

**Summary Minutes**  
**ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, April 2, 2015**  
**City Hall**  
**Sister Cities Conference Room**  
**6 p.m.**  
**Special Meeting: Waterfront Governance Study Update**

Commission Members

Present

Charles Ablard, Historic Alexandria  
Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II  
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  
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and Chair  
Kathryn Kolbe, Citizen, Park Planning District III  
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)  
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:

Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council

Excused:

Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission  
Jerry Bennis, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholders  
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission  
Stephen Muttly, Citizen Park Planning District I

Vacancies:

Citizen representative, east of Washington St. and south of King St.  
Alexandria Seaport Foundation representative

Staff:

Joanna Anderson, Assistant City Attorney  
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison and Division Chief, Public Relations, Special  
Events & Waterfront Operations, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Susan Eddy, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning (P&Z)  
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA

Guests:

Tarek Bolden, resident (West End)  
Stephen Koenig (Planning Commission)  
Hal Hardaway, resident

## Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and announced that, due to resignations, there are two vacancies on the Commission: one for a Seaport Foundation representative, and one for a citizen living south of King Street and east of Washington Street. Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

### **Briefing: Waterfront Governance Models Analysis** - Susan Eddy, Planning & Zoning

*Note: The Waterfront Governance Models Analysis is posted to*

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

Eddy reviewed highlights of a just-completed report prepared for the City by BAE Urban Economics that provides information on five public and private governance models that could be used by Alexandria. Three models are already in use here.

She said the purpose of the analysis is to assist the City as it considers how best to manage the activated Waterfront to facilitate its transformation as the Waterfront Small Area Plan (WSAP) becomes fully implemented - with increased programming, operations, and maintenance. She said staff helped define the criteria that BAE used to evaluate each of the governance models and an interdepartmental team of City staff had worked closely with the BAE analysts.

### ***Timetable***

Eddy said BAE is still working on an analysis that examines the revenue potential of selected proposed Waterfront activities such as a skating rink and a civic building. She said it might be ready to brief to the Commission by May 2015.

Eddy said a timetable had not yet been established for actions on the governance issue and the meeting's briefing was the first public presentation of the BAE analysis. She said Commissioners' comments would be incorporated into staff's planning on how to move ahead.

Eddy recommended two additional references for more information:

- "Public Spaces/ Private Money: The Triumphs and Pitfalls of Urban Park Conservancies", The Trust for Public Lands; <<https://www.tpl.org/public-spacesprivate-money>> and
- "Business Improvement Districts: History, Organizations and Applications", Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP), 2009 memo (21 pp) <<http://alexecon.org/images/data-research/studies/BIDMemo.pdf>>

## **Commission Discussion**

### ***Importance of choosing the right Waterfront governance model for post-WSAP implementation.***

Commissioners agreed with the staff and BAE governance objective that the City's Waterfront governance model will need to strike the right balance between the authority and accountability of public sector governance and the flexibility, efficiency and more entrepreneurial orientation of

governance models managed by private sector entities. Commissioners agreed with Bordner who said making the right choices for a governance model that provides for the Waterfront's ongoing needs post-construction will be as or more important to the Waterfront's success than Council's approval of the WSAP.

***Timing: How quickly do City decisions on a Waterfront governance model need to be made?***

Commissioners said the City should move forward soon with the additional data collection and analysis needed before deciding on the most appropriate Waterfront governance model. Commissioners said facilitating the identification of diversified funding sources should be the top priority. Auld, Watters, Manor and Downs also said private developers may encourage the City to accelerate its timetable for implementing the Waterfront's planned public amenities once the three Waterfront redevelopment sites have opened and to do that additional funding sources would be needed.

***Which activities will need funding?***

There was a Commission consensus that more information is needed before decisions can be made on the governance model or models best suited to managing the variety of Waterfront activities proposed by the Waterfront SAP and the Olin plan.

Auld asked for a full listing of current and likely future activities on the Waterfront.

Kolbe said that, based on her experiences running a large enterprise in the military, the City's next step should be to create and cost out with best estimates a comprehensive, detailed list of both current and potential Waterfront-related activities that will need funding. She said a 'best guess' costing is needed to project the scope of the likely gap between Waterfront activities' ongoing costs and the City funding likely to be available to cover them. She said the list of ongoing Waterfront activities should include programs, personnel, operations, maintenance and repairs.

Watters said the family-related activities that are important features of other active Waterfronts will appeal to a City-wide demographic, but will require dedicated staffing for safety-related tasks and providing and securing equipment. Browand said City staff is also considering where to store equipment for future Waterfront activities.

***Current Waterfront activities are already enumerated***

Eddy said detailed information for the first part of this task is found in the BAE report's listing of "Current Governmental Functions on the Waterfront" (pp 37-39), compiled by surveying all City agencies with current Waterfront-related responsibilities. Browand said that only activities such as the proposed skating rink and fountain would be unique new Waterfront activities. He said other new features of the WSAP are not new types of activities, but enhanced versions of the Waterfront activities currently operated and maintained by City staff,

***Funding: The need to start identifying a range of potential revenue sources***

Watters said the City's tight budget situation makes it necessary to find revenue sources to augment City funding for Waterfront-related activities. Kolbe said once the City has identified the scope of the additional funding needed the next step is to identify the specific activities for which the City can seek out new funding sources.

Commissioners agreed work needs to begin on identifying the full range of potential funding sources such as City funds, state and federal grants, user fees, philanthropic, and private sponsorships.

***City governance and funding: Advantages and limits***

Commissioners agreed that the City staff who currently carry out the full range of current Waterfront-related responsibilities do so in a consistently professional and effective manner.

However, Commissioners also agreed that the City will not be able to have the world-class Waterfront envisioned by the WSAP and the Olin landscape design if the City does not set up a governance system capable of identifying potential sources for additional funds to cover ongoing costs of Waterfront activities - and in a timely manner.

***Funding: An assured source of operations & maintenance (O&M) funding***

Auld asked if O&M funds for Waterfront parks would be linked to O&M funding for other City parks. Van Fleet noted the CIP for RPCA projects is already underfunded. Pulliam asked if funds for Waterfront maintenance could be earmarked within the parks maintenance budget.

Manor said it must be remembered that when City parks compete for general revenue funds during the City's annual budget process they rank below schools and public safety. He said the likely ongoing O&M expenses for the planned public pier on the Robinson Terminal North (RTN) development site are an example of why the City needs to find other assured funding sources for Waterfront activities.

***Funding: Local philanthropic resources for this purpose may be limited***

Watters said potential City and local philanthropic resources may be limited since private donations tend to support human services needs.

***Governance models: Supportive organizations and conservancies to facilitate fundraising***

Commissioners were very interested in the BAE analysis' information that supportive organizations and conservancies are especially effective models for fundraising. Thayer said the City should consider creating a supporting organization empowered to fundraise and investigate concessions.

Watters said supporting organizations such as conservancies will be needed to help with activities and fundraising, but the City should not give any non-City entity independent control over their Waterfront-related responsibility areas.

***Governance models: a hybrid model best suited to generate and solicit revenue***

Commissioners agreed with the conclusions in Eddy's March 11, 2015 memo accompanying the BAE analysis that "... public/private management is most common and appropriate for specific activities that are unique to high profile parks and waterfront public realm" and that "key subject areas for public/private management include fundraising and financial management, waterfront-specific maintenance and operations, marketing, and programming."

Among the tasks for a governance model mentioned by Commissioners were soliciting funding from non-profits, private sector sponsorships, private grants and donations and setting up supporting organizations to identify potential funding sources.

***Governance models: Little Commission interest in a Waterfront improvement district.***

There was a Commission consensus the Waterfront is not well-suited for an Improvement District (e.g. a Business Improvement District or BID) governance model because a BID requires a dense commercial area for it to work. Thayer said the City's financing Waterfront activities from general revenues reflects the WSAP's goal to create an attractive and active area for all City residents.

***Privately-owned public spaces: How to ensure proper maintenance?***

Hall said the City's inability to enforce maintenance standards at the Torpedo Factory Food Court and Canal Center must not be repeated for privately owned public spaces.

Commissioners wanted to know how the City would ensure proper ongoing maintenance if management of public spaces at the RTN site were ceded to the property owners.

Anderson said the Development Special Use Permits (DSUPs) issued for those sites, approved in the 1980s, were considered at a time when the City's main goal was to attract businesses to the Waterfront and there was not much interest in locating there. She said it was likely, therefore, the City was reluctant to impose too many DSUP maintenance conditions for privately owned public spaces. She said this is not the situation today and the details in the WSAP provide a clear reference for the standards expected for public and private Waterfront spaces.

***Canal Center maintenance a continuing concern***

Van Fleet said the City should consider legal action against the owners if they continue to allow standing water that attracts mosquitoes, due to the risks of West Nile disease.

Wojtanowski said Canal Center's new owners might be shamed into providing better maintenance even without legal action since the public space along the Waterfront will attract more foot and bicycle traffic.

***Next steps***

Pulliam said Commissioners should attend the April 9, 2015 Planning Commission hearing on the Robinson Terminal South DSUP to ensure strict maintenance requirements are put into the DSUP.

Commissioners asked for a detailed listing and best-estimate costing for potential future Waterfront activities so the scope of the likely funding gap can be identified.

Bergman asked that the Commission consider and discuss which activities will be essential to creating a world-class Waterfront.

Commissioners asked that staff consider how to prepare for the possibility that pressures might develop for accelerating the public amenities timetable as work on the Waterfront's three private redevelopment sites is finished.

Commissioners asked that the decision-making timetable for a governance model be set with a sense of urgency so additional revenue sources can be identified in a timely manner.

Eddy said staff will use the Commission's comments to help determine the next steps for moving actions forward on governance planning.

Eddy said staff will try to have the BAE report on selected revenue generation opportunities ready for a May briefing.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.