor Transportation Management Plan prior to approval of any new development, to mitigate and manage traffic impacts along the Waterfront; and
- The development of a design plan to provide a holistic design vision for the Waterfront public and private realm improvements consistent with the historic setting of Old Town.

In addition, the Committee endorsed several of the staff recommendations outlined in the January 17, 2012 memorandum from the City Manager to City Council regarding the Waterfront Small Area Plan. In particular:

- The proposal to apply the Old and Historic District design guidelines to the Robinson Terminal North Site, which would provide for oversight by the Board of Architectural Review.
- The establishment of a non-profit foundation to benefit Alexandria's Waterfront. This is an important mechanism for productively channeling the widespread community interest in the Waterfront demonstrated over the past two years, particularly for arts and history betterments.
- The proposal to quantify the expected contributions to public realm improvements that may be expected

from developers of Waterfront parcels.

Finally, the Waterfront Committee expressed that it was eager to assist with implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, noting that the Waterfront Plan Work Group Report called for designation of a public body to provide input and advise on plan implementation, a role very similar to the Waterfront Committee's charge. The Committee expressed its "enthusiastic interest" to support Waterfront Plan implementation in a February 27, 2012 [letter to the Mayor](#).

Change in Name, Function, and Membership – In a special meeting on March 1, 2012, the Committee formally endorsed a proposal to change the name, functions, and membership of the Waterfront Committee to support Waterfront Plan implementation. A similar package of proposed changes were subsequently endorsed by City staff and approved by City Council on April 14, 2012.

The name of the Waterfront Committee was changed to the Waterfront Commission, and Section 2-4-54 of the Alexandria City Code, which specifies the functions of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee, was amended as follows:

The functions of the ~~committee~~ commission shall be to advise city council, the city manager, and appropriate city departments on matters pertaining to:

- the use of the Alexandria Waterfront by commercial and private vessels; and
- implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

For purposes of this article, the term "Alexandria Waterfront" shall include the area within the boundary of the Waterfront Small Area Plan and shall include all waters of the Potomac River located within the boundaries of the city and all piers, docks and other structures located on such waters which are or may be used for the docking of commercial or private vessels.

In addition, Commission membership was broadened from 15 to 21 members through the addition of the following representatives:

- one representative from the Alexandria Commission for the Arts;
- one representative from the Alexandria Planning Commission;
- one representative from the Historic Alexandria Foundation;
- one citizen representative from Park Planning District I;
- one citizen representative from Park Planning District II; and
- one citizen representative from Park Planning District III.

The group held its first meeting as the Waterfront Commission on April 17, 2012. New representatives were appointed by Council on May 8, 2012 and seated in time for the Commission's May 15, 2012 meeting.

Waterfront Plan Implementation – The Commission began to advise on implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan in April 2012. Advisory discussions held to date include:

- Commentary to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services on the proposed request for proposals for engineering implementation and flood mitigation activities
- Receipt of a presentation by Brandt Properties on the renovation of its properties at 204-206 South Union Street
- Updates from the Department of General Services on the status and proposed uses of the Beachcombers restaurant site
- Update on staff-developed communications tools for Waterfront Plan implementation

- Commentary to the Department of Planning and Zoning on the landscape design services RFP summary

Other Waterfront Plan implementation items discussed by the Commission included the location of a Waterfront-area Capital Bikeshare station and the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study, described in the Transportation and Environmental Services section below.

Waterfront FY13 Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Priorities – The Committee provided a [series of recommendations](#) on the City’s FY 2013 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program to City staff in September and October 2011, culminating in a November 16, 2011 [letter to City Council](#) summarizing Waterfront-area priorities. Following release of the City Manager’s proposed budget and CIP during the winter, the Committee followed up with a February 21, 2012 [letter to City Council](#). Operational items included support for the proposed Office of Project Implementation, the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study, the valet parking pilot program, and a set-aside for Waterfront Plan study/implementation contingency. The Committee also endorsed centralized management of Waterfront operations, and improvements to Marina security oversight. Capital priorities included Windmill Park bulkhead repairs, City Marina seawall maintenance and utility upgrades, design and engineering for flood mitigation, a Waterfront Small Area Plan preliminary design and engineering plan, Marina dredging, and Marina maintenance. The Committee noted the deleterious condition of the Windmill Hill Park bulkhead and strongly encouraged Council to inspect it first-hand.

Marina Operations – The Commission monitored and advised the City on several Marina operations issues:

- **Public Restrooms:** The Commission discussed provision of additional public restrooms at or near Torpedo Plaza. The permanent closing of the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion in December 2011 ended public access to the area’s primary public restroom facilities. An October 27, 2011 [letter to staff](#) outlined several potential options, including opening only the restrooms in the Food Pavilion for public use, constructing new public restrooms near the existing water taxi waiting area below the Chart House Restaurant, or incorporating new public restrooms into any City-owned civic/cultural facilities or hospitality businesses constructed as Waterfront development proceeds. Another option includes increasing the hours that Torpedo Factory Art Center restrooms are open to the public. The Commission will work with staff to resolve this issue in FY13.
- **Marina Fee Category for Historic Vessels:** The Committee reviewed and generally endorsed a staff proposal to institute a fee category for short-term use of the City Marina by historic vessels. In a March 29, 2012 [letter to staff](#), the Committee noted that the policy would provide a predictable rate structure for commercial and non-profit historic vessels and streamline the approvals process for nonprofit vessels, with the hope that more historic vessels would make a port-of-call in Alexandria. The Committee offered several specific comments on the staff proposal, and will work with staff to seek adoption of the policy as part of the FY14 budget approval process.
- **Marina Users Public Meeting:** On November 3, 2011 the Committee held a public meeting to hear from users of the Alexandria City Marina. The meeting focused on operational issues, providing staff the opportunity to communicate to leaseholders and for leaseholders to share with staff and the Committee concerns regarding the Marina. In general, leaseholders expressed satisfaction with Marina operations, but asked for additional channels to receive communications from Marina staff. RPCA followed-up based on this feedback.
- **Marina Pilings:** The Committee received regular updates from staff on the City’s replacement of damaged pilings at the City Marina, which was completed in May 2012.

- **Marina Security:** The Commission considered actions by the City to maintain public safety and security at the Marina, including the installation of video cameras to deter crime in this vicinity, which are now live.
- **Minnie V:** The Commission monitored City implementation of its June 2011 recommendation for the historic Chesapeake Bay skipjack *Minnie V* to offer cruises from the Alexandria City Marina, which began in May 2012.

Transportation and Environmental Services: The Commission monitored and advised the City on several Transportation and Environmental issues:

- **Parking and Wayfinding Signage:** In a November 1, 2011 [letter to staff](#) the Waterfront Committee recommended that the City begin to address the recommendations of the Old Town Area Parking Study, including the immediate implementation of strategies aimed at maximizing existing capacity such as wayfinding, valet parking, and shuttle services. The Committee called for a pilot program to mitigate existing parking issues, determine successful approaches prior to development, and provide a model as the Waterfront Small Area Plan is implemented. In November 2011 the Committee heard from staff on proposed transportation management strategies, including newly installed parking wayfinding signage and the Waterfront parking implementation plan. Two members of the Waterfront Commission were appointed to serve on the Old Town Area Parking Study, to meet during the summer of 2012.
- **Bikeshare:** The Committee received a staff presentation on the Capital Bikeshare program in November 2011 and a presentation on the proposed location of Waterfront-area bikeshare stations in February and April 2012. In April 2012, the Commission voted to support the City's participation in the Bikeshare program in general, but oppose staff's proposed location of a station along Cameron Street Alley (near the City Marina), which was documented in a May 3, 2012 [letter to staff](#). Staff presented nine locations for Commission consideration at its May 15 meeting, to which the Commission added two additional options. A majority of Commission members voted for two locations, 1) within a half-block radius east of the corner of South Union and Prince Streets, and 2) the Beachcombers parking lot. Per Commission guidance, Staff is presently pursuing installation of a station at the corner of Prince and South Union streets.
- **Union Street Corridor Circulation Study:** The Commission provided comment on proposed scoping specifications for the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study at a special meeting on March 26, 2012. On June 21, 2012, the Commission held an interactive work session with the City's consultant for the Study. The Commission discussed key issues such as motor coaches and delivery trucks, enforcement, maintaining pedestrian friendliness, managing bicycle traffic, and implementing and testing options early. The Commission will continue to provide public input to this study through autumn 2012.

Park Maintenance and Operations – The Commission received monthly updates from RPCA staff regarding Waterfront-area park operations and maintenance issues. Improvements reported during FY12 included the replacement of damaged observation decks at Oronoco Bay Park and the resolution of minor flood damage at Founders Park. The Commission discussed proposed improvements to the Windmill Hill Park bulkhead, including the installation of temporary fencing to restrict access to the existing bulkhead. The Commission also monitored the status of improvements to Jones Point Park, which reopened to the public on July 7, 2012 under National Park Service management following extensive rehabilitation of the park as part of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge construction project. The Commission received a presentation from National Park Service personnel regarding Jones Point at its May 15, 2012 meeting.

Park Naming Protocol – The Commission received a recommendation to rename Waterfront Park in honor of John Fitzgerald, George Washington’s Aide-de-camp and an early mayor of Alexandria. The Commission sought clarification of the policies and protocol for park renaming, and will reconsider the proposal in FY13.

Waterfront Area Safety and Security – The Commission received monthly updates from the Alexandria Police Department regarding Waterfront-area safety and security issues, including monthly crime statistics. Issues of particular concern include hazards created by bicyclists who disobey traffic regulations and motor coaches that disregard City ordinances regarding parking and the loading and unloading of passengers. The Commission also addressed protocols for handling squatters in Waterfront parks.

Fire Boat Dock Location: In April 2012 the Commission received an update from the Fire Department regarding its plans to purchase a new fireboat for the City. The new 50-foot boat will be larger than the existing fireboat and will require a larger berth. The Waterfront Commission will continue to advise the Fire Department on near-term and long-term docking options for the new vessel.

Waterfront Walk – The Waterfront Commission led its annual Waterfront Walk on Saturday, June 9, 2012, from the bulkhead at Windmill Hill Park to Oronoco Bay Park. The walk focused on maintenance and operational issues along the Waterfront, as well as implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. The walk was facilitated by staff members from the Departments of Planning and Zoning and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. The event was attended by 13 Commissioners, the Mayor and several members of City Council, various City staff, and many members of the public, for a total of approximately 50 participants. The walk resulted in a list of items for follow-up action by the Commission and staff, the resolution of which the Commission will supervise in FY13.

Anticipated Activities in FY13

This section summarizes the anticipated activities of the Alexandria Waterfront Commission during FY 2013.

- Support implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, including:
 - Advise on Waterfront engineering and flood mitigation design
 - Advise on Waterfront landscape architecture design services
 - Complete the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study and advise on implementation
 - Participate in the Old Town Area Parking Study
 - Work with the Waterfront Art and History Committee to support implementation of art and history elements of Waterfront Small Area Plan
 - Review and advise on Waterfront-area development proposals, including, 601 North Fairfax Street (The Oronoco), 220 South Union Street (Carr Hospitality), Robinson Terminal North, and Robinson Terminal South
 - Review and advise on plans and specifications for the City-owned Beachcombers Restaurant building (0 Prince Street)
 - Review and advise on changes to the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion (5 Cameron Street)
- Provide recommendations to staff and Council on the City’s FY14 operating budget and capital improvement program as they pertain to the Waterfront, including:
 - Planning and development of Waterfront-area parks and public spaces
 - Engineering, design, and construction of Waterfront-area infrastructure improvements
 - Other Waterfront Plan implementation activities
 - Provision of public restrooms in the vicinity of Torpedo Plaza
 - Replacement of Windmill Hill Park bulkhead

- Through its Marina Committee, monitor and advise the City on Marina operations, including:
 - Seek Council approval of a Marina fee category for historic vessels
 - Review and advise on marina maintenance assessment
- Monitor and advise on Waterfront park maintenance and operations, including:
 - Advise on resolution of follow-up items from the June 2012 Waterfront Walk
 - Recommend a naming protocol for Waterfront-area parks, buildings, and public spaces
- Monitor and advise on Waterfront area safety and security issues
- Other activities as appropriate

Recruitment and Leadership Plans

Much of the Waterfront Commission's membership is appointed by constituent member groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Old Town Civic Association, and the Founders Park Community Association, among other groups (see complete list on page 1 of this report). These groups are active participants in the Commission and have quickly replaced their membership when vacancies arise. Seven seats are held by citizen members who do not represent a constituent organization; competition for these positions has been vigorous, with numerous applications to the City Clerk's office when terms expire.

The Waterfront Committee elected Nathan Macek Chair in December 2009 and Peter Pennington Vice-Chair in September 2010. The Commission does not anticipate holding leadership elections again until fall 2013, but will schedule a special election in the meantime if an unexpected vacancy should arise.

Community Outreach

In response to citizen concerns, on September 20, 2011 the Waterfront Committee adopted a formal [policy regarding public participation](#) at its meetings. The policy states that the Waterfront Commission welcomes public participation during meetings. Individuals are invited to speak on any Waterfront Commission agenda item for a period of up to three minutes. Members of the public wishing to speak will be called on in turn by the chair following Commission member and City staff discussion, but prior to Commission action on any motions. It is the Commission's policy to limit public discussion on any single agenda item to a total of 15 minutes. The Commission may allow additional time for public discussion by a majority vote. Members of the public may provide comments on any issue not included on the Commission's agenda during the Announcements / Public Discussion item at the end of each agenda. Individuals may speak for a period of up to three minutes.

The Commission holds its regular monthly meetings at 7:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday of the month in Room 2000 of Alexandria City Hall, 301 King Street. On occasion, special meetings of the Commission are held two Thursdays after the Commission's regular monthly meetings at 4:00 p.m., or at the call of the Chair. All Commission meetings are public, and notification of meetings is circulated via the City's eNews email service and to local newspapers by the City's Office of Citizen Assistance and posted on the City's website. Summary Minutes of its meetings, and briefings presented at those meetings, are posted to [RPCA's Waterfront Commission meeting page](#) on the City website.

The Waterfront Commission will once again sponsor the Waterfront Walk as its major outreach effort in June 2013.