

Joint Public Hearing

**Alexandria Waterfront Commission &
Park and Recreation Commission
Thursday, December 11, 2014
Lee Center,
7 PM**

Waterfront Commission Members

Present:

Dennis Auld, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Jerry Bennis, Representative, Pleasure Boat Lease Holders at Alexandria Marina
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.
Shirley Downs, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and Chair
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Stephen Mutty, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Ted Pulliam, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.
Townsend A. (Van) Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.

Excused:

Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council

Absent:

Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
Arthur Fox, east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Ryan Wojtanowski, Environmental Policy Commission

Vacancies:

Representative, Historic Alexandria Foundation

Park and Recreation Commission Members

Gina Baum, Planning District I
Alexis Browand, Youth representative
William Cromley, Planning District I
Ripley Forbes, Planning District II
Brian McPherson, Planning District III
Catherine Poulin, Planning District I
Emma Schutzius, Youth representative

Absent:

Jennifer Atkins, Planning District II and Co-chair
Stephen Beggs, Planning District II
Rich Brune, Planning District III

Judith Coleman, Planning District III and Co-Chair

City Staff

Emily Baker, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Commission Staff Liaison, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
William Chesley, Deputy Director RPCA
James Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Tony Gammon, Civil Engineer IV, DPI
David Ghezzi, RPCA
Ron Kagawa, Division Chief of Park Planning and Capital Development, RPCA
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
James Spengler, Director, RPCA
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z/DPI

Guests:

Frank Fannon.
Doug Gosnell
Cynthia Jensen, resident
Tom Kaiden, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Sean Keenan
Pat Moran
Lewis Nardi
Louis Novak
Keith Rodgers
Laura Stokes
Dan Straub, Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)
Tim Tran
Clayton Wirtz

Welcome and Opening Remarks by Chairs

Hall called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and commission members introduced themselves. Hall welcomed Pulliam and Bennis to their first meeting as newly-appointed members of the Waterfront Commission.

Hall said the meeting would discuss staff options that had been developed in response to public comments about phasing and funding options that were presented at the December 3, 2014 Community Open House. She said the Waterfront Commission and Park and Recreation Commission would each follow up on the evening's discussion at their next regular monthly meetings and, at that time, each Commission would decide which implementation option to recommend Council support.

Waterfront Implementation: Phasing and Funding Options - Staff Briefing

Note: Presentation posted to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PublicHearing11Dec14.pdf>

Baker said staff is developing Phasing and Funding Options that reflect public priorities for the Waterfront Plan. She said staff will request Council's guidance at its January 27, 2015 meeting regarding how to prioritize elements of the Waterfront Plan within the FY 2016 budget and 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) proposal that City Manager is developing. She said about 70 people had participated in the Community Meeting and their top priorities had been flood mitigation, having a continuous riverfront walkway, expanding and enhancing parks, and having activity at the foot of King Street.

Baker said staff has been developing cost estimates for the individual elements of the Olin landscape design plan since June 2014 and noted there are many complicated aspects to incorporate, including underground utility work and shoreline improvements. She said that, in addition to considering cash and bond funding as financing options, staff is also working to identify potential grant opportunities for funding different elements of the Waterfront Plan.

Commission Discussion

Note: Waterfront Commission (WC) and Park and Recreation (P&RC) members are noted).

Coordinating public space and private Waterfront development construction timelines

Auld (WC) asked how the year-by-year 10-year timeline of the three public space phasing options corresponds to the five-year projected year-by-year timelines for private Waterfront construction projects that staff submitted to the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on Waterfront Construction (Construction Monitoring Group) at its December 8, 2014 meeting. (The Monitoring Group timeline included the Robinson Terminal North (RTN), Robinson Terminal South (RTS), Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC), Carr hotel, and Blackwall Hitch restaurant sites.) Baker said a detailed project timeline for public space projects can't be created until Council decides when and how to fund the public space projects (cash, bonds and/or other funding sources).

Avoiding potential conflicts between flood mitigation and private Waterfront construction projects

In response to Mutty's (WC) question, Baker said the private construction sites lay outside the flood mitigation area, but DPI will coordinate planning for the public space work with work timelines planned for the private development sites.

Flood mitigation: the first step

Cromley (P&RC) said work on the bulkhead is the foundation that will protect other elements of the Waterfront Plan. In response to Schutzius' question, Baker said flood mitigation would provide homes closest to the Waterfront some protection but a much higher protection level for Waterfront parks.

Why protect against a 10-year flood level?

In response to McPherson's (P&RC) question about whether providing protection against the level of a 10-year, not 100-year, flood might be too low for needs that develop in the future, Baker said the flood mitigation system will be designed to ensure it can be enhanced to provide additional protection against higher flood levels if the City were to decide in the future it were needed. Baker said the City had studied a full range of the physical options needed to offer

protection against flood levels ranging up to that of a 100-year flood and it was decided that measures to protect against the 10-year flood fit into the existing topography in the least disruptive way. She said measures needed to protect against a higher flood level would be significantly more complicated and require physical barriers that would be hard to incorporate into the Waterfront landscape. Baker said the decision to protect against a 10-year flood level reflects the community's preference.

Factoring climate change into Waterfront design elements

In response to Downs' (WC) question, Baker said the potential impacts of climate change had been closely considered during the flood mitigation study. Cromley (P&RC) said the parks should be designed to withstand the impact of potential sea level increases.

Promenade

Separate work on the promenade from the flood mitigation bulkhead?

In response to Baum's (P&RC) question, Baker said staff put flood mitigation and the promenade together as the first phase in Option A because both are near the shoreline and both elements were among the top three priorities at the Community Open House. Baker said that if the promenade were delayed a potential interim step might be to install and grade grassy public spaces and asphalt pathways in advance of the planned amenities to be included with the Waterfront promenade. Cromley (P&RC) said, based on his experience as builder, the promenade should be built at the same time as the parks as "icing on the cake" to avoid the risk that the promenade, if built before the park enhancements, might be damaged during later work on the Waterfront parks.

Art and History - Incorporating Art and History Plan plaques into Promenade

In response to Pulliam's (WC) question, Baker said incorporating elements of the Art and History Plan would primarily be part of the Waterfront park enhancements. Pulliam said the History Plan's proposal for engraved history-related quotations along the promenade should be included as part of the work on the promenade.

Expansion and enhancement of Waterfront parks

Coordination with Old Dominion Boat Club move

In response to Watters' (WC) question, Baker said the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) will vacate its current clubhouse and parking lot before the City can begin construction on the flood mitigation bulkhead and other public improvements. Bordner said the vacated ODBC site should not be allowed to sit empty. Cromley (P&RC) said building the bulkhead and demolishing the ODBC clubhouse and parking lot should be the first phasing steps taken so new grassy open space can be opened up in advance of work on Fitzgerald Park or the Waterfront promenade.

Financing Options

Identifying potential funding sources to make it possible to move forward as soon as possible with Phase 2 (Fitzgerald Square) to activate the unit block of King Street

In response to Watters' question, Baker said it would take 10 years to complete work on the three phases of Option A if funding were available, but the Waterfront Plan elements will be competing in the City budget with other funding priorities. Watters said the disadvantage of having no new programmable Waterfront spaces in Option A's phase 1 could be lessened if the

City can identify funding sources that would help it move quickly from finishing Phase 1 elements to starting Phase 2 (King Street Unit Block and Fitzgerald Square).

Non-City funding sources

Watters (WC) said having non- City funding sources will be crucial to implementing the full Waterfront Plan in light of the \$120 million price tag projected for public space improvements. She asked if the City has a single entity responsible for developing potential funding sources such as creating a public-private partnership. Baker said the City is looking at governance options for Waterfront parks to cover maintenance, programming, and other activities.

Livingood (WC) asked if the City is working to identify state and federal sources of grants to fund, for example flood mitigation activities. Baker said City staff from DPI, T&ES, P&Z and other agencies are working on this with the City's elected representatives at the state and federal levels. In response to Downs' question, Baker said each grant has its own process and criteria.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead replacement

In response to Poulin's (P&RC) question, Baker said work on replacing the Windmill Hill Park bulkhead is separate from the Waterfront Plan's public space elements. She said funding has been approved, a consultant hired, and the first community meeting to discuss the bulkhead replacement options is planned for January 2015.

Public Comments

Louis Novak asked if it would be possible to avoid removing the current pier at Waterfront Park, after the Seaport Foundation had been relocated, as a way to save removal costs. Baker said that idea could be considered. Novak asked if there will be a way to put boats in the water using a ramp. Baker said the plan does not currently include that.

Keith Rodgers said that when he had been part of the team in charge of the Jersey City waterfront redevelopment in 1990s a variety of financing options, including bond financing, had been used and recommended that be considered. Rodgers said he is currently working on a book on how to finance transformative development such as that of Jersey City, and might like to include the Alexandria Waterfront development among examples considered.

Shawn Keenan. In response to Keenan's question, Baker reviewed the structural details of the flood mitigation design.

Clayton Wirts said he supports Phasing Option A and favors bond financing. Wirts asked what is being done to follow up on Council's recent statement reiterating its support for retaining pleasure boat marina slips in numbers similar to those that currently exist. Browand said a Council-directed staff feasibility study will consider the type of marina that should exist, options for maintaining pleasure boat slips, and what the costs would be. Browand said staff will brief the Waterfront Commission on the feasibility study at a regular monthly Commission meeting.

Laura Stokes asked if flood mitigation construction will extend beyond the core area. Baker reviewed the area covered by the flood mitigation plan.

Pat Moran asked how long construction of the flood mitigation bulkhead might take and how access to the Waterfront would be affected. Baker said construction itself could be completed within three to four years once funding becomes available and Waterfront access would vary as different areas of the construction are worked on.

Sean Keenan asked how much money will be allocated for each phase over time. Baker said staff will request Council's guidance about how the Waterfront Plan Options should be integrated into the budget and 10-year CIP at Council's January 27, 2015 meeting.

Frank Fannon said constructing bulkhead should be the top priority. Fannon said the City should also consider how quickly it will be able to follow up after ODBC vacates its current clubhouse and parking lot. Fannon said that, based on information he has seen as a member of the ODBC building and design committee, ODBC might be able to move into its new clubhouse within 30 months. He said the City should consider whether it will be ready to take actions on the parking lot and ODBC clubhouse sites to avoid those vacated sites standing empty, a situation Commissioners have said they want to avoid. Fannon said the Commissions should also remember that Waterfront Plan elements funded by the Capital Improvement Plan will continue to compete each year with other upcoming City priorities such as the \$300 million Potomac Yards Metro station and the \$500 million sewer improvements.

Tom Karden said it is likely that further analysis will confirm that implementing flood mitigation first will be the most cost-effective choice but he suggested that a sensitivity analysis, or what-if analysis, be done for each of the three options to compare the potential impact of revenues lost from delayed amenities with the potential benefits of flood mitigation's risk reduction. Baker said she would discuss this further with Karden.

Wrap up: Baker thanked the Commissioners' and community for the ideas presented and staff will meet Tuesday morning with the WFC.

Next Steps

Hall announced the Waterfront Commission would discussion and other agenda items at its next meeting, Tuesday, December 15, 2014, at 7:30 AM.

Hall said the Planning Commission would consider the Implementation Phasing at its January 6, 2015 meeting and staff will request phasing and funding guidance from Council at its January 27, 2015 meeting.

Adjournment.

Hall adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM