



City Hall
Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Waterfront Committee
Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314



November 16, 2011

The Honorable William D. Euille
Mayor of Alexandria
City Hall
301 King Street, Room 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Euille:

This letter summarizes the recommendations of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee on Waterfront-related budget priorities for the City's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP). At its meeting on September 20, 2011, the Alexandria Waterfront Committee voted to recommend the following six priorities:

- City Marina Seawall Maintenance
- City Marina Utility Upgrade
- Marina Security Improvements
- Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Repairs
- Waterfront Restrooms
- Marina Waterway Trash Deterrence

Each of these priorities is summarized below.

City Marina Seawall Maintenance

This project would repair damage to existing seawalls at the Alexandria City Marina. According to the City's FY12 CIP (p. 6-73), this project includes evaluation of the condition of the existing seawalls in order to determine the level of needed repair. It is anticipated that the seawalls will require new cladding, caps, and hardware, as well as soil stabilization, footer repair, sidewalk/walkway renovation, and possibly utility relocation. It is expected that an engineering study of the seawalls will identify required short-term seawall repairs as well as long-term solutions that should be addressed with the waterfront redevelopment.

The City's FY12 CIP programs \$1.7 million for repair of City Marina Seawalls in FY16 and FY17, including \$200,000 for initial engineering studies in FY16 and \$1.5 million for repairs in FY17. According to the City's FY12 CIP, the seawalls at the City Marina have suffered 20+ years of erosion and environmental damage due to tidal change and the absence of a breakwater. This condition has allowed surrounding water to wash away soils, resulting in dangerous voids in the seawalls that require repair. During the 2008 marina dredging project, areas on the North and South seawall were too tenuous to allow dredging within a reasonable vicinity of the seawalls. If the seawalls are to withstand future storms and daily stresses they must be repaired.

Given the dangerous conditions and the operational impacts on the Marina of this damaged infrastructure, the Waterfront Committee recommends that repair be prioritized and funded earlier than FY16 and FY17.

City Marina Utility Upgrade

This project would upgrade facilities at the Alexandria City Marina to facilitate utility requirements for modern vessels. According to the City's FY12 CIP (p. 6-74), a total of \$1.25 million is planned for this project over two years (\$250,000 in FY 2016 and \$1,000,000 in FY 2017). Future funding for this project will include an evaluation of the existing system, the design and upgrade to the facility and piers electrical service, and replacement of pier utility pedestals. The current plan funds design for this project in FY 2016 with construction in FY 2017. The project schedule should coincide with the City Marina Seawalls project to minimize the length of disruption at the facility due to construction.

According to the City's FY12 CIP, the existing Marina electrical service was designed to meet the needs of boats built in the late 1980's. The current electrical service does not meet the needs of the contemporary boats visiting the Marina today. This has resulted in electrical breakers frequently tripping and boats incurring damage to electrical systems when plugged into the insufficient electrical shore power supply available at the docking locations.

In order to provide a modern facility for boaters using the Marina, the Waterfront Committee recommends prioritization of improvements as funding permits.

Marina Security Improvements

The Waterfront Committee recommends reinstatement of a second marina security guard as funding permits. The Committee further recommends that the City consider staffing marina security with Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs (RPCA) staff directly employed by City in lieu of a private contractor. This would shift responsibility for overnight marina security from the Department of General Services to RPCA, the entity responsible for management of the marina and daytime operations. This arrangement would facilitate interaction between existing Dockmaster staff and overnight security and provide continuity of operations around the clock.

Unlike most marinas, the Alexandria City Marina serves as the City's back porch, a place where residents and visitors alike gather to view the river and be out-and-about in public. Non-boaters are welcome to walk along the Marina's pleasure boat piers during daylight hours. After hours, however, the Marina's open design makes it easy for pranksters to trespass, loiter, and steal from pleasure craft docked at the City Marina. The Waterfront Committee and RPCA staff have worked with the Police Department to provide additional patrols in the Marina vicinity, and four web-accessible security cameras were recently installed to monitor each pier, but additional measures are warranted. Additional, reconfigured security patrols will address complaints of security breaches at the City Marina.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Repairs

This project consists of renovation and construction work on the bulkhead at Windmill Hill Park. According to the City's FY12 CIP (p. 6-65), the renovation work on the bulkhead is planned to be phase I of the Windmill Hill Park development. The existing bulkhead is in a state of advanced deterioration and collapse, such that there is ongoing soil erosion behind the bulkhead and collapse of debris into the cove. The bulkhead was inspected by engineers in January 2009, which rated it in "critical" condition with vertical and horizontal movement of structural components, and was noted as a significant safety hazard to the public (RK&K 2009).

According to the City's FY12 CIP, this project would increase the length of the waterfront, as well as counteract some of the current deterioration occurring along the shoreline. As proposed in the CIP, the project would be designed to meet resident expectations for durability and aesthetics. By not completing this project, the City may experience serious deterioration of the waterfront, creating potential safety problems into the future.

Council adopted a concept plan for Windmill Hill Park in 2003, but as of yet, limited improvements to the bulkhead have been made. The City's FY12 CIP programs repair of the Windmill Hill Park bulkhead in FY16 and FY17, which would result in completion a full 14 years after adoption of the concept plan.

The Waterfront Committee, which understands that the City submitted an unsuccessful grant application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during FY11, urges the City to continue to identify Commonwealth or Federal funding for bulkhead repairs that could expedite the timeframe for completion of this project. The Waterfront Committee also urges consideration of less-costly yet aesthetically-appropriate approaches to replacing the existing bulkhead, which may make the project more affordable and able to be implemented earlier than the currently-programmed FY16/FY17 project delivery timeframe.

Waterfront Restrooms

This project would provide dedicated public restrooms in the vicinity of the Waterfront, as the Waterfront Committee believes that existing public restroom facilities in the vicinity of the Waterfront are inadequate. Presently, public restrooms exist in the Torpedo Factory Art Center and the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion, but these facilities are only available to the public during the hours in which the respective buildings are open.

According to the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities, over 600,000 individuals were estimated to visit Torpedo Plaza at the Alexandria City Marina in the 12-month period from June 2010 to May 2011. Despite this traffic, existing public restrooms in the area are intended to serve patrons of the Torpedo Factory Art Center and Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion. These facilities' toilets serve as de-facto public restrooms for Torpedo Plaza visitors when they are open.

Notably, the Art Center is open 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily (and until 9:00 p.m. on Thursdays), but sometimes closes as early as 5:00 p.m. when there are evening events. Thus, restrooms at the Art Center are unavailable in the early morning hours, and during the evening when Marina Plaza is most active. Food Pavilion restrooms are open to the public during its operating hours, which are erratic, and the facility is scheduled to close indefinitely beginning December 1, 2011. There is no exterior signage on either building to welcome use of restrooms by non-patrons, and Food pavilion restrooms are not particularly well-marked.

There are several options to address this issue:

- One option is for the City to reach an agreement with the existing lessee/operator of the Food Pavilion to make restrooms available for public use beyond the operating hours of the food court. The Waterfront Committee initially anticipated that the restrooms could be open during the late-evening hours after the Food Pavilion closes for the night, but would not be open 24 hours. However, the Food Pavilion will be closed to the public beginning December 1, 2011, which complicates the City's ability to make the facility's restrooms available for public use. Minor structural modifications, such as the installation of a gate just inside the building entrance nearest the restrooms, would permit public access to the restrooms when the remainder of the facility is closed. This arrangement would require the City to compensate the Food Pavilion operator for the operating cost associated with public use of the restrooms, especially if the facility remains closed. The City would also need to develop a security protocol for periodically checking the restrooms, and staff would be required to close the restrooms each night. The building would require additional signage to direct the public to the restrooms.
- Another option is to develop new public restrooms near the existing water taxi waiting area below the Chart House Restaurant. This would have a higher capital and operating cost, but would provide truly dedicated public restrooms in the Torpedo Plaza area. Since it is in the flood plain, restrooms in this location require flood proofing or other approaches to mitigate the potential for flood damage, which will add expense.

The Waterfront Committee recommends that the first option, enhanced public use of the existing Food Pavilion restrooms, be pursued in the near-term. Should this option prove infeasible, additional funding would be required in future years of the Capital Improvement Program to instead implement the second option.

New public restrooms should be incorporated into any City-owned civic /cultural facilities or hospitality businesses constructed as Waterfront development proceeds. This would provide public restrooms away from the Torpedo Plaza area in areas such as the 200 block of The Strand, where the draft Waterfront Plan proposes additional, more intensively-used parks and open space.

The Waterfront Committee believes that, given the security, sanitation, and operational requirements for public restrooms, any new restrooms constructed should not be located in a free-standing restroom building but incorporated into other public facilities in the vicinity of the Waterfront. Further, the Committee recommends the installation of flush toilets with sinks and running water, and does not recommend the use of portable toilets.

Marina Waterway Trash Deterrence

This project would provide funds to install bubblers and other mechanisms that would circulate river water and limit the accumulation of trash in Marina waterways.

During FY11, the City installed a \$400 bubbler in the vicinity of the City Marina's A/B-Pier on a trial basis. This low-cost apparatus successfully limited the accumulation of debris in a back-corner of Marina waterways. This reduced the man-hours required to remove the accumulation of driftwood, garbage, and flotsam, and improved the apparent cleanliness of the Marina by preventing accumulation of debris in the first place.

The Waterfront Committee therefore recommends the programming of funds for the deployment of additional mechanisms throughout the Marina and elsewhere as appropriate along City-maintained portions of the Waterfront.

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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on Alexandria's FY12 budget priorities. On behalf of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee and the broad Citywide constituencies that we represent, thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Nathan M. Macek, Chair
Alexandria Waterfront Committee

- CC: Alexandria City Council
- Bruce Johnson, Acting City Manager
- Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
- Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning
- Edward Mandley, Director, Department of General Services
- Jim Spengler, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Jack Browand, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Cheryl Lawrence, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Jim Hixon, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Alexandria Waterfront Committee