

**Joint Meeting  
Alexandria Waterfront Commission &  
Park and Recreation Commission  
Thursday, March 13, 2014  
Durant Center, 1605 Cameron St.  
6 p.m.**

**Waterfront Commission Members**

***Attended:***

Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II  
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission  
Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)  
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.  
Shirley Downs, Alexandria Commission for the Arts  
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and Chair  
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission  
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation  
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)-  
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council  
Townsend A. (Van) Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association  
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.

***Unable to Attend:***

Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)  
Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation  
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission  
Arthur Fox, east of Washington St. and south of King St.  
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholder  
Stephen Mutty, Citizen Park Planning District I  
David Speck, Citizen Park Planning District III  
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.  
Ryan Wojtanowski, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission

**Park and Recreation Commission Members**

***Attended***

Judy Guse-Noritake, Planning District I, Chair  
Jennifer Atkins, Planning District II  
Gina Baum, Planning District I  
Rich Brune, Planning District III  
William Cromley, Planning District I  
Emma Schutzius, Youth representative

***Unable to Attend:***

Stephen Beggs, Planning District II  
Judith Coleman, Planning District III  
Ripley Forbes, Planning District II  
Brian McPherson, Planning District III

**City Staff**

Emily Baker, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)  
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Commission Staff Liaison, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Tom Canfield, City Architect, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)  
Faroll Hamer, Director, P&Z  
James Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA  
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z  
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA  
Diane Ruggiero, Office of the Arts, RPCA  
James Spengler, Director, RPCA  
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z/DPI

**Guests:**

Stan Aldrich, URS  
Yvonne Callahan, President, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)  
Dennis Carmichael, Parker-Rodriguez, Inc. (Olin Team)  
Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee  
Skip Graffam, The Olin Studio  
Dan Straub, Alexandria Urban Design Advisory Committee, (UDAC)  
Denise Tennant, Alexandria Beautification Commission

**Welcome and Introductions**

Hall, Waterfront Commission chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and Noritake, members of both commissions, staff and guests introduced themselves.

**Purpose**

Hamer introduced the briefers from the Olin Studio and URS Corporation, reviewed the process to date, the expected schedule for completing the Waterfront landscape design plan, and changes to the evolving design that were made in response to stakeholder inputs throughout the process. She said public responses at the public meetings held so far has been generally favorable and feedback from the evening's joint commission meeting would be shared with the Planning Commission and City Council.

**Waterfront Small Area Plan Flood Mitigation & Landscape Concept Design Refinements - The Olin Studio and URS Corporation -Graffam (Olin)/Aldrich (URS)**

Graffam reviewed the stakeholder feedback from the March 6, 2014 public meeting reviewing design Option C for the Core Area, covering flood mitigation, draft designs for parks outside the core area, and common elements to be incorporated along the Waterfront. He reported that the design team is scheduled for initial work sessions with the Planning Commission on April 1, 2014 and City Council on April 8, 2014 and final work sessions are scheduled for June 2014. Aldrich reviewed elements of the flood mitigation plan being integrated into the Waterfront landscape design. Auld asked how many times flooding has exceeded level 6, the level of nuisance flooding that the flood mitigation plan has been designed to avoid. Aldrich said he could provide that data.

***Core Area***

Graffam said the flood mitigation actions developed by URS are being integrated into the Waterfront design plan to minimize their visual impact and then reviewed highlights of community inputs, positive and negative, into the design concept that has evolved since it was first presented in February 2014. He said the initial proposal to remove the Marina gazebo, in one of the original alternatives, had triggered some pushback, and some questions had been raised about whether a skating rink would be appropriate in the Old and Historic District.

***Old Dominion Boat Club area***

Graffam said the design around the area around the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) parking lot and Beachcomber would be modified as needed after the City concluded its negotiations with ODBC. Graffam said the design team had determined dimensions for the proposed civic building based on what could fit comfortably within Waterfront sites available for it and rather than determining the building dimensions needed to accommodate the various activities that might be located there. He said the City had not made any decisions about what activities might be located in the civic building.

Graffam reviewed the design's spaces that could accommodate outdoor activities such as Point Lumley croquet or bocce ball plus a performance area with a stage, and Waterfront Park market stalls plus an outdoor movie area able to fit blanket seating for 500. He said the Fitzgerald Square design could include a performance area plus an ice skating rink as that included within the Waterfront Small Area Plan (Waterfront Plan).

***King Street to Queen Street area***

***Marina area***

Graffam said the design of the Marina's commercial boat area reflected changes made in response to discussions the design team had with commercial boat owners. He said Thompson's Alley would be used to service Marina boats and the Charthouse and Blackwall Hitch restaurants and the alley size would be expanded to let trucks load and unload at the same time. He said the design includes recommendations from the Waterfront Plan such as extending the deck between Blackwall Hitch and the Charthouse and ensuring a view of the water. He said space to accommodate expanded park services is also being incorporated into the design.

Cromley said he does not like the diagonal path proposed for Waterfront Park because he considered it too regimented. Auld asked if the street level would need to be raised in addition to the permanent bulkhead that is planned. Hamer said raising the street level in some areas such as the foot of King Street and the Strand would lift as many buildings as possible out of the flood plain. Graffam said raising the street level in these areas would also mitigate the elevation differences between Waterfront sections.

***Civic Building***

Livingood said she thought the design's vision for how the proposed civic center would be used was less clear than it had been in the December 2013 concept version and, based on advice she had been given by architects, she thought the building size and design should not be finalized until it is first known what activities will be located there. She proposed that civic organizations interested in using the building, including the Seaport Foundation, be invited to discuss their potential needs for the building.

Hamer said that the building's design concept had not changed over time but the labeling of it within the design had been modified. She said the City recognizes the support that has been voiced for keeping the Seaport Foundation and its activities on the Waterfront and the City supports this but there will need to be a process developed for determining who will be eligible to use the civic building that will consider factors such as programming, governance, funding, costs and criteria not yet set for who would be eligible to apply for using the civic building.

Downs asked that a list be developed of groups who have expressed interest in using the proposed civic building. Hamer said the City remains committed to finding a Waterfront location for the Seaport Foundation, but not necessarily to its being located in the proposed civic building. Graffam said the design's proposed size for the civic building would likely be in the 3,000 to 4,000 square foot range and would open up views of the river. Graffam said the landscape design team first determines a size that conceptually can fit within a particular location rather than designing a building to accommodate activities to be located there first. Van Fleet said a civic building should not be built before the City knows the activities to be located there.

### ***Ice Rink***

Van Fleet asked if consideration is being given to removing the ice rink should be dropped. Hamer said the Waterfront Plan as approved by Council included a rink in response to residents' interest in having one and staff does not have the authority to remove the rink. Noritake and Atkins said the Park and Recreation Commission had over the years heard many resident requests over the years asking for a City skating rink within Old Town. Schutzius, youth representative, said the ice rink and other ideas sounded "fantastic".

Watters asked if the design had identified a potential Waterfront location to accommodate the 7-8,000 square feet area the Seaport Foundation has said it needs for its boat-building activities. Graffam said there is an ongoing discussion about the minimum space size needed to accommodate Seaport Foundation activities. Moritz said that when the City had interviewed the Seaport Foundation as part of the process to determine Waterfront Plan elements such as a possible civic building, staff had been given a smaller space requirement in the range of 4500 square feet needed to accommodate Seaport Foundation activities.

### ***Waterfront maintenance and public restrooms***

Brune said the design should ensure that practical operational and maintenance needs can be addressed, such as providing sufficient visitor restrooms with proper maintenance. He said he was pleased the design has created spaces that will be as welcoming to Waterfront visitors as to Waterfront residents.

Manor asked if the planned bulkhead at the foot of King Street would impede the view of water. Aldrich said a full view of the water from King and Union Streets would be preserved. Atkins said she liked the large multiple-use open space and the multiple access points to the Waterfront that the design provides.

### ***Giving parks primacy within the Waterfront design planning process***

Noritake said the design fits the Alexandria community well and the design team's decision to fit the civic building's form and size to the available space is a welcome contrast to the habit of buildings being designed first so that park spaces are then determined by what is left over after

the buildings' needs are addressed and parks and open space needs should be given primacy over building needs within the Waterfront landscape design. She said that when the City decides whose activities should be located in the civic center it should be remembered that there are a number of good City organizations that should be candidates in addition to the Seaport Foundation and that although the Seaport Foundation should be accommodated at a Waterfront location the proposed location for the civic building might not be the best place. Noritake said that when wondering what type of impact the City's adding a sea wall for flood control might have it should be remembered the Georgetown sea wall is significantly higher. She said it will be important for the Waterfront design to accommodate practical operational needs such as having little kiosks at which staff can be located for functions such as providing information, first aid, security advice, and collecting event tickets. In response to Auld's question, Hamer said the civic building would be limited to two to three stories and have a footprint of about 40 by 90 feet.

Smedberg said the flexibility provided by the design is helpful and suggested consideration be given to flipping the Waterfront garden area currently planned for Waterfront Park to the part of the park where people enter it from the street. He said the design team should also consider how many trees can be included without creating the closed off pockets rather than an open feel. Graffam said that when the Waterfront is viewed from the water there should also be some sort of unique design (planting/ street print, etc.) that sets off each street. Graffam said that thinning or removing lower branches from the trees in Waterfront Park would add openness and a view of the river currently lacking.

Smedberg said parks and open space should drive the design rather than letting the possible space needs of the civic building drive the design. He said during the Waterfront Plan Work Group's discussions the civic building had not been identified as a site for a specific group but as a space to be available for civic groups. Smedberg said several organizations had expressed interest in having a space on the Waterfront.

### ***Seaport Foundation references in the Waterfront Plan***

Livingood read into the meeting's record the following excerpts from the Waterfront Small Area Plan (SAP) that references the Seaport Foundation:

Section 3, "Character and Theme areas", p. 72

*"The Art League and the Seaport Foundation embody core attributes of the City's history and are important to the City's daily life. The continued operation of both institutions is a high priority of this Plan."*; and

Section 3, "Character and Themes", p. 74:

*Celebrating the City's shipbuilding industry is an ideal focus of the expanded Point Lumley Park because it is the location of historic wharfs and shipbuilding activities during the 18th and 19th century. Nearby Robinson Terminal is already the site of the contemporary educational boat building program of the Seaport Foundation, but the workshop is not accessible to the public. The Plan recommends continuing the Seaport Foundation's current activities in The Strand area, as well as exploring how the Seaport Foundation's boat building activities could be part of a multifaceted engagement with Alexandria's shipbuilding past, along with outdoor display of boats and boatbuilding, "living history" programs onboard historic ships, and other creative approaches to involve the public.*

**Area outside the Core Area**

Graffam reviewed highlights of the design goals of the promenade outside the Core Area and how community feedback received at the November 2013 community meeting had informed the design team's concept.

***Gateway North***

He said in the Gateway North area Tidlock Park had been identified as a wonderful space that people want enhanced but not changed and its unique seating area preserved. He said people supported the proposed non-motorized boat launch and the goal of providing access to water via adding steps down there.

***Madison Street to Canal Center***

Graffam reviewed the concept for the Rivergate Park area, including adding seating along the water that provides Waterfront visitors a northward view of the Capital.

***Oronoco Bay Park***

Graffam reviewed design highlights such as the waterfront boardwalk to be added along Oronoco Bay Park, opening up the park's open area into a large single space that can accommodate events and smaller performances, providing a boardwalk that will protect plantings and other sensitive areas while facilitating Waterfront access for strollers. He said the design concept will also a vestibule area to help to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists.

***Founders Park***

Graffam said the design's goal it to keep Founders Park in tact as much as possible reflecting public inputs at the November 2013 public meeting.

He said that because the Olin team had noticed Founders Park is being "loved to death" in places near the water the design provides access to the water and protects other areas of the park. He said the proposed design includes redoing the path, reworking it to access the increased elevation to be added as part of flood mitigation measures, and adding some stepping stones and perhaps boulders for seating.

Graffam reviewed highlights of community concerns that included: sustainability, not blocking views, ensuring adequate maintenance, addressing problems of debris and sludge, and finding a way to involve the community in Waterfront governance.

***Discussion***

Cromley said he supported the idea of preserving the knoll in Founders Park and should be kept primitive, not made a formal seating area. Bordner said designers should consider how to make Tidlock Park easier for people to find since a comment offered during a public meeting had noted one has to be either "born and raised here or lost" to end up in Tidlock Park.

Van Fleet said the City should consider dredging Oronoco Bay to make it usable. Hamer said the bay's buried contamination (creosote, etc.) keeps the City from dredging to avoid stirring it up.

Baker said the City has a small project to dredge some of the contaminated material but the outcome would not be to make the bay suitable for boating and other activities.

Watters asked if the boardwalk would encourage further silting. Graffam said shoreline planting would help to protect the shoreline but it would be a City decision whether to let the water level go down or be silted in. Hamer said the idea is to let the area be as natural as possible since it is better for the Potomac but there will have to be a decision on whether to let the area fill in with silt or dredge it somewhat.

Noritake suggested the design team consider the option of adding one or more floating platforms as venues for hosting small musical performances that are viewed from the shore, a practiced successfully used in front of the Spokane, Washington opera house. She said the design team should consider how to mitigate the visual impact of the transformer in front of the boathouse.

### ***Common Elements and Art/History***

Graffam said details of the Waterfront landscape design's common elements will be worked out during the next phase of developing the design. He said the design team has reviewed the Waterfront Plan's art and history elements, held several discussions with members of the art and history communities, and will next be addressing how these elements can be integrated into the design concept.

He said common elements to be incorporated will also include educational elements, how to embrace history; incorporate functional art elements, and integrate sustainable ecological systems and lighting into the design. He said care will be given to avoid evening lighting along the Waterfront promenade that would undercut views of the river.

### ***Discussion***

Auld said he might support reducing the amount of park space to accommodate a civic building that can accommodate a range of activities. Cromley said he hoped the City's contract with the Olin team is such that it will give the City continuing access to the Olin Team over time to ensure the clarity of the initial design concept can be preserved over the years as Waterfront redevelopment proceeds. Graffam said the current design contract includes development of a plan regarding how the different elements can be phased in and costs related to the options. Hamer said the City's initial contract with Olin was for a year, a second year has now been added to the contract and it the City can extend the contract further if it chooses to do so.

Noritake said it is reassuring the design will include ways to incorporate the often-conflicting needs of stormwater treatment and open space.

### **Next Steps**

Hamer reviewed a number of questions to be addressed during the next phase of Waterfront planning, such as (i) creating a governance structure, (ii) updating cost estimates, (iii) identifying potential funding sources; (iv) sequencing implementation of the various design elements; (v) phasing in elements of the Art and History Plan, (vi) addressing the details of the civic building; and (vii) additional Marina details.

### **Closing Remarks**

Hall thanked the meeting participants and Noritake suggested that in time a single park should be

picked to implement its part of the concept design to provide an opportunity to see how the City Waterfront will be evolving over time.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.