

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 20, 2016
Sister Cities Conference Room
City Hall,
301 King St

Commission Members

Present

Charles Ablard, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Cheryl Ahearn, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Dennis Auld, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Jerry Bennis, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholders
John Bordner, Citizen, west of Washington Street
Susan Cohen, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Kathryn Kolbe, Citizen, Park Planning District III, and Chair
Nate Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission
Jody Manor, VisitAlexandria
Sally Masterson, Citizen, East of Washington St. and south of King St
Stephen Muttu, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Edward (Ted) Pulliam, Alexandria Archaeology Commission
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council
David Speck, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
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.

Absent:

Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)

Vacancy:

Representative, Environmental Policy Commission

City Staff

Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison and Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
David Fehr, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Tony Gammon, DPI
Jim Hixon, Dock Master, RPCA
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA

Guests

Christine Bernstein, resident
Bert Ely, Friends of Alexandria Waterfront, OTCA
Stephanie Landrum, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)
Skid Masterson, resident
Randy Randall, resident

Nina Randolph, Fords Landing HOA
Ken Wire, McGuireWoods, LLP

Welcome and Introductions

Kolbe called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from June 21, 2016

Watters moved and Bordner seconded that the June 21, 2016 minutes be approved. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Private Development Updates

Robinson Terminal North (500/501 N. Union Street)

https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/RTN5_25_16_final.pdf

Note: Posted PPT briefing is a project plan that has not yet been updated.

Ken Wire, representing RTN site owners CityInterests and Rooney Properties, reviewed why the owners decided this summer to put their site demolition and construction plans “on hold” and to reevaluate the project’s financial assumptions so the project can be redesigned. He said current financial factors no longer make it viable for the RTN project’s hotel to charge room rates that would generate enough revenue to cover project expenses, e.g., site environmental remediation and almost \$6 million for public amenities such as the new public pier. He said all of the project’s original financial assumptions - construction costs, equity requirements, costs for site improvements – proved wrong.

Wire said the RTN owners are at the beginning of reevaluating options for the site but they remain committed to developing a financially realistic project.

Next steps

Wire said the RTN owners have been talking with the City Manager and staff about possible next steps and expect to meet again in coming weeks. He said the developers plan to seek community input early in the process as new options are considered. They will brief the Waterfront Commission and others after project details are developed.

Timing

Wire said the second quarter of 2017 is probably the earliest Council could approve a new plan in light of the public outreach and City review process. He said it should take at least six months to finalize a redesigned proposal after a consensus on the design is reached..

Commission Discussion

Site rezoning?

Wire said the owners do not plan to request the property be rezoned for a new design.

Status of RTN site’s environmental monitoring/testing

Wire said the site’s environmental monitoring and testing will proceed as planned. He noted the testing results will help predict the costs of remediation.

Amenity costs

Wire said cost of amenities approved as part of the RTN project's DSUP, e.g., the public pier's \$6 million cost, are much higher than amenity costs for Robinson Terminal South (RTS).

Impact on Waterfront Plan's two hotels?

Auld and others said they are concerned the RTN development team's failure to correctly predict hotel room rates and other financials for the project risks undoing the City plan to have two Waterfront hotels. He noted after Council approved Carr's Indigo Hotel and the RTN project's hotel, the Robinson Terminal South (RTS) project could not consider a hotel since the Waterfront Plan includes only two hotels. Wire said the development team will be discussing with the City Manager whether there are modifications to the current plan that could make a hotel financially viable.

Public comments

In response to Bert Ely's question, Wire said the owners plan to move forward with the eastern and western sites as a package after a design for the western site is settled.

RTN DSUP's development conditions

In response to Nina Randolph's question, Browand said the full list of RTN development conditions is part of the docket information for Council's October 17, 2015 meeting.

RTN environmental remediation work to continue as planned

In response to Kathryn Papp, Wire said environmental site testing will continue as planned.

Credibility of any new RTN proposal?

Smedberg asked how the City will be able to accept as reliable any new financial calculations the development team uses to support a redesigned RTN proposal. Wire said the CityInterests/Rooney Properties team knows it has to rebuild its credibility with the City and has agreed with the City Manager that the City will submit a revised RTN project proposal to an independent third party review.

211 The Strand – Ken Wire

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/FINALWFCPresentation211Strand.pdf>

Wire introduced Carlos Checchi of IDI Companies and the development team for 203/205 and 211 Strand development team. He reviewed highlights of the mixed-use project's Concept 1 design plan for the site next to the Carr Indigo Hotel under construction at 220 Union Street. Chadwicks will stay put, perhaps expanding into the 205 building, and there will be 11,000 square feet of retail, restaurant and active use space, 16 residential units at 211 Strand Street, two units at 205 Strand Street, and two parking spaces per unit. Wire said the project's design will be integrated with the Indigo Hotel's and the question of how to use the planned new public alley is completely open for discussion. Most retail customers will probably be hotel guests.

Public-private open space coordination

Browand said the project design dovetails with the City’s public Waterfront open spaces planned to its east - an expanded Point Lumley and the new Waterfront promenade.

Outreach to date

Wire said they have met once already with the Board of Architecture Review (BAR) to review the project’s general height, mass and character.

Commission discussion

Timeline

Wire said it would probably be at least 18 months until work can begin in light of the time needed to finalize the design and complete the outreach and the City review process.

Setbacks?

In response to Ablard’s question about the setback, Wire said these design details would be available as the design develops beyond a concept design.

Public comments

Kolbe invited public comments. There were none.

Marina Committee – Stephen Thayer (Committee Chair)

Thayer reported no meeting was held this month. Browand said issues for at the Marina Committee’s October 13 meeting include the City’s plan to add addresses to Marina locations so a precise location can be included if an incident needs to be reported to the City Communications Center. He said staff discussions about noise issues at the Marina will also be covered.

Commission Liaison Reports

Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on Waterfront Construction - John Bordner (Group Chair)

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/special/waterfront/default.aspx?id=82590>

Bordner said the Monitoring Group’s meetings last at least two hours to ensure all comments can be received. Meeting notes and other documents are posted to the Ad Hoc Group’s Web page. (see link above) Their next meeting is October 4, 2016, 4 p.m.

Robinson Terminal South (RTS) demolition-related damage

Bordner reported that the Monitoring Group has been discussing reports of demolition-related damage to neighboring houses. Issues covered at the September 12, 2016 meeting included the damage reports and EYA’s ongoing pre-demolition surveys of houses within 250 feet of its project site. He said EYA’s surveys should be finished within a few weeks. Adam Hayes is the EYA contact for reporting damage claims.

Bordner said EYA now has 10 seismic monitors, including six in historic structures that are calibrated at a lower level to identify seismic activity likely to damage the more sensitive historic structures. Bordner said EYA has also changed the process used to chew up concrete prior to its transport to reduce the vibration level caused by the process. He said RTS will barge in fill soil after demolition is done.

Clarifying division of responsibility for construction-related monitoring

Bordner said the City, in response to requests from the Monitoring Group, is preparing a clear breakout of City agency and developer responsibilities for monitoring demolition- and construction-related factors (e.g. seismic, dust, pollution, traffic, parking, etc.). He said the City will present this information at the Monitoring Group's next meeting.

Improvements in City monitoring of trucking route violations

Bordner said City enforcement of designated routes for construction trucks has improved.

Ad Hoc Monitoring Group outreach

Bordner said the Monitoring Group is considering ways to reach residents and businesses that do not belong to a homeowners association or the Chamber of Commerce to ensure they are kept advised of Waterfront construction-related activities.

How to improve rodent abatement for surrounding properties

Bordner said the Monitoring Group has asked the City to consider how the City Code could be modified to address demolition's creating an exodus of rodents to nearby properties.

Commission and Public Comments

Damage claims

In response to Commissioner Thayer's question, Bordner said EYA is currently reviewing the three or four damage claims that have been reported to them. He said the Monitoring Group's has discussed how EYA is handling its pre-demolition inspections.

Randy Randall said documented demolition-related damage has been found on properties as far as 300 feet from the construction site even though the DSUP only requires monitoring properties within 250 feet. He said monitoring should not be limited to a structure's ground floor. Bordner said a DSUP typically requires monitoring properties within 200 feet but the zone was expanded to 250 feet for this project. Kathryn Papp said additional seismic reference data can be obtained from the US Geological Survey and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Motorcoach Task Force – Charlotte Hall

Hall said staff will present options at the Motorcoach Task Force's next meeting, on October 4 at 6 p.m. She said the Task Force plans to send its finalized recommendations to the Traffic Board for its review and recommendation prior to submitting them to Council for action.

Motorcoaches banned from Lee Street?

In response to Baum's question, Hall said no action has been taken yet on Baum's request that the City investigate whether motorcoaches are banned from Lee Street and why Lee Street signs barring motor coaches are no longer present.

Better City enforcement needed for passenger loading, unloading and parking

Commissioners said the City needs to improve enforcement of regulations governing where motorcoaches can park and let passengers on and off. Masterson recommended people call the 800 number on a motorcoach's side when they witness a violation. Smedberg said the City will eventually probably need to designate a parking location outside Old Town for motorcoaches to use after they drop off passengers at City Hall.

Commissioners questioned whether Alexandria Police Department (APD) officers are sufficiently familiar with regulations affecting motorcoaches and asked that APD and Traffic Enforcement representatives be at their October meeting to discuss the issue. Watters noted there has been no improvement over the five years the Commission has been discussing the need to improve enforcement of motorcoach regulations.

Commission actions at October 2016 meeting

Browand will request an APD briefing for the October Commission meeting.

Kolbe asked Mutty to review the Task Force recommendations after they are finalized at the October 4 meeting and to consider possible Commission recommendations that can be discussed in October and sent as a letter to Council and other City entities as the Motor coach Task Force recommendations are reviewed.

City Project Updates

i. Flood Mitigation – Tony Gammon (DPI)

Data collection

Gammon reported that data collection supporting the flood mitigation plan should be completed within six months. Studies include archaeological documentary studies for each Waterfront parcel, utility planning, and a storm water master plan. He said construction projects will be implemented for the funding schedule is included in the 10-year CIP.

Park pavilion structures

Gammon said staff is working with architect Michael Winstanley and the Olin Group on designing the structures that will include restrooms and support items for the two pump stations. He said a significant civic engagement process is planned.

Order of upcoming Waterfront construction projects

Gammon said the Interim Fitzgerald Square project will be the first Waterfront construction project. Utility construction in the core area is planned for FY18.

Commission discussion

Include public Waterfront projects in Ad Hoc Monitoring Group timeline?

Auld asked if the Monitoring Group's tentative timeline for the City's private Waterfront construction projects could include the public projects such as flood mitigation.

Gammon said the final sequencing of the projects has not yet been set because the City is still working on an engineering analysis of the most efficient way to phase in construction of the Waterfront Plan projects. He said the analysis should be done within six months and staff will then propose an update to the 10-year CIP that includes a revised project sequencing and timing. He said staff is now working on its FY18 budget proposal and he and Browand will consider how to add the planned Waterfront construction projects into the Monitoring Group's timeline on a tentative basis.

Pump station size

In response to Cohen's question, Gammon said the preliminary concept has a pair of buildings at each pump station with each being about 24 by 24 feet.

Common Elements

Gammon reported that the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) approved the Waterfront Plans Common Elements at its September 7, 2016 meeting.

Public comments

In response to Nina Randolph's question, Gammon said the RTS site's archaeological study is being done by the RTS developer. Pulliam noted that the RTS contractor is Thunderbird Archaeology and the City Archaeologist is monitoring their work. Browand suggested the question be presented to the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group's meeting.

ii. Interim Fitzgerald Square Project

Note: Project details posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/special/waterfront/default.aspx?id=89727>

Gammon said concept documents for Interim Fitzgerald Square have been submitted to Planning and Zoning, will eventually be considered by Planning Commission, and will have an extensive civic engagement process. He said work will be done in FY18 and include demolishing the ODBC boathouse, taking down the parking lot fence and preparing the ground area. He said the ODBC clubhouse will be demolished when ODBC moves out, expected some time in fall 2017.

iii. Oronoco Street Outfall Remediation Project – David Fehr (DPI)

Fehr reported that bids for the RFP released in September were due by October 12, 2016. He said a half-acre of river will be dredged and the observation deck has been removed in preparation. Sand and stone will replace the dredged material. He said the project was redesigned after last year's bid process because last year's bids were higher than expected. The primary contaminant to be removed is creosote left by the coal gasification plant formerly at this site.

Commission discussion

In response to questions, Fehr said the delay in the RTN project should not affect the Oronoco Outfall remediation project. He said the material dredged from the riverbed will be barged out.

Heads up re: Oronoco Bay outfall's sewage release issue

Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group (OTN SAP Advisory Group)

OTN SAP Advisory Group information posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/planning/info/default.aspx?id=86036>

Watters, an OTN SAP Advisory Group member, said she wanted to give the Commission a heads-up that North Old Town residents are discussing the remaining combined sewer outfall that releases sewage into Oronoco Bay even though the state has not required the City to address this as a priority. The City currently plans to address this outfall after it has addressed the sewage releases into Hoof's Run and Hunting Creek, perhaps as late as 2035. Watters said this was discussed by the OTN SAP Advisory Group and 48 million gallons of contaminated combined sewage is released annually into the river from this location. She said she had raised this issue at the Environmental Planning Commission's meeting the previous evening since EPC has proposed designating North Old Town as an eco-district.

Windmill Hill Park Shoreline Rehabilitation - Jack Browand (RPCA)

Browand reported that the plan is expected to be finalized within a few weeks and a groundbreaking and community update meeting are planned for October. He said construction should begin in late October. He said most of the work should be over the next year and includes walkway and Union Street pedestrian improvements.

Commission comment

Masterson said she is disappointed that the shade trees near the railroad tunnel were cut down and is concerned that chemicals might be used to remove tree stumps, including those near the playground. Browand said stumps near the waterfront will be bulldozed and he will check on the removal process for the stumps near the playground.

City Marina Utility Upgrade – Discussion deferred to October meeting.

Browand said an RFP for the utility upgrade is expected to be released within the next few weeks and construction should be finished prior to the 2017 boating season.

City Marina Feasibility Study

Browand reported that work continues on finalizing the feasibility study's analysis identifying potential sites for additional slips if the City wants to add pleasure boat slips to replace Marina slips that will be lost as the Waterfront Plan is implemented. He noted the Commission had recommended to Council that a feasibility study be done.

Commissioner Announcements/Reports

- Mutty reported the Seaport Foundation is holding its annual public Seaport Day on September 24, 2016, noon to 6 p.m. and is a free event.
- Speck asked whether artificial plants should be considered for the planters at the King/Union Street intersection since the plantings now there died from lack of care. Browand said options are being considered.

Waterfront Commission Waterfront Boat Tour

Kolbe said the Commission's DC Waterfront study tour is Saturday, October 15, 8 to 10 a.m. and leaves from the Marina's C/D Pier. The public is invited.

Kolbe said the next Commission meeting is October 18, 2016.

Meeting Adjourned

Kolbe adjourned the meeting at 9:53 a.m.