

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMITTEE

Lee Center

Tuesday, February 19, 2008

7:30 a.m.

Summary Minutes - Approved

MEMBERS PRESENT

Susan Pettey, Chair
Engin Artemel
Henry Brooks
Mel Fortney
Michael Geissinger
Nathan Macek
Pete Petersen

Willem Polak
John Renner
Councilman Paul Smedberg.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Charles Hamel
Peter Pennington
Robert Taylor
Jay Atkinson
Doug Gosnell

STAFF

Roger Blakeley, RPCA
Aimee Vosper, RPCA
Kathleen Beeton P & Z
Jim Hixon, RPCA
Craig Perl, TES
Julie Rasmussen, RPCA
Laura Seidler, RPCA
David Huchler, Captain/Police

GUESTS

Carolyn Dabney Bell
Stephanie Brown (ACVA)
Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet
Van Van Fleet
Charlotte Hall (PRB Co.)
Sean McCabe (NPS)
Matthew Whitestone
Harry Harrington
Joanne Platt

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m, reporting a quorum present. Committee members, Department staff and meeting guests introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Summary Minutes from the January Meeting

Update on process: RPCA, Roger Blakeley

- **Motion:** Committee Member Brooks proposed and Member Geissenger seconded a motion to approve the January 2008 Summary Minutes.
- **Action:** The Summary Minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote after discussion.
 - **Guest Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet** was invited to submit suggested corrections to the January Summary Minutes when she advised the Committee that she felt her meeting comments had not been accurately stated.
- **Discussion Highlights:**

- Alexandria resident **Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet** advised the Committee that the January minutes should be revised to reflect that (a) she had not used the word “temporary” when describing pots behind the Torpedo Factory, (b) she had not referred to the pots as “sidewalk pots”; and (c) the January Summary Minutes failed to indicate to which sections of the December 2007 Summary Minutes she had requested that information be added.
 - o **Response: Chair** invited Ms. Crenshaw Van Fleet to submit her requested corrections to the Committee so that they could be addressed.
 - **Committee Member Brooks**
 - o Commended the staff for their efforts to produce summary minutes which reflected Committee meeting discussions,
 - o Expressed regret for having been more critical of the minutes process than he had intended at the January meeting,
 - o Recommended that the Committee adopt the practice of people submitting proposed corrections to the draft Summary Minutes in advance.
 - **Committee Member Macek:**
 - o When corrections to the previous month’s minutes are requested they should be included in Summary Minutes of both the Meeting at which the corrections are requested as well as in a corrected final version of previous month’s Summary Minutes.
 - **Committee Member Artemel** asked that the January record be corrected to reflect he had not been able to attend the meeting.
- **Update on Summary Minutes Process - Roger Blakeley, RPCA**
 - Mr. Blakeley reviewed options for Waterfront Committee Record-keeping:
 - o Draft Waterfront Committee summary minutes provided by the City are not intended as a transcription service;
 - o City Committees and Commissions use of video and audio taping, televising, and written summary minutes varying in length to maintain records of their meetings.
 - **Samples were presented of summary minutes kept for other meetings**
 - o **BAR (Board of Architectural Review) minutes – January 2008 (1/2 page)**
 - The BAR’s January one-hour meeting was reflected in a half-page of written minutes.
 - BAR tapes its meetings, as does the Waterfront Committee.
 - o **Alexandria Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes**
 - A similar format is used, highlighting the issues brought up, without identifying each comment’s speaker during Committee discussions.
 - For public hearings held by the Commission Summary Minutes include details of each public speaker’s statement to the Commission, and responses to those comments.
 - o **December 18, 2007 Waterfront Committee Summary Minutes (13 pages)**
 - 13 pages describing details of the 1-1/2 hour meeting.

- **Options for Recording Meeting Proceedings - presented by Mr. Blakeley:**
- Return to former Committee practice of having Committee members taking notes and drafting minutes.
 - City can provide meeting write-ups as long as funding is available – noting that this costs the Department.
 - City can tape meetings – noting that this costs.
 - City can provide transcription services – noting that this costs Department.
 - City can provide televised coverage of meetings as it does with the City Council – noted that this costs the Department.
 - Suggested the option - used at other City Commissions - providing a podium for use by public guests speaking on issues being considered, replacing the informal conversations between guests and Committee currently used at Waterfront meeting.

- **Committee Discussion:**
 - **Chair:** The Chair noted that the Department had provided a meeting scribe to draft Committee meeting Summary Minutes when no Committee Member had volunteered to serve as Committee Secretary. Prior to her election as Committee Chair, **Ms. Pettey** had served as Committee Secretary.
 - **Member Polak:** The official meeting scribe should be kept; what happens in meetings should be recorded in some fashion a shortened version of the Minutes would be sufficient.
 - **Member Artemel:** It would be sufficient for Summary Minutes like the abbreviated version for Planning Commission meetings to be kept, with audio recorded minutes relied upon for further detail. He noted his satisfaction with the recent more comprehensive minutes.
 - **Member Macek:** Liked the current format breaking out main discussion points with their related responses.
 - **Mr. Blakeley:** Advised that Waterfront Summary Minutes are posted to the at the Waterfront section of the City's Website.
 - **Member Renner:** Favored maintaining monthly written minutes, was satisfied with the minutes as is, and favored posting them to the City Website so they can be located easily.
 - **Committee Members Smedberg and Macek:** Urged that the Committee Minutes be placed in a more prominent place on the City Website, suggesting a link perhaps on the Department's home page.
 - o **Follow-up Action:** Mr. Blakeley stated that he would this month discuss with the Web staff how this change might be realized.

- **Chair** summarized Committee preferences about its Summary Minutes as supporting:
 - Current format
 - A streamlined written version
 - Audio tapes of meetings being available for supplementary reference.

- Chair reported she had sent a letter sent to the Environmental Policy Council following upon discussions last meeting.

- **Meeting Hand-out:** Chair circulated copies of her January 31, 2008 letter to Danielle Fidler, Chair, Environmental Policy Commission.

3. NATIONAL HARBOR TASK FORCE – UPDATE - Stephanie Brown (ACVA)

- Briefed the Committee using slides highlighting the National Harbor Collaborative’s actions.
 - Advised that **Aimee Vosper** and **Charlotte Hall** had been working with ACVA as part of the Collaborative.
 - City Council approved \$1.3 million in November to cover related actions.
 - An implementing group meets weekly on Thursday.
 - Activities include:
 - o Developing a rack brochure and in-room guides for hotels
 - o The water taxi.
 - o Updating the City’s slogan: “Shop, Dine and Celebrate on America’s Historic Main Street”.
 - Change reflects results of a City brand/image study, concluded in December 2007.
 - Focus will be on history - the City’ historical ambiance and collection of period architecture, and its vibrant shopping and dining scene.
 - o New URL purchased: “VISITALEXANDRDIAVA.COM”.
 - o A video about the City, to be shown to Water Taxi riders, is in development; five days of filming has been shot in over 30 locations.
 - Information responds to Committee goal of providing information that will encourage visitors to visit locations throughout the City,
 - ACVA will place ads Gaylord’s in-room guide.
- **ACVA**
 - o As of April 1, the Alexandria Visitors Center at Ramsey House will stay open to 8 p.m.
 - o ACVA goal is to transform the center into a more integral part of both residents’ and visitors’ time and planning process.
- **Follow-up Action:** **Ms. Brown** offered to return to the Committee with materials once they have been developed.
- **Water Taxi Update - Charlotte Hall**
 - **Hand-out:** The Potomac River Boat Company’s brochure, “Alexandria-National Harbor Water Taxi”
 - Water Taxi to begin operations April 1.
 - 2 taxis, each with a capacity of 99 people.
 - Operating time: 10am -10 pm, every 30 minutes on the half-hour.
 - Potomac River Boat Company is working with the City Manager’s Office and Old Town Civic Association on how to schedule the Water Taxi to

accommodate pre-arranged groups wishing its services either before or after its operating hours.

- Noted that Alexandria hotels are accommodating Gaylord's overflow
 - o Use of 9 a.m. Water Taxis is being planned to transport Alexandria hotel guests traveling to Gaylord activities.
- Fares: \$7 one-way; \$14 round trip, with multi-day passes available.
- In response to Member Smedberg's question, it was noted that passes would be for sale at the ACVA OFFICE, on-line, at hotels, and other venues.
 - o **Ms. Brown** and **Ms. Hall** are working with National Harbor and Gaylord officials to work out terms selling passes, and also with Travelocity.
 - o Water Taxi ticket booths to be at Gaylord and National Harbor.
 - o New ACVA brochure is being designed and will be distributed on the trolley.
- Highlight of the City video use on the Water Taxi:
 - o Video will direct people to the services in the City.
 - o As boats come through Wilson Bridge from Gaylord, video will play for the trip's last 10 minutes as the Water Taxi approaches Old Town.
 - o ACVA is creating a one-minute version of the video
- **ACVA's tourist map:**
 - Not a Citywide map.
 - Shows all of Old Town
 - All ACVA members on listed the map.
 - For \$70 additional businesses will be listed.
 - Map is called a "shopping and dining" map.
- **ACVA Maps, videos, and podcasts to be on a new Website**
 - To be launched by ACVA by Sept 2008.
 - Mr. Macek suggested putting the video on YouTube.
- **King Street Trolley**
 - **Hand-Out:** A picture of the new trolley, taken during its run in the Washington's Birthday parade.
 - A free service
 - Starts running April 1.
 - To run from foot of King Street to King Street Metro
 - Step-on step-off service with approximately the same stops as the DASH-About.
 - Includes narrated tour highlighting historic points of note.
 - In response to a question from Mr. Brooks, it was noted that Marks Grey Line will handle operation and maintenance.
- **Kiosks**
 - Part of the Wayfinding program.
 - To be brand-neutral.

- Sample banners were shown, noting that banners' location affected the color palette to be used for the banners.
- Size and placement was discussed, noting that mockups had been produced.
- Waterfront kiosks will not disrupt the Waterfront view, but also need to be visible when large numbers of people are surrounding them.
- Directional Wayfinding panels will be 8 feet tall.
- **Mr. Artemel:** Noted a small kiosk is already at the King Street Metro

- **Buses (Ms. Brown):**
 - Collaborative's next step is to form a subcommittee addressing buses;
 - City Manager's office is to address Motor Coach issue next, Rich Josephson is heading this up.
 - o **Follow-up Action:** Aimee Vosper will check on the scheduling of this action.
 - Motor Coach tours will leave from National Harbor, conforming to rules now in place regarding motor coaches on City streets.
 - Ms. Hall noted that ACVA has decided to arrange for Water Taxi transport - rather than buses - from Alexandria to Gaylord for visitors attending Torpedo Factory events that don't end before 10 or 10:30p.m.

- **Morning transport needed from Alexandria to Gaylord:**
 - Ms. Brown noted that ACVA has had a hard sell during its discussions with meeting planners encouraging people to stay at Alexandria hotels while attending Gaylord events -- without being able to assure guaranteed transport to Gaylord in the morning.

- **Member Smedberg re: Taxis in Alexandria**
 - Urged the Collaborative to take action re: the expected increase in taxis likely to be "hanging out" in Old Town.

- Estimates of the occupancy and attendance at Gaylord and National Harbor were reviewed for April 1 – Dec 31, 2008.
- An increase in business is already being anticipated by the Potomac Riverboat Company, Charthouse and other Alexandria businesses.
- ACVA is hosting mixers and tours with meeting planners.
- **Member Artemel** called the large number of groups involved in the Collaborative's effort "an exemplary effort by Alexandria to bring everyone together",
 - Noted City Council's decision to fund actions to bring this together, and Charlotte Halls' efforts.
 - Emphasized importance of Task Force staying intact to look at parking issues and other related issues that develop.
 - **Response: Ms. Brown** advised that the Collaborative will stay together to monitor, and adjust actions as things develop.

4. PLANNING AND ZONING ISSUES: UPDATE ON WATERFRONT PLAN, HUNTING CREEK - Kathleen Beeton, (P&Z)

- **Ms. Beeton** provided an overview of actions related to Hunting Creek. Highlights included:
 - Planning Commission had heard four hours of testimony from 44 speakers.
 - Action had been deferred until the applicant has a contract of sale for Hunting Towers property, and has addressed a number of issues raised, including
 - o Evaluation of the developer's height proposal,
 - o Ways to address providing more affordable housing units, and
 - o Looking at the density requested by the developer.
 - P & Z staff will present to Planning Commission an update on the proposal at its March 4 meeting.
- P & Z met with City Council in January
- Staff conducts two major plans a year, with Braddock and Landmark ongoing, and the Eisenhower West plan to be initiated.
- P & Z has requested additional staff to handle its workload
 - Without additional staff, P & Z will not be able to begin the Waterfront plan until January 2009.
 - The RFP process for the Waterfront Plan will begin prior to January 2009.
- **Committee Discussion re delays in starting work on the Waterfront Plan:**
 - **Member Polak:** Wanted to know why the Waterfront Plan is a secondary priority, noting it has been delayed a year and a half.
 - o **Response:** Braddock plan has required additional time; Braddock East plan was not anticipated a year ago, including a review of public housing. October 1 is the deadline for Braddock East.
 - **Member Smedberg** supported the importance of moving ahead with the Waterfront Plan.
 - **Chair:** Other actions along the Waterfront will not remain static while waiting for the Waterfront Plan –
 - o Delaying Waterfront Plan, risking piecemeal development, will frustrate the objective of Waterfront Planning.
 - **Member Polak:** Demand for the Water Taxi will require 2 or 3 additional more boats, but current Marina space will not accommodate that.
 - o "At some point the rubber will need to meet the road."
 - **Member Artemel:** Emphasized the importance of the Waterfront Plan's parking and transportation plan.
 - o Urged it be separated out and worked on in advance of full Waterfront Plan,
 - o **Follow-up Action:** Ms. Beeton will report back to Committee in March on the status of Richard Josephson's planning work regarding Old Town parking, and transportation related to Waterfront.
 - **Committee Members Renner and Geissinger** urged a letter be written to City Manager and City Council.

- **Member Smedberg** noted the Waterfront is vital to the City's commercial base and tourism and that if the City can't provide transportation to the City via the Waterfront - there will be more cars.
- **Member Geissinger** noted that Gaylord had announced its plans for National Harbor.
 - o Idea for Waterfront Planning had been discussed but deferred since then.
- **Committee Motion Passed re: Delays in Waterfront Planning.**
 - Mr. Renner proposed and Mr. Polak seconded a Motion:
 - o That the Committee send a letter to the City Manager expressing its extreme displeasure that the Waterfront Study has been delayed again, noting that this delay will have a big impact on the City and its residents, noting the increases in tourists and related transient tax revenues related to the increase in hotel stays, and also the fact that the risks of piecemeal Waterfront development are significant.
 - **Motion passed** by voice vote, with no opposition and one abstention (Mr. Smedberg).
- **Ms. Beeton** stated that Waterfront planning would take two years, with another two-three years needed to implement the larger actions.
- **Committee Follow-up Action:** To implement the Motion passed, Chair to draft a letter and circulate it to committee members for comment.
- Mr. Van Fleet, a citizen representative on the Collaborative, reported that the issues of motorcycles, tour buses and parking had been raised to the Collaborative – but not yet addressed by it.

5. WATERFRONT DREDGING PROJECT -- Craig Perl (TES)

- **Hand-out:** City Marine Dredging Final Report (Feb 19, 2008)
- This was the final report to the Committee on dredging.
 - Dredging had been completed the week before – within the deadlines set
 - Weather had been good all winter, with no ice to disrupt dredging.
 - 25,000 cubic yards of sediment had been removed from river bottom.
 - Some final wrap-up being done on the contract.
- Next Marina task: Installing the floating dock for Potomac River Boat Company.
- **Member Polak:** Tall Ships will once again be able to be accommodated.

6. OLD TOWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION WATERFRONT STANDARDS

- Its standards will be presented next month.

7. WATERFRONT RAILING AND RPCA BUDGET - Roger Blakeley

- **Hand-out:** Marina Slip Wait List
- **Marina Slip Wait List reviewed:**
 - For people wishing to be on the List are charged an initial \$25 fee, then \$5 a year after that
 - Currently about 50 people on the Wait List.
 - 25-foot boat is minimum size accommodated.
 - Alexandria residents have priority over all those others on the Wait list.
- **Ongoing Maintenance Issues reviewed included:**
 - Pillars – walkway issue: New bricks were put in.
 - At places such as near the boathouse - where people are tripping – areas have been identified, and **Mr. Blakeley** will report repairs as they proceed.
- **Marine Railing:**
 - Design was presented to BAR – twice.
 - White railing approved as previously presented to the Committee.
 - RFP has been issued for a steel railing.
 - Department has considered all related safety issues – dogs going through it, children passing through or becoming captured, etc.
- **Marina Operations:**
 - Money for the Marina is under Operating Budget. The level of service planned may not be able to be implemented due to budget cutbacks.
 - Mr. Blakeley agreed with Member Polak’s point re: the importance of being able to expand the marina to provide additional revenue to the City.
- **City Manager’s Budget present to City Council is on the City Web site.**
 - Timetable: Council will review Waterfront-related budget items in the context of the overall budget.
 - Mr. Blakeley suggested that the Committee actively advocate for budget issues of interest that it wishes to see preserved in the City Budget.
- **The Department’s efficiency audit has been completed.**
 - Some savings have been identified for the Department.
 - Mr. Blakely noted the Department’s goal of being as transparent as possible in its actions.
- **Comment to the Committee:**
 - **Ms. Charlotte Hall** noted that the Committee has been fighting the battle re: the Waterfront development plan for years.

- o Robinson Terminal looks to be developed before anything else, the way planning is proceeding.
- o Landmark Mall had been on the front burner a few years ago, then Waterfront planning had been ahead of it when owners changed.
 - But “once again Waterfront plan has been pushed back.”
- o Urged Waterfront Committee Members to go back to their respective organizations to encourage their members to support the City giving higher priority to conducting the Waterfront Study.

8. ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.