

Summary Minutes

Alexandria Waterfront Committee Thursday, March 1, 2012

Alexandria City Hall

Members:

Present: Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Arthur Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat lease holder
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen and Chair
James McCall, Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC)
Peter Pennington, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.
Van Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.

Excused: Kent Barnekov, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association
Linda Hafer, Old Town Business and Professional Association
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council

City Staff: Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, Parks Operations, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning (P&Z)
Cheryl Lawrence, RPCA
Jeremy McPike, General Services
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z

Guests: Brian Buzzell
Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee
Joanne Platt
Iris Portny
Mike Tamarin, Virginia Tech Urban Planning Student

Welcome and Introductions

The Committee was called to order at 4:00 p.m. and members and guests introduced themselves.

Discussion of Waterfront Committee Role in Waterfront Small Area Plan Implementation

Macek introduced the draft of proposed changes to the Alexandria Waterfront Committee Functions and Membership, which included proposed changes to Section 2-4-54 of the Alexandria City Code (which specifies the functions of the Alexandria

Waterfront Committee) a summary of the effect of the proposed changes, and proposed membership changes.

Discussion of Committee Function

McCall said that if the Waterfront Committee is suggesting a more visible and active role it might request changing its classification from a committee to a commission. Watters asked how City defines a commission differently than a committee. She noted that some commissions have more than advisory authority. Macek said this issue could be raised as a question for staff and Council consideration. Following further discussion, there was general consensus to recommend changing references to the Waterfront Committee in the City Code from “committee” to “commission”.

McCall said that the proposed code amendment defined the jurisdictional boundary as that of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. Watters and Baum commented that the draft language regarding the boundary may be too limiting. There was further discussion of boundary definitions, noting that language could be limiting if too specific. Rather than state that the boundary “shall be” the boundary of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, there was general consensus to state the boundary “shall include the area within” the boundary of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

McCall said he wanted to make sure that the roles of art and history communities were respected, and noted the implications of development and commercial proposals.

There was discussion of whether the code language needed to enable the Committee/Commission to sponsor or participate in events, to convey the City’s liability protections. Pennington said he believed it should be defined as a commission “able to undertake any activity that promotes the well-being of the Waterfront.” Macek said this was an issue that could be raised with the City Attorney. There was further discussion about whether to include a paragraph regarding activities on the Waterfront. There was general consensus not to include such a paragraph, but to ask the City Attorney whether such language was appropriate.

Underscore and ~~strike-through~~ text below reflects the Waterfront Committee’s discussed changes to Section 2-4-54 of the Alexandria City Code, which specifies the functions of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee:

The functions of the ~~committee~~ commission shall be to advise City Council, the City Manager, and appropriate City departments on matters pertaining to public, private, and commercial uses ~~the use of the Alexandria Waterfront and the immediate area by commercial and private vessels,~~ including implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

For the purposes of this article, the term “Alexandria Waterfront” shall include the area within the boundary of the Waterfront Small Area Plan and shall include all waters of the Potomac River located within the boundaries of the City and all piers, docks and other structures located on such waters which are or may be used for the docking of commercial or private vessels.

(Ord No. 3382, 5/23/89, Sec. 4)

Discussion of Effect of Change

Hamer said that Council will be interested in the Committee's opinions on traffic, parking studies, and development proposals.

Pennington noted that the Effect of Change bullets needed to be grammatically consistent, and suggested changing the text of the third bullet from "Recommendations related to implementation..." to "Proposals related to implementation..."

There was general consensus to recommend the following text regarding the Effect of Change:

With the above change [to the City Code regarding Committee function], subjects about which the Waterfront Commission could be asked to review and advise the City Council, City Manager, and staff could include:

- Public improvements, including flood mitigation, new parks and improvements to existing parks, utilities, piers and the marina, and shoreline improvements.
- Design guidelines or standards for new buildings and for the public realm (including parks, plazas, and other public spaces).
- Proposals related to implementation of the waterfront public art and history plans.
- Proposals for commerce, private redevelopment, and public-private partnerships.
- Studies and recommendations related to transportation, parking, and circulation, including vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and marine travel.
- City management, maintenance, operations and programming of new and existing Waterfront facilities, including the Alexandria City Marina.
- Operating budgets, capital improvement programs, and funding for new and existing infrastructure, including phasing of planned improvements.
- Public safety and security issues.
- Environmental quality of the Potomac River, along its shores, and on adjacent land in Alexandria.
- Governance and/or fundraising organizations or activities, such as they affect the Waterfront.

This list is inclusive of the advisory capacities of the existing Waterfront Committee, and includes new activities commensurate with implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan. This detailed list is not appropriate for inclusion in the ordinance itself, but could be adopted by resolution, administrative rules, procedures, or by-laws that specify this level of detail.

Discussion of Membership Changes

The draft proposal included the following membership changes:

- 1 representative of the Alexandria Planning Commission
- 1 representative of the Alexandria Commission for the Arts
- 3 new residential representatives:
 - 1 from Park Planning District I, which generally encompasses Old Town and the Eisenhower corridor to a point just south of Quaker Lane
 - 1 from Park Planning District II, which generally includes portions of the City west of the Metrorail tracks, north of Duke Street, and east of Quaker Lane
 - 1 from Park Planning District III, which generally includes portions of the City west of Quaker Lane
- The existing at-large citizen representative other than from any group or area currently represented on the committee would be eliminated and replaced by one of the new residential representative seats.

McCall said that Council may want to lay out the commission in accordance with its needs, and the Waterfront Committee may not want to recommend membership beyond the existing representation.

Gosnell and Fox spoke in favor of Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) membership. Gosnell also recommended creating a commercial boat business representative. There was discussion about whether to include other commercial seats. Buzzell said that the current mix of representatives by residential geographic areas, associations, and city commissions needed to be re-thought. He noted that the ODBC and Harborside marinas together have more slips than the City. He said that Rivergate and the Torpedo Factory Art Center were not directly represented on the Committee.

Pennington stated that the Committee represents the City, and that he did not feel that users of the Waterfront should necessarily be represented. He said he couldn't see adding commercial entities to the membership. He said that current commercial organization members of the Committee are not specific to any one commercial entity. There was further discussion of membership, but no formal action to add any additional representatives to the draft proposal.

There was discussion of whether to include a planning commissioner. Van Fleet said he objected to planning commission membership. Pennington said that decisions should be brought cleanly from the Waterfront Committee/Commission to the Planning Commission for consideration, which in his view precluded a planning commissioner's membership on the Waterfront Committee/Commission. Macek made the case for including a Planning Commission member to facilitate communication between the Waterfront Committee/Commission and the Planning Commission. He said it would parallel the role played by the Waterfront Committee's existing representative of City Council.

Moved by Van Fleet, second by Pennington, to strike Planning Commission membership from the draft proposal. The motion carried 7-1-1, with Macek objecting and Baum abstaining.

Moved by Pennington, second by Thayer, to adopt the changes to Alexandria Waterfront Committee functions and membership as discussed at the meeting as a recommendation of the Committee. The membership changes include a representative of the Alexandria Commission for the Arts and new residential representatives, but exclude a member of the Planning Commission. The motion unanimously carried on a voice vote 9-0.

Announcements / Public Comments

There were no announcements or public comments.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned without objection at 5:30 p.m.