

**Summary Minutes
Monthly Meeting
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, May 17, 2016
Sister Cities Conference Room
City Hall
301 King Street
7:30 a.m.**

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
Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.
Susan Cohen, 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
Jody Manor, VisitAlexandria
Sally Masterson, Citizen, East of Washington St. and south of King St
Stephen Mutty, 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.
Ryan Wojtanowski, Environmental Policy Commission

City Staff

Francine Bromberg, City Archaeologist, Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA)
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison and Division Chief, Park Planning, Design &
Capital Development, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Mary Consules, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES), Wayfinding
Captain Len Fouch Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Tony Gammon, of Project Implementation (DPI)
Jim Hixon, Dock Master, RPCA
Dirk Geratz, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA

Guests

Brian Buzzell, resident
Mel Garbow, resident (Harborside)
Hal Hardaway, resident
Joan Hutter, resident (Harborside)
Stephanie Landrum, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)
Nate Macek, Planning Commission
Dan Straub Alexandria Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC)

Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Stewart Dunn announced his service as the Planning Commission representative on the Waterfront Commission was ending since his time on the Planning Commission had concluded. Hall noted that Planning Commission (PC) member Nate Macek, who had previously served as Waterfront Commission chair, is expected to assume the PC seat on the Waterfront Commission in June 2016. Commissioners thanked Dunn for his contributions to the Waterfront Commission's work.

Approval of Minutes from April 19, 2016

Auld moved and Watters seconded that the April 19, 2016 minutes be approved. The motion was approved by voice vote (Bordner abstained due to his April absence).

FY 2017 Commission Officer Elections

Bordner moved and Van Fleet seconded that Kathryn Kolbe be approved as Commission Chair and Stephen Thayer as Vice Chair for the year beginning July 1, 2016. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Commission Liaison Reports

Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on Waterfront Construction (Monitoring Group)

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

Bordner, Monitoring Group chair, asked people to advise him if they have difficulty finding information about Waterfront construction on the City's redesigned website.

He reported that the Monitoring Group website continues to update its Waterfront Construction Schedule Living Timeline regularly.

See:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/special/WaterfrontPlan/info/LivingConstructionSchedule26April2016.pdf>

Bordner provided updates on several projects: Austin Flasjer, Carr Hospitality's president and its representative on the Monitoring Group, has asked that any questions or feedback on the Indigo Hotel construction project be emailed to him directly. The Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) has submitted its fifth site plan and its project timeline has been extended. The first site plan for the

Robinson Terminal North (RTN) East Building has been submitted and City Interests, RTN owner and developer, has scheduled a public meeting on May 25, 2016 at 6:30 p.m., to discuss Phase 1 of the construction project. Bordner also noted that the Monitoring Group had been an advocate for Council's recent passage of City Ordinance 4995 that changes haul route violations from a criminal to a civil violation to make it easier to enforce the regulations.

Bordner said he will look into the possibility of the Commission and/or the Work Group touring the Indigo Hotel construction site.

Motorcoach Task Force

Mutty said he will report on the next Task Force meeting, set for May 30, at the Commission's June 2016 meeting. Hall noted that, as of June 3, motorcoach parking will no longer be available near the RTN site due to construction-related activities.

Waterfront Governance Subcommittee

Kolbe, subcommittee chair, reviewed highlights of public comments at the subcommittee's recent public meetings held with the Old Town Civic Association and local business and property owners.

- City should consider letting some of the recurring Waterfront development tax revenues that have been designated for Waterfront capital expenditures be used for operation and maintenance expenses.
- City should create a Citywide tax to help fund Waterfront expenses rather than a special Waterfront improvement district.
- Further refine key BID-related issues before forwarding the Improvement District concept to Council to consideration. (e.g. a BID's potential boundaries, potential BID-related tax rate, BID priorities, BID areas of focus, and a BID's governing board composition.)
- Recent retail departures from King Street show City actions to help Old Town businesses are needed (e.g. improving maintenance, landscaping, safety, etc.)
- Consider a Council legislative work session on the Improvement District concept.
- Resident and business inputs should be incorporated early into the City's review of the concept's merits.
- An Improvement District would need to accommodate Old Town's diverse business and commercial interests.
- Questioning why a BID would be needed since the City initially presented the Waterfront Plan as self-paying.
- Concern that residents' influence on Waterfront decisions might be lessened if the City were to share Waterfront governance responsibilities with a BID.
- Questions about why a BID to support Waterfront activities is needed since many BIDs focus on actions to revitalize an area and further actions to revitalize the Waterfront seem unnecessary.
- Concern that creating a special Waterfront tax district might encourage small businesses to leave Old Town.

- Uncertainty about how, if at all, park maintenance under BID governance might differ from the City's maintenance of parks such as Ben Brenman Park.
- Some residential resistance to a BID that markets Old Town since residents don't want more visitors brought to Old Town.

Business perspectives

- A group of 30 small Old Town retailers, called the Old Town Boutique District, have already banded together and each pay \$2,000 annually to market Old Town. These business owners would prefer having a BID take over their work so that all businesses who benefit from the BID's activities would pay for them.
- Business owners need to be assured that a BID's service district would be the same as the BID's tax district - and not be restricted to just the Waterfront or Waterfront and King Street.
- Consider an Old Town BID that includes the Waterfront, not a Waterfront BID.
- Owners of professional services businesses will need to understand how a BID would benefit them.
- Recognition that more activities are needed in Old Town to encourage those who work in Old Town to stay here after work.
- Major BID-related activities of interest: (1) marketing/advertising; (2) beautification (replacing dead trees, lights, etc); (3) wayfinding; (4) arts activation; (5) attractions, e.g. tall ship and other Waterfront visits; (6) holiday-driven programming like National Harbor's; (7).parking management: (8) creating a planning calendar to facilitate marketing and promotion of events.
- The need for a mechanism to better address Old Town issues as they arise.
- Creating public Wi-Fi; and
- Creating a data-driven process to consolidate visitor and tourist-related information.

Governance Subcommittee recommendation

Kolbe said the business community representatives suggested the next step should be to create an exploratory committee to define potential BID boundaries, tax rate, key stakeholders, and an organizational structure. She said it was the Governance Subcommittee's judgment that the next step should be for the business community and other City stakeholders to examine the idea and develop a position on how the concept might benefit the Waterfront-Old Town area. Kolbe noted that Council, at the urging of business owners, has set aside \$25,000 in FY2017 funds that will be available as needed to study a BID's potential viability and that the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) will oversee this study.

Kolbe said the Waterfront Commission's Governance Subcommittee has fulfilled the mandate for which it was created.

Commission Discussion

BID boundaries

Bergman and Watters said a BID should cover both the Waterfront and Old Town since visitors to the King Street area usually continue on to the Waterfront area for its restaurants and its activities. She said the structure of any BID that is created should recognize that the distribution of business throughout this joint area will evolve over the next 25 years as more businesses

locate along the Waterfront area as development proceeds. Bergman said any BID proposal that includes the Waterfront area should be reviewed by the Waterfront Commission. Speck favored creating a Waterfront-specific BID since he thought having a combined Waterfront-Old Town BID that extended, for example, from the King Street Metro to the river might undermine the City's goal of creating a focused and unified Waterfront area. Dunn said the next step should include the development of a business community position on a BID's potential advantages.

Masterson said it would be useful to know if other historic coastal cities along the East Coast have BIDs of the type being considered for the City.

Public comment

In response to Hal Hardaway's question, Landrum said Council had approved the \$25,000 for a BID study to be available only if needed. Smedberg said Council viewed the \$25,000 as a contingency fund for a BID study and noted there may also be grant opportunities to fund the study.

Dunn moved and Manor seconded that the Commission accept the Governance Subcommittee recommendation and that the Commission expects any City actions that affect the Waterfront will be submitted for review by the Commission. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Hall thanked Kolbe and the Governance Subcommittee members for their review.

Marina Subcommittee

Thayer and Browand reviewed Marina improvements the City has made and is planning to make. Browand reported staff is reviewing the final draft of the Marina Feasibility Study assessing potential locations for additional pleasure boat slips if the City decides it wants to add some slips. He said staff will forward the draft report to the City Manager when it is finalized and the report will then be discussed with the Commission.

In response to Auld's question, Browand said ODBC will be able to use the City's A/B pier when flood mitigation construction makes ODBC's current pier inaccessible. He said the City-ODBC agreement gives ODBC 10 years to decide what action it will take regarding building a permanent pier to be used by its new clubhouse.

Captain Len Fouch (APD) invited people to email any questions or non-emergency concerns about the Waterfront area to him.

Staff Reports

Wayfinding Update – T&ES

Briefing posted to:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WC21May2016WaterfrontWayfinding.pdf>

Mary Consules, Wayfinding Coordinator, reviewed the Wayfinding signage approved by Council for City-wide installation, including signage samples and their planned locations. She noted signage is geared to visitors traveling by a variety of modes and said the overall goal is to guide visitors from the City's outskirts into the City center to help them find areas of interest. The City has completed implementation phase 1, parking signage, and is moving into phase 2, pedestrian signage. Consules said the City plans to install pedestrian signage along the Waterfront during summer 2016.

Commission discussion

Commissioners discussed how the planned signage might be implemented in a way that helps visitors unfamiliar with the Waterfront area find their way to the Waterfront and along it. Consules said T&ES has been actively working with Planning and Zoning, the Office of Historic Alexandria and RPCA on developing the plan. Commissioners generally agreed that the goal should be to balance the need to have enough information to guide visitors effectively with the need to avoid having so much information that it distracts from the signs' effectiveness.

Reports from Commissioners

Mutty reported that the previous Sunday's welcoming ceremony for Hawaii's Holuke'a canoe, co-sponsored by the City and the Seaport Foundation, was attended by at least 400-500 people and members of the Piscataway Nation had provided a very moving traditional ceremony to welcome the Holuke'a crew to Alexandria as they stopped here on their worldwide voyage. He said four hours of Hawaiian music and chanting had followed Holuke'a's arrival on Sunday and public tours would continue to be offered that day. He said Holuke'a was scheduled to depart Alexandria the next day.

Mutty reported that tickets for the Seaport Foundation's annual Wine on the Water fundraiser, scheduled for May 21, 2016, were available online at alexandriaseaport.org

Wojtanowski reported that the Environmental Policy Commission plans to send a letter to the City that is generally supportive of Option 2 for the proposed Interim Fitzgerald Square Park, notes its concern that any trees removed from Wales Alley to open the view of the river should be replaced in a number greater than one-for-one replacement and that trees be placed on either side of Wales Alley to preserve the view of the river.

Hall reported that the Potomac River Boat Company, for which she works, has been acquired by Chicago-based Entertainment Cruises, that its name will remain the same and it will keep its Alexandria headquarters.

Browand reported that the Commission's June 4, 2016 Waterfront Walk will begin at Windmill Hill Park at 9 a.m., move northward to Tide Lock Park and is expected to last about two hours.

Hall announced the Commission's regular June meeting will be held on June 21, 2016.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.