

Summary Minutes

Alexandria Waterfront Committee Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting

December 2, 2010
Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion, Upper Level

Members: Linda Hafer
Charlotte Hall
Nathan Macek
Jody Manor
Peter Pennington
Pete Peterson

City: Frank Fannon, City Council
Karl Moritz, Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

Guest: Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation

Welcome and Introductions

Waterfront Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

Discussion

Macek said the role of Subcommittee is to develop new interest and economic development at the Waterfront. The intent is not to compete with the forthcoming long-term Waterfront Plan, but to identify and execute short-term concepts, as early as March 1, 2011 when spring arrives and foot traffic at the Waterfront increases. By general acclaim of the Subcommittee, Hall and Manor were selected a co-chairs of the Subcommittee.

Issues:

- No clear, welcoming signage stepping off the water taxi—lost tourists stop at the Seaport Center and Dockmaster Hut for information
- Awkward features (gazebo, for example)
- No welcoming entrance to the Torpedo Factory
- Hosts activities, but not a lot for children
- Food Pavilion has the only bathrooms at the Waterfront
- Plan to redevelop Food Pavilion with additional sit-down restaurants, as well as possible restaurant where Historic Alexandria shop is presently located
- Majority of people walk around Waterfront empty-handed, which results in lost sales tax revenue
- Businesses aggressively courted to move to National Harbor Need to ensure collaboration between staff
- Need to attract residents, in addition to tourists. Can do that passively, or actively

Potential Concepts:

- Sunday Farmers Market
- Seaport Day activities once a month for families

- Linking in Art League and Torpedo Factory to open doors
- Quality vendors using existing food carts
- Make Food Pavilion the place to be—similar to its “Radio Free Italy” days
- Music in Gazebo
- Wine and cheese happy hour behind Torpedo Factory
- Information/education booths at farmers market

Synergies:

- New Torpedo Factory Art Center Board
- Parking meter war has been fought and new meters are forthcoming
- New Wayfinding signage on way (in next 6 months)
- Want to generate activity without needless regulation
- Food vending carts at Market Square (prompted by the restaurant community)

Governance/Management:

- Because of structure, City staff become regulators rather than enablers
- Create a Waterfront Authority or dedicated staffing to manage and promote facilities and activities at the Waterfront
- Dockmaster is not empowered to make decisions.
- Need someone to cut through red-tape on behalf of Waterfront—could be similar to City’s former small business liaison.
- Waterfront Committee should raise the issue of Waterfront governance.

Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion features and issues:

- Unique, easily leveraged asset
- Bright, generally attractive features
- Building reminiscent of Faneuil Hall in Boston
- 40 years left on Realco’s lease. City supports improvements to the facility, as well as finding ways to make areas outside the building more inviting (which is within the City’s control)
- The City will support Realco in identifying high-quality tenants at facility. The big danger is that nothing happens.
- Lease renegotiation is on the table
- City is trying to be flexible on parking, to determine what parking needs are for new developments. Right now 750 spaces not used at peak times on Fridays, and maximum additional needs are estimated to be 500 given present plans.

Strong support for an outdoor market given the short-term mandate of the Subcommittee.

Action Items/Conclusions:

- Art League, Seaport Foundation, ACVA, and Chamber to develop concrete ideas to present to the Subcommittee. Will include outreach to Handcrafted Alexandria and the Boutique District. If Realco is amenable, could potentially move activities inside.
- Farmers market to serve as anchor for activities at the Waterfront
- Subcommittee to tentatively meet the second Thursday of the month, prior to full Waterfront Committee meeting on the third Tuesday. (Schedule subject to confirmation.)