

Summary Minutes
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, February 19, 2015
City Hall
Sister Cities Conference Room
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present

Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Jerry Bennis, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholders representative
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 Mutty, Citizen Park Planning District I
Edward (Ted) Pulliam, Alexandria Archaeology 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.
Ryan Wojtanowski, Environmental Policy Commission

Absent:

Arthur Fox, east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Charles Ablard, Historic Alexandria Foundation representative

Excused:

Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council

City Staff:

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)
Maya Contreras, P&Z
Tony Gammon, Department of Project Implementation Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Pete Mensinger, Code Administration
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA

Guests:

Yuri Blazer, City Interests,
Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee
Bert Ely, Friends of the Alexandria Waterfront
Peter Farrell, City Interests

Chris Furlong, City Interests
Mary Catherine Gibbs, Hart, Calley, Gibbs & Karp, PC (counsel to ODBC)
Hal Hardaway, 311 South Union Street
Val Hawkins, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Jeff Lockwood, Hickok Cole
Devon Perkins, Hickok Cole
Eric Wallner, Torpedo Factory Arts Center
Ken Wire, McGuire Woods LLP

Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the Commission to order at 7:30 a.m. and Commissioners introduced themselves. Hall announced that two new Commissioners had been appointed by Council to fill vacancies: Kathryn Kolbe, representing Planning District III, and Charles Ablard, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation. She reminded Commissioners of the requirement they attend at least 75 percent of meetings and the importance of their keeping their constituencies regularly informed of activities overseen by the Commission.

Approval of Minutes from January 20, 2015

Dunn moved and Auld seconded that the January 20, 2015 minutes be approved. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Robinson Terminal South Ad Hoc Subcommittee Report

Note: Letter as approved is posted to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCRTSCityCouncilLetter19Feb2015.pdf>

Watters presented the revised draft Commission letter to Council conveying the Commission's judgment on how well EYA's proposed Robinson Terminal South (RTS) development meets the Waterfront Small Area Plan's goals and guidelines for the site. She thanked Commissioners for suggestions submitted during and after the Commission's discussion of the draft at its January 17, 2015 meeting.

Action: Watters moved and Wojtanowski seconded that the Commission's revised draft letter be accepted and forwarded to City Council and other appropriate entities. The motion passed by voice vote with Mutty abstaining and Van Fleet voting no.

500 & 501 N. Union Street

Note: Briefing is posted to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/RTNPresentationWC19Feb2015.pdf>

Wire reported the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) had endorsed City Interests' proposed design for the project at the BAR's February 18, 2015 meeting by a 4-2 vote, with a member absent due to illness having indicated she also supported the design. Wire reviewed design

changes made since the Commission's previous briefing on the proposed site design, including a number of changes made to the east building site that were made in response to the BAR's suggestions, especially for the pavilion.

Activating the east building's public spaces

In response to Commissioners' concerns about how the east building's design will activate the site, Wire said City Interests had identified three potential categories of tenant for the 8,000 square foot public pavilion: retail, restaurant, and cultural entity. He said the development's cost makes it necessary for the pavilion space to have a rent-paying tenant.

Parking

Wire said the number of parking spaces planned would accommodate the most dense potential use of the pavilion, a restaurant. In response to Baum's question, Wire said the east and west buildings would each have one entrance to their parking garages and each garage would be used for both deliveries and visitor/resident parking.

West's Point

Wire said the development team has been discussing with the City's archaeology office ideas for commemorating West's Point, including the historically appropriate location to do so.

Design concept

Wire said the design team has struggled with how to incorporate elements of both historic Old Town and North Old Town and, among the design choices reviewed, he provided samples of the bricks and grey slate planned for the facade.

East building green roof

Wire said the east building's green roof will be fully visible by air to those using the busy Reagan Airport approach. Wojtanowski invited City Interests to consult the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) for ideas for sustainable plantings.

Goals and Guidelines highlighted in the RTN draft letter.

Wire said almost the entire ownership/ stewardship of the site's outside open space will be for public use and the development team is discussing with staff how this would be managed.

Public art and amenities

Wire said City Interests plans to make a one-time \$70,000 payment to the City (\$.30/square foot) for public art for the site that the City will be responsible for choosing.

Commission discussion

In response to Dunn's question, Wire said the two BAR members who opposed the proposed design had primarily disagreed with the Waterfront Plan's building mass and scale for the site.

Responsibility for maintenance

In response to Livingood's question, Wire said the City Interests team is currently discussing with the City, including the Planning Commission and Council, who will be responsible for managing and maintaining the site's pier. Watters said the City should not be responsible for covering the full cost of maintaining the pier if a restaurant on the pavilion were able to put tables on the pier. Wire said he assumed that if a restaurant wanted to use the pier the City's permitting process would address this. Downs said a formal agreement indicating responsibility for ongoing maintenance will be important.

In response to Auld's question, Wire said the project's pier consultants are considering how the pier design could minimize the problem of river debris.

Transient boat tie-up

Livingood said some type of maritime boat use should be incorporated into the pier as a way to activate the area. Wire said the development team plans to request a Special Use Permit SUP for a transient boat tie-up.

History and cultural elements

Pulliam said the design team's basic historic interpretation plan is a good start and he looks forward to their working with staff and the appropriate commissions to refine it. He said the development team should continue to look for a cultural entity such as a museum or theater to integrate into the pavilion uses.

Project timeline

In response to Auld's question, Wire said it might be a year before demolition and construction could begin. He said the complicated City and federal permitting process makes a specific timeline projection difficult. He said site construction would likely take about a year and a half.

Design's relationship to Old Town's historic design concept?

Bergman and Van Fleet said they oppose the proposed design because it is inconsistent with historic Old Town's architectural style. Bergman said that even though the design is consistent with the Waterfront Plan's goals and guidelines, he regrets the Waterfront Plan failed to "extend the charm of Old Town" beyond the Old and Historic District. Van Fleet said he hoped Council would reconsider the BAR's decision to approve the proposed design. Wojtanowski said Old Town's authenticity would be devalued if the new development, adjacent to the Historic District, were to incorporate Old Town's architectural style.

Next steps

Wire said the final RTN renderings would be submitted to the City a few days after the Commission meeting. He said meetings are planned with the Urban Design Advisory Committee (UDAC), Planning Commission and City Council.

Public Comments

In response to Bert Ely's question, Wire said approximately 25,000 square feet is planned for all active uses, including the pavilion and part of the hotel lobby, and 276 parking spaces are planned.

Hal Hardaway said he opposes City Interests' proposed design.

Susie Cohen said the design should avoid overemphasizing written historical documentation and signage to convey the site's history and consider how smart phone apps might be also be used to provide expanded historical information for visitors.

Old Dominion Boat Club

Briefing posted to:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/ODBCPresenationWC19Feb2015.pdf>

Mary Catherine Gibbs, ODBC's land use attorney, introduced the Michael Winstanley architectural design team. She reported the BAR had unanimously approved ODBC's propose clubhouse design the previous evening and ODBC would present its plans in March 2015 to the Planning Commission and Council at public hearings.

Design elements common to Waterfront public and private spaces

Winstanley said ODBC wants to integrate into its design the same materials that will be used for Waterfront public spaces, especially for elements such as ODBC's parking lot surface. He asked the Commission to encourage the City to task the Olin design team as soon as possible to identify these common design materials because, if ODBC does not have this information soon, it will have to choose its own materials to stay on its planned clubhouse schedule.

Incorporating history

Winstanley reviewed how the ODBC and Beachcomber histories are incorporated within the clubhouse design. He said the ODBC team is discussing with City staff ideas for panels to be placed on the building's rear that will reflect the site's history

Site improvements

Winstanley said ODBC also plans to use landscaping, including four trees to be added along Prince Street, to enhance the site since the clubhouse will be finished ahead of the City's planned public space improvements.

Commission Discussion

In response to Baum's question, Winstanley reviewed the relationship of the parking lot, boardwalk, and boat ramp. He said the boat ramp will go over the boardwalk and bollards will be used to hold back boardwalk pedestrians when the boat ramp is in use.

Pervious pavers

Wojtanowski encouraged ODBC to use a pervious paver for the parking lot surface for its environmental impact. Winstanley said ODBC is open to pervious pavers and would like to use

the material to be used for the public spaces but needs that information as soon as possible. Browand said the City is working to provide the needed information to ODBC.

In response to Auld's question, Winstanley said ODBC will remove the current Beachcomber building because it is structurally unsound and will replace it with an almost identical building .

Boat ramp's potential impact on promenade pedestrian traffic?

Livingood said she was concerned about the ODBC's boat ramp's potential impact on the promenade's pedestrian traffic and asked for data on how many ODBC boats would likely be using the ramp during the boating season. She asked if ODBC could coordinate the timing of its members' use of the boat ramp so as not to conflict with the times of high volume pedestrian use of the promenade. Winstanley said usage data will be provided. Thayer said the City-ODBC agreement includes an assurance regarding an ODBC boat ramp and ODBC is designing the ramp to minimize its impact on public use of the promenade

In response to Van Fleet's question about the status of the Gilpin Alley easement, Gibbs said the City is working with property owners to reach an agreement.

Planned ODBC boat ramp and pier

In response to Downs' question, Winstanley said the current ODBC design does not include the boat ramp planned for the site and no work has been done on how it might be designed. Bennis asked what ODBC's current thinking is regarding the piers. Winstanley said the ODBC design does not include the piers. It was pointed out that the City-ODBC agreement gives ODBC 10 years to make a decision on its piers.

ODBC project timeline.

In response to Auld's question, Winstanley said ODBC construction can be done before the City's flood mitigation. In response to Bordner's question, Winstanley said it might be possible for the clubhouse to be ready for move-in by summer 2016. He said its Planning Commission and Council public hearings are planned for March 2015, design drawings are expected to be finalized by the end of June 2015, and construction could start as early as summer 2015 and probably be completed within nine to 12 months.

The need to identify common elements for public and private spaces soon

Mutty moved and numerous Commissioners seconded that the Commission convey to the City the Commission's judgment that it is urgent to resolve design continuity elements affecting the public and private Waterfront spaces.

Watters said the Commission's broader letter to Council regarding the Robinson Terminal South site design includes a statement that the Olin design team should promptly come up with Second Phase designs that address the common elements of the Plan so private Waterfront developers can incorporate these common design elements as they move forward with constructing their projects. She suggested the Commission restate this position in a separate letter to Council.

Watters said the City needs to resolve confusion about materials soon because the Commission's Ad Hoc Committee on the Robinson Terminal South development site was advised that a City staff member had told the Robinson Terminal South design team the City might not recommend using permeable pavers. Watters said the Commission needs a technical engineering opinion regarding how water table levels close to the river might affect the appropriateness of using permeable materials before finalizing its letter to Council on this. She said without a timely City decision on materials the end result will be a patchily designed Waterfront because private developers will make their design decisions without knowing the City's choices. Watters said Commissioners should convey the urgency of resolving these questions to both the Planning Commission and Council.

Action. Mutty withdrew his motion so the Commission could consider it at its March meeting. In response to Hall's request, Browand said the Commission would be updated in March 2015 on the status of City decisions regarding design elements common to the public and private spaces.

Announcements

Hall announced written reports would be submitted for the agenda items not covered: the Ad Hoc Monitoring Group on Waterfront Construction, Old Town Area Parking Study, Marina Committee, Agency Reports, including the February 12, 2015 Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Community Meeting, and reports from Commissioners.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.