

Summary Minutes

Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Alexandria City Hall

Members

Present: Engin Artemel, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association
Arthur Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Linda Hafer, Old Town Business Association
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen and Chair
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Peter Pennington, Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Van Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association

Excused: Kent Barnekov, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
William Cromley, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat lease holder
Pete Peterson, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council

Vacancy: Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.

City Staff: Lt. Mark Bergin, Police Department
Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, Parks Operations, RPCA
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Nancy Williams, Planning & Zoning (P&Z)

Guests: Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee
Harry Harrington, Old Dominion Boat Club
Harry Mahon, Torpedo Factory Art Center Board
Joanne Platt (resident)
Steve Thayer (resident)

Welcome and Introductions

The Committee was called to order at 7:30 a.m. and Members and guests introduced themselves.

Macek introduced Harry Mahon, Interim CEO of the Torpedo Factory Art Center (TFAC) Board and member of the TFAC Board since June 1, 2011. Mahon provided a brief overview of the new 13-member TFAC Board which includes TFAC artists and representatives of the City, the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, the Art League, and four at-large members. The Board is developing a strategic plan that it expects to be completed within several months. A new TFAC information desk has been established and a Request for Proposals (RFP) has been issued for

a cafe that will open next to the TFAC gift shop in spring 2012. Members encouraged the Board to pick a local merchant to run the cafe rather than a national chain.

Approval of Minutes from September 20, 2011 Meeting

Moved by Pennington seconded by Hall, to approve the summary minutes of September 20, 2011 as drafted. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Report from the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)

Park Maintenance

Browand reported that RPCA is developing a detailed map indicating ownership of, and maintenance responsibility for, all Waterfront park properties and expects it to be available for the next Committee meeting. City-owned properties cover approximately 22-25 acres. The RPCA map will, for the first time, consolidate information about maintenance responsibilities currently found in a variety of City memoranda of understanding covering individual properties.

Following up on the Committee's discussion the previous month regarding Founders Park maintenance issues, Bernstein reported that the Park's condition has been greatly improved, thanked RPCA staff for their work and said she had sent a letter to Director Spengler thanking him for the work. Browand said RPCA is considering how best to address current Founders Park trail problems. Tidal flooding and large amounts of driftwood, especially at the south ends of both Oronoco Bay and Founders Park, have required more upkeep and repair work than usual this past year. RPCA is working to determine whether these problems were related to the year's unique combination of weather events or whether this might become an ongoing issue. Browand offered to determine the status of work on the Founders Park north-south easement's gravel trails and provide it to Bernstein and the Committee.

RPCA and T&ES are considering long-term improvements to the south-end trails in Founders Park and Oronoco Bay, including ideas such as re-grading the parks and resurfacing the soft trails using a combination of impervious and pervious materials. The permitting delay affecting replacement of the Oronoco Bay overlook has been resolved; work is moving ahead. Pennington said chipped and rusty lamps on the western side of Founders Park need to be addressed.

Outfall project

Browand reported T&ES expects the two to three months of work on the project to be completed during the winter months. The park should not be impacted during the project except for a portion of the sidewalk.

Browand reported that RPCA has had initial discussions about West Point overlook repairs. After ground repairs are completed remediation work will be needed for the related soil and river bottom area. Bernstein said the repairs should be made a priority given West Point's historic importance.

Marina Pilings

Hixon reported that a new RFP would be issued now that RPCA has decided upon standardizing materials to be used for all pilings. Because of their significantly greater strength and cost-effectiveness, composite pilings will be used rather than wood. In response to a question from Macek, Hixon advised that staff has informally presented its plan to use

composite pilings to the BAR, has received an informal approval, and is awaiting a written BAR response to the proposal. Hixon said the replacement of the Marina's nine broken pilings is expected by January 2012.

Work on the two new pilings needed for the Minnie V dock has been delayed by the National Park Service (NPS) permitting process. Browand said RPCA had thought that once it had decided upon the materials and size for the Minnie V pilings it could append its Minnie V piling permit request to its pending NPS permit request for the replacement pilings. However, NPS has advised RPCA that, because the Minnie V pilings will be new pilings in a location currently without pilings, the City needs to submit a separate NPS permit request for the Minnie V pilings. RPCA is working on it.

Because the Potomac Riverboat Company would like to relocate the Minnie V to the City Marina by April 1, members were especially concerned by permitting delays for the pilings needed for the Minnie V pier.

Pennington moved, seconded by Bernstein, that the Minnie V Marina pilings approvals be treated as an issue of urgency by the Waterfront Committee, that the Committee Chair be updated by staff on a daily basis as conditions change, and that the Committee Chair follow up with government officials as required. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Hixon reported that four bubblers have been installed to deflect driftwood from the Marina's shoreline and the Marina's new work boat is in operation.

Pennington asked whether adequate signage at Jones Point Park would be in place when existing construction has been completed. He said signage at the Marina's water taxi locations also needs to be improved. Members said these signage issues should be addressed in advance of the City's comprehensive wayfinding review.

RPCA offered to report at the November meeting on whether signage to Jones Point Park would be installed by the time construction is completed.

Marina Security Camera Demonstration

Browand provided an overview of the four new Webcam security cameras installed at the Marina. RPCA is considering how to facilitate Marina leaseholders' access to the camera views. Live screenshots of the Marina using the new technology were shown to the Committee. Browand advised that the camera's technology provides good night-time resolution.

The cameras provide views of the Marina's primary piers. Marina signage now publicizes that video cameras are in use. The new security system lets staff follow up visually on any reports that might be received regarding boat damage and will offer viewers real-time information about the pier conditions.

Marina Users Public Meeting

Macek reported that the Committee's public meeting for Marina users has been set for Thursday, November 3 at 7 p.m. and will be held at City Hall. Staff has publicized the meeting

to leaseholders. A police department representative will be present to answer any questions about Marina security.

The meeting focus is operational, giving staff the opportunity to provide information to leaseholders and leaseholders the opportunity to share with staff and the Committee any questions or concerns they may have about the Marina. The meeting agenda will include Marina operations, storm preparations and changes made over the past year, a demonstration of the new Marina Webcam security system, and other Marina improvements.

Members agreed that the Committee's CIP recommendations should be mentioned at the meeting and attendees encouraged to convey their support of the proposals to City Council.

Discussion of the City's Waterfront Plan is not on the agenda. The Committee-sponsored Marina Night held the previous year had considered those issues.

Report from Police Department

Bergin reported several minor crimes and a recent early evening stabbing at the foot of Duke Street and The Strand (Lumley Park). The stabbing was regarded as an isolated incident resulting from an argument between two people of no fixed address who knew each other.

Members reiterated their concerns, discussed the previous month, about the need for the police to enforce bicyclists' adherence to traffic rules, a need that will increase as bicycle use in the City increases in light of the City's having joined the Capital Bikeshare program. Bergin reported that over the past 12 months there had been 16 bike-related accidents in the Waterfront area: eight were the bicyclists' fault, four the motorists' fault, and one the pedestrian's fault.

Pennington said the police should add advisories about adhering to traffic rules to T&ES outreach the coming Thursday when the department would provide lights to bicyclists. Bergin said he would share that information with community policing officers.

The Committee would invite Carrie Sanders of T&ES to brief at the November meeting about possible Bikeshare sites and their design, and the City's bicycle education program.

Waterfront Small Area Plan/ Waterfront Plan Work Group (Work Group)

Macek, the Committee's representative on Work Group, updated the Committee on Work Group actions taken since the last Committee meeting. Having concluded public realm issues, including issues related to the Marina, arts and history, parking and traffic, open space and other issues, the Work Group is now considering private realm issues including zoning, amenities and land use on private waterfront properties.

The Work Group continues its topical staff briefings and its work developing a set of draft plan statements to be applied to evaluate each element of the Waterfront Plan. Macek noted that the Work Group's draft plan statements are similar in concept to the Committee's Waterfront Vision Statements adopted in 2009 regarding what a waterfront plan should include.

Next the Work Group will compare the existing Waterfront Plan to the Work Group's plan statements to determine how well the Plan reflects those principles, what improvements the Work Group might recommend, and where areas of agreement and disagreement are found.

Williams reported that at the next day's Work Group meeting developers and/or owners of the three private Waterfront sites included in the Plan (Robinson Terminal North and South and the Cummings/Turner block) will provide brief presentations about their intentions. Currently there are no plans to develop the Robinson Terminal sites. Carr Hospitality will present an overview of its plans for the southern part of the Cummings/Turner block, and the Brandts will discuss their plans for the northern part of the block.

Macek said he is one of two Committee members working on a draft outline for the Work Group's report to Council that the full Work Group will then review. A status report of the Work Group's actions will be presented to City Council November 9. It will likely include a review of the plan statements that the Work Group has developed. The final report to Council will provide the Work Group's judgments on how the Plan measures up against those principles and its recommendations to Council. The report is expected to be finished in the November/December timeframe.

Williams said the final topic area, funding for the Plan, is scheduled to be briefed and discussed by the Work Group at the following week's meeting.

Van Fleet said the Work Group should consider how the GenOn site might fit within the Waterfront Plan.

Waterfront Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Priorities

Following up on the Committee's approval the previous month of six projects for RPCA to include in its CIP priorities, Macek reported he had presented Committee's priority items to City Council at its public hearing on the FY13 budget and CIP the previous Saturday. The priorities discussed included the City Marina utility upgrade, City Marina seawall maintenance, Marina Waterway Trash Deterrence, Windmill Hill Park Bulkheads Repairs, and Marina Security Improvements, including a recommendation that responsibility for Waterfront security staffing be transferred from General Services to RPCA.

Committee members then considered their sixth FY13 CIP priority: adding Waterfront public restrooms. The Committee had submitted the CIP restroom item to RPCA without details pending further Committee discussion. Possible locations included a Strand location, perhaps inside the municipal building that the Waterfront Plan proposes for that area, near the water taxi waiting area under the Chart House Restaurant, and the Torpedo Factory Food Court. Members suggested the City propose to the Food Court's landlord the idea of making the Food Court's existing restroom available to the public outside the Food Court's operating hours.

Members agreed that any proposal to put restrooms in either Waterfront Park or Oronoco Bay Park would require careful analysis of its potential security-related concerns. Members also made clear they were not advocating temporary or free-standing restroom facilities.

Hall suggested Food Court leaseholder Gary Baker be invited to brief the Committee on the status of his efforts to attract new tenants to the Food Court and noted that if the water taxis

were moved to a location near the Dandy, as the Waterfront Plan proposes, the importance of having public Waterfront restrooms will become even greater.

Macek offered to contact Deputy City Manager Mark Jinks to learn the status of Baker's efforts to attract new restaurants to the Food Court and the possibility of public access to the Food Court's restroom outside the Food Court's operating hours.

Moved by Bernstein and seconded by Pennington, that the Committee accept the proposed CIP recommendation regarding "Waterfront Restroom" with the last two bullets deleted and noting other options will be needed as Waterfront development occurs and that permanent facilities rather than temporary 'port-o-john' facilities' be added, and follow up regarding enhanced public use of existing Food Court restrooms. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Waterfront Parking Management and Wayfinding Signage

Macek reported that, following up on the previous month's discussion, he'd tried without success to arrange for a T&ES representative to be at the meeting to answer questions about the status of plans to implement parking management and wayfinding signage.

At issue is the Committee's plan to send a letter to the City Manager and T&ES advising of its position that a Waterfront Parking Implementation Group should be created immediately to begin to test the effectiveness of the Waterfront Plan's proposed parking policies.

The Committee sought to arrange briefings on the following topics at its November meeting: T&ES parking planner to discuss the possibility of implementing the Waterfront Plan's parking plan immediately, in advance of the Waterfront Plan; the City's bicycle/pedestrian coordinator to brief on the City's new Bikeshare Program; and T&ES to brief on the status of the wayfinding project.

Nancy Williams offered to contact T&ES to help arrange the briefings.

Macek would draft/send a letter to the T&ES Director and Acting City Manager advising that it is the Committee position that the Waterfront Plan's Parking Plan should be implemented immediately to test the effectiveness of the proposed parking policies.

Announcements

Hall announced that the Alexandria Seaport Foundation's Seaport Day and Riverfest Fundraiser was scheduled for October 22, 2011 at Robinson Terminal South. Also, 1,300 people had visited the Godspeed while it was moored at the Marina.

Macek reminded Members that the Marina Users Public Meeting (a Waterfront Committee Special Meeting) would be held Thursday, November 3, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in City Hall's Sister Cities Room (1100) and that the next regular monthly Alexandria Waterfront Committee would be held on Tuesday, November 15, 2011 at 7:30 a.m., in Room 2000 in Alexandria City Hall.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned without objection at 9:35 a.m.