

Summary Minutes
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, March 17, 2015
City Hall
Sister Cities Conference Room
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present

Charles Ablard, Historic Alexandria
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Jerry Bennis, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholders
Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)\
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
Kathryn Kolbe, Citizen, Park Planning District III
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Stephen Muttu, Citizen Park Planning District I
Edward (Ted) Pulliam, Alexandria Archaeology Commission
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council
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.
Ryan Wojtanowski, Environmental Policy Commission

Absent:

Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II

Vacant:

Citizen representative, east of Washington St. and south of King St.

City Staff:

Fran Bromberg, City Archaeologist, Office of Historic Alexandria
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison and Division Chief, Public Relations, Special
Events & Waterfront Operations, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Tom Canfield, City Architect, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Tan Cross, General Services (GS)
Susan Eddy, Deputy Director, P&Z
Tony Gammon, Acting Deputy Director, Department of Project Implementation Department
of Project Implementation (DPI)
Captain Don Hayes, Alexandria Police Department
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Carrie Sanders, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, Transportation & Environmental
Services (T&ES)
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z

Guests:

Christine Bernstein
Brian Buzzell
Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee
Karen Devlin
Bert Ely, Friends of the Alexandria Waterfront
John Gosling
Hal Hardaway
Joan Huffer
Nick Kuttner
John T. Long, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Jerry McAndrews
Pat Miller
Kathryn Papp
Dan Straub Urban Design Advisory Committee
Eric Wallner, Torpedo Factory Arts Center
Mike Young

Welcome and Introductions

Hall welcomed Charles Ablard as a new member of the Commission and Commissioners and staff introduced themselves. Hall said the topic of barging vs. trucking of Robinson Terminal South construction site materials would be discussed at the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on Waterfront Construction's meeting that evening. She encouraged people to attend.

Approval of Minutes from February 19, 2015

Dunn moved and Thayer seconded that the February 19, 2015 minutes be approved as corrected, changing "EYA" to "City Interests" on pages 3 (par. 2 and 8) and page 4 (par. 1), and "RTN" to "RTS" on page 6 (par 8). The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

FY 2016-FY 2025 CIP Proposed Budget – Waterfront Plan Implementation

Browand reviewed highlights of the proposed FY2016-2025 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) budget and noted key items directly and indirectly related to Waterfront Plan implementation. He said funding for the Marina seawall construction was moved from RPCA's CIP budget into the Waterfront Plan Implementation's flood mitigation funding. He said Council will hold a Work Session on the proposed CIP budget on April 9, 2015 and encouraged Commissioners to attend.

In response to Van Fleet's question, Browand said the restaurant Blackwall Hitch is expected to open in late May-early June 2015.

Operation & maintenance funding

Bergman asked if there will be a dedicated funding account for Waterfront operations and maintenance. Browand said discussions continue regarding the future funding needed for the City to achieve its goal of having a world-class waterfront.

Public art funding

In response to Bennis' question, Browand said the proposed CIP includes Waterfront public art funding.

Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on Waterfront Construction (Ad Hoc Monitoring Group)

Bordner reported that the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group would be held that evening, would receive updates on all planned Waterfront development projects, and would focus on the Robinson Terminal South (RTS) proposal to use barging for hauling demolition- and fill-related materials. He said he had, as chair of the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group, received a number of inquiries about which truck hauling routes would be used for materials related to Carr's Hotel Indigo. He said T&ES has not chosen street routes but had briefed the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on criteria for choosing routes.

Bordner said the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group will be requesting information about the Waterfront traffic management plan called for by the Waterfront Small Area Plan. Sanders (T&ES) said the traffic management plan will include issues related to the Robinson Terminal North and Robinson Terminal South development sites.

Public Comments

Hardaway read the Waterfront Plan statement that "a Transportation Management Plan that comprehensively addresses parking, motor coach, freight loading, and other impacts along the Union Street corridor should be completed prior to approval of any new development". He asked if such a plan had been completed and, if not, (1) has the Waterfront Plan recommendation been rejected; (2) how could EYA's request for a waiver from parking requirements for its RTS site be considered absent a Union Street transportation management plan, and (3) how could Carr's DSUP have been approved absent such a traffic management plan?

Old Town Area Parking Study (OTAPS) Work Group

OTAPS information is posted to <http://alexandriava.gov/tes/info/default.aspx?id=77053>

Bergman, the Commission's representative on the OTAPS Work Group (Work Group), reported on the latest meeting, including the Work Group's goals and tasking, and noted several other Commissioners are also OTAPS Work Group members as representatives of other entities. He said metered parking restrictions and Old Town residential permit parking are covered by the Work Group review and directed people to the Work Group's website for full parking-related data. He said the next Work Group meeting would be March 25.

Bergman said the Work Group discussion had, among other issues, highlighted the differences between parking west and east of Alfred Street: west of Alfred Street there are few available parking garages, and east of Alfred Street there are underused parking garages and an on-street metered parking usage rate of 81 percent, a near-saturation level.

A comprehensive plan is needed

Bergman said the City needs a plan that addresses both current parking needs and parking needs that develop in the next few years as new Waterfront developments are brought online. Manor said long-range planning should also recognize that younger people rely less on individual cars.

Van Fleet said the City should encourage evening parking at the Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) by means such as creating a shuttle from PTO to Old Town.

Encouraging parking garage usage

Manor said the goals of the previous OTAPS Work Group's policy recommendations had not been realized and more ways should be tried to encourage more use of parking garages. Dunn said garage use had declined over the past five years. Watters said raising parking meter rates as a way to encourage garage use should be considered. Ablard said some drivers may be disinclined to use parking garages when they are poorly lit or maintained. Wojtanowski said standardized illuminated garage signage should be considered. Bordner offered historic Williamsburg's signage as an example of effective signage directing drivers to parking. Smedberg said community representatives had opposed having more visible parking signage when the Wayfinding Task Force considered the signage now in place.

Metered parking

Manor said he thought sales tax income in the central business district had declined because the hours for using two-hour meters were extended to 9 p.m., an extension recommended by the last OTAPS Work Group, and drivers now need to move their cars after two hours.

Public comments

Christine Bernstein said the City's wayfinding signs and parking-related information is adequate and noted Pango, the City's parking app, provides garage locations.

Bert Ely said garage parking is often less appealing than on-street parking because it is usually further from restaurants and some garage closing times are too early. He said parking garage rates should be less than those for metered on-street parking since people prefer on-street parking.

Katherine Papp said the City has too little information about the factors that drivers weigh when considering whether to use a garage. She said one way to encourage drivers to use parking garages would be for restaurants to provide customer discounts for parking garages.

Marina Committee

Thayer said the Marina Committee's next meeting, April 9, 2015, will be an orientation for Marina leaseholders and a review of Marina-related items in the proposed CIP.

Torpedo Factory Art Center

Briefing posted

to <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCTFAC17March2015.pdf>

Wallner reviewed the Torpedo Factory Art Center (TFAC)'s value to the City, including its national and international profile and the fact that TFAC attracts widespread attention for being the largest collection of publicly accessible artists' studios in the U.S. and one of the first creative reuses of formerly industrial space. He said TFAC attracts over 500,000 visitors annually, is an important City cultural amenity, and generates \$16.2 million of direct visitor spending in the City. Wallner said the City-owned building is rented to TFAC at a subsidized rate and the building's upcoming renovation will be its first since 1983. He said TFAC is not

funded as a line item in the City budget; it applies for City arts grants as do other arts organizations.

Commission Discussion

In response to Manor, Wallner said TFAC's 40 event rentals each year generate about \$300,000.

Public comments

Christine Bernstein asked how TFAC's revenue generation had changed since it had been reorganized and whether, for example, TFAC rentals had increased. Wallner said cost savings had primarily been realized by cutting expenditures on staff salaries.

Bernstein asked how artists are monitored to see if they are living up to their contractual responsibilities. Wallner said the Torpedo Factory Artists Association is responsible for overseeing matters related to artists' use of the studios.

Dan Straub asked if public access to the TFAC roof is available. Wallner said public access is impeded by issues such as the need for ADA accessibility, structural issues that would need to be addressed, and the fact that rooftop lighting levels are determined by the building's location on the flight path for Reagan National Airport.

In response to Hardaway's question, Smedberg said the City has never considered closing the TFAC as an artists' center.

Agency Reports

Common Elements Update

Note: Briefing posted

to <http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCCommonElements17March2015.pdf>

Nancy Williams presented an update of work on the Olin Waterfront design plan's common elements, features to be incorporated into public and private Waterfront spaces. The briefing was provided in response to Commissioners' concerns, raised at their February 19, 2015 meeting, that the design teams for the private Waterfront developments might not receive information on common design elements in time to incorporate them into their site designs as their projects move ahead.

Williams said the City had originally planned for the Olin design team to develop common elements such as paving materials, light fixtures, street furniture, planters and sustainability, art and history features during Phase II of Waterfront Plan Implementation, but by fall 2014 it had become clear the timetables for the private Waterfront development projects would need detailed information about paving and lighting common elements sooner than the City had planned. Williams said that, as a result, staff had directed the Olin design team to begin work on common elements in December 2014 and has kept the development teams apprised of the work. She reported that staff had provided the final lighting and paving palettes to the private sites' project managers during the previous week and work on the remaining common elements continues.

Next steps

Williams said public comments on the common elements will be received during the upcoming public hearing on ODBC's final site plan and during those on the Robinson Terminal South (RTS) and Robinson Terminal North (RTN) projects.

Commission Discussion.

Commissioners agreed that the timetable for identifying the Waterfront design's common elements meets the City's need to make decisions in time for common elements to be incorporated into the private developments' designs. Mutty said the timing of the public comment process on the common elements should also reflect the City's need to have this information in time to be incorporated into the first private Waterfront redevelopment project, the new Old Dominion Boat Club clubhouse.

Incorporating historic features into the design early

In response to Mutty's question, Gammon said work on Phase II of Waterfront Plan's implementation tasks will focus first on the more utilitarian features of flood mitigation and then phase in the decorative work on the landscape design elements. Pulliam said the appearance of the medallions, signage, and other historic features of the Waterfront design should be incorporated early in the Phase II implementation along with planning for paving, lighting and other features. Gammon said he will look at which elements can be incorporated into the flood mitigation work.

Using off-the-shelf elements to keep costs down

Bergman said the City should ensure that Waterfront design elements are off-the-shelf items so that replacements will be reasonably priced and easily accessible when needed. He said this point was underscored to Commissioners by the staff of Yards Park in Washington, D.C. since customized elements at Yards Park proved both expensive and difficult to repair and replace. Williams said the materials chosen will be durable, easy to maintain, and easily available. Wojtanowski said using a plastic composite material for the lower promenade would be environmentally friendly and easier to maintain than wood.

Minimizing light pollution from the promenade

Wojtanowski said light fixtures along the promenade should be designed to avoid extraneous ambient light.

Facilitating Arts Commission inputs

Downs asked that information on the timetable for common elements also be provided to the Arts Commission so it can consider how artwork might be incorporated into functional Waterfront elements. She offered as an example artist-designed manhole covers.

Key City staff for Waterfront Plan implementation

In response to Van Fleet's question, Williams said the principal DPI staff responsible for Waterfront implementation includes Tony Gammon, who leads the Waterfront Implementation Work Group, Mitch Bernstein, DPI's Acting Director, and Emily Baker, Acting Deputy City Manager and former DPI Director.

Public Comments.

Plantings and trees

Dan Straub said a common palette of Waterfront plantings should be developed in time for private developers to have it when deciding on major trees to be planted on their properties.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Community Meeting

Note: 2/12/2015 meeting presentation and a summary of the meeting's highlights are posted to Windmill Hill Park's website at

http://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=12292#Windmill_Hill

Gammon reviewed highlights of the Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Replacement community meeting held February 12, 2015, the first in a series of public meetings to review options available for replacing the Windmill Hill Park bulkhead. He said about 30 people participated. Gammon said staff reviewed and answered questions about the City's approved 2003 Windmill Hill Park Master Plan, its shoreline elements, and new treatment options that have become available since Council approved the 2003 Master Plan. Public feedback on what participants liked and disliked about the 2003 plan was also solicited.

Next steps

Gammon said the second community meeting, on April 13, 2015 at Lee Center, will present several different design concepts, including a modern version of the 2003 plan plus two new concepts: a living shoreline option and a hybrid option. Gammon said the federal permitting agencies look favorably on both of the two new concepts.

Gammon said the timetable for actions following up on the April 13, 2015 community meeting would include making a presentation to the Waterfront Commission in June 2015, and presenting the new proposed options to Council in early fall 2015, perhaps in September. He said if Council approves a bulkhead option in the fall, construction could begin as early as summer 2016. Browand said the goal is to choose a bulkhead option for which permits can be obtained that will stay within the approved budget and whose construction can begin as early as summer 2016.

Waterfront Governance Study Update

Note: The Waterfront Governance Models Analysis is posted to

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/GovernanceReport9March2015.pdf>

Hall recommended that the Commission's discussion of Waterfront governance options be deferred to a separate Commission meeting that will be scheduled. Watters moved and Dunn seconded that the briefing and discussion be deferred to a special meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. In response to Dunn's suggestion, Eddy agreed that a representative from the City Attorney's office would be present at the special meeting.

Special Events Policy Recommendations Status

Browand said community outreach and stakeholder meetings on the proposed special events policy continue and he will present a revised proposal at the Commission's April meeting.

Waterfront Program: Operations Update

Information posted, on p. 92 of "Meeting Packet" for the Commission meeting

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCMarch2015MeetingPacket.pdf>

Browand reviewed highlights of the Waterfront Program proposed FY2016 operating budget and the proposed FY2016-2025 CIP. Among the program elements highlighted, Browand said the proposed CIP includes a new \$50,000 annual Capital Facility Maintenance Program (CFMP) for park maintenance within the Waterfront Park District.

City Marina

Browand reviewed data related to City Marina operations for the 2014 and 2015 boating seasons, including a breakout of numbers for Marina slip license holders and boat owners on the Marina wait list. He said non-residents are offered a Marina slip only when there are no City residents waiting for a Marina slip. Hall asked Commissioners to remind their constituencies they should put their names on the Marina's waiting list if they have inquired about leasing a slip and none are available.

Marina Maintenance Project status

Browand reviewed the status of dredging (done), wharf strengthening, Blackwall Hitch public restrooms, and additional upcoming activities. He said the City's goal is to complete work on the public restrooms at Blackwall Hitch by the time the restaurant opens and work on the Torpedo Plaza Wharf strengthening is expected to be finished in early April with no anticipated disruptions of access to the docks, the Torpedo Factory, or to the Waterfront Market dining area.

Special Events

Browand reported that the French tall ship L'Hermione is still expected to arrive at the Marina early on June 10, 2015 and depart on June 12, with public visitation hours on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. He reported that he has been discussing with local businesses at the Marina, including Blackwall Hitch, the possibilities for sponsoring a concert series to further activate the Marina area.

Gilpin Alley easement

In response to Van Fleet's question, Thayer said discussions between the City and local property owners continue regarding the Gilpin Alley easement so it can be transferred to ODBC together with the City's Beachcomber property.

Reports from Commissioners

Livingood reported the Seaport Foundation will move to its new location by end of March 2015. She said that in its new location it will be refocusing its mission on youth and young adult programs.

Adjournment

Dunn moved and Livingood seconded that the meeting adjourn and the motion passed by unanimous voice vote. At 9:34 a.m. the meeting adjourned.