

**DRAFT ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMITTEE
FY 2009 ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2008 - JUNE 30, 2009**

INTRODUCTION

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee is an advisory body to the City Council and to the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. It was established by City Council on April 25, 1989, based on the recommendation of the Alexandria Waterfront Task Force, which was appointed by Council on June 29, 1988.

The function of the Committee is to study issues relating to the Alexandria Waterfront, and to make recommendations to City Council, the City Manager, and appropriate City departments.

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee meets every month from September to June. The Chairperson may call special meetings. The Committee's meetings are public, and notification of meetings is circulated to newspapers by the City's Office of Citizen Assistance and posted on the City's website. Summary Minutes of its meetings, and briefings presented at those meetings, are posted to RPCA's Waterfront Committee meeting page on the City website.

LIST OF MEMBERS

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee is composed of 15 members. Each member represents a particular neighborhood, community, City committee, or civic organization.

MEMBERS SERVING DURING FISCAL YEAR FY 2009:

Councilman Paul Smedberg, City Council Representative
 Susan Pettey, Chair - Old Town Civic Association Representative
 Engin Artemel - Citizen, East of Washington St., North of Pendleton St.
 Jay Atkinson – Citizen, East of Washington St., North of King St.
 Christine Bernstein - - Founders Park Community Association Representative
 Henry Brooks - Parks and Recreation Commission Representative
 Mel Fortney – Citizen, East of Washington St., South of King St.
 Michael Geissinger – Chamber of Commerce Representative
 Doug Gosnell - Pleasure Boat Lease Holder Representative
 Linda Hafer – Old Town Business Association Representative
 Nathan Macek – Citizen, West of Washington St.
 Peter Pennington - Environmental Policy Commission Representative
 Pete Peterson – Alexandria Archaeological Commission Representative
 John Renner – Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association Representative
 Robert Taylor - Alexandria Seaport Foundation Representative

CITY STAFF

Kirk Kincannon, Director - Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
 Laura Seidler, Recreation Supervisor – Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Highlights of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee during FY 2009:

Waterfront Planning – The Committee continued its advocacy for beginning the development of a new plan for the Waterfront. The Committee met with the Mayor and members of City Council regarding the role of the Committee in the planning process. The City undertook work on a new plan in January 2009.

The Committee then developed a set of principles that should be incorporated into a new Waterfront Plan.

Highlights of the Committee's vision for the Waterfront include the following:

- There must be continuous public access, and a continuous pedestrian pathway and bikeway along the entire Waterfront. City Waterfront plans have called for this since 1981. The Waterfront Plan must include a strategy for achieving that critical objective.
- The Waterfront ambience must emphasize Alexandria's history, maritime heritage and marine uses, recreation and the arts. The City's rich history, historic architecture, and river location are key elements that distinguish Alexandria from other tourist destinations and draw visitors from around the world. The City should encourage the tourist potential of the historic and architectural aspects of the Waterfront and Old Town, as well as its arts and cultural aspects.
- While seeking to capitalize on our historic environment, we must also preserve it. Development must be respectful of Alexandria history, and must preserve the historic scale and atmosphere of the current Waterfront area. Historic and architecturally significant buildings must be protected, and the City should require adaptive reuse of such buildings.
- Alexandria's Waterfront has been a place of commerce since the City's founding in 1749, and shall continue to promote trade. The Committee views the Waterfront as a vital conduit to maintaining a vibrant Old Town business district. We recognize that the commerce that we now enjoy and want to encourage must be supported by adequate transportation and parking.
- To reach the Waterfront, we need to support a variety of types of transportation, including transit, bicycle, boat and foot. Alexandria should encourage transportation options that distinguish the City, such as the water taxi, trolley, and horse-drawn carriages.
- To be appreciated, the Waterfront must be seen. Visual awareness of the Waterfront should be improved and preserved. Open panoramic views should be protected. The Waterfront should be attractive both to and from the river.
- City parks provide a key aspect of access to the Potomac River and the Committee emphasizes the importance of maintaining and improving existing parks along the Waterfront. We single this out for note here because of our concern regarding the adverse impact of current budget reductions on park maintenance. We also believe that it is important for the City to continue to acquire

land as designated in its Open Space Plan to support recreational and/or environmental objectives.

- Waterfronts, especially those in urban areas, are ecologically fragile, and particular concern should be paid to the ecology of the Waterfront, with plans to deal with wetlands, flooding, and river quality, all under the terms of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. We want to emphasize that a critical preliminary step in Waterfront planning must be an assessment of the projected sea level rise on water levels in the Potomac River and the impact on the Alexandria Waterfront. We cannot base our plan on only the Waterfront that we can see today, but must plan for the shoreline we are likely to have 20 to 50 years from now, based on best available projections. The City must determine a strategy for coping with sea-level rise and increased storm surge. Decisions will need to be made regarding which lands are to be conceded to rising waters and which will be defended.
- Alexandria has become known for its thriving Waterfront arts activities, and those activities should be encouraged. The Committee envisions the Waterfront as a showplace for the arts, including public, fine, and performing arts.
- New mixed-use development should be encouraged in appropriate areas, and water-related activities and organizations should be encouraged along the Waterfront.

The Committee identified a variety of possible Waterfront uses/features, including parks incorporating active and passive recreation and attractions for children, a maritime museum, restaurants with outdoor/river views, boutique retail shops, an expanded marina with docks suitable for visiting tall ships, public gathering spaces such as performance amphitheater and/or picnic pavilion, and office/residential components.

The Committee also stressed its belief that, unlike most plans developed by the City, we believe that the Waterfront Plan must encompass programs and activities in addition to land uses and capital improvements. Period and other entertainers and historic interpreters should be encouraged in public gathering places such as the marina boardwalk. Tall ships can also be used to draw people to the Waterfront, as well as for historic interpretation. Special programs to educate and entertain can also enliven the Waterfront. The Waterfront should not be merely a collection of historic or historically sympathetic buildings and lovely parks, but must be alive with people as well.

A full copy of the Principles may be found on the Committee's website.

The Committee described its principles at a Public Forum on April 23, 2009, that served as a kickoff to the Waterfront planning process.

The Waterfront Committee also led its annual Waterfront Walk in June. This year the walk was devoted to educating citizens about specific historic, environmental, and other aspects of the Waterfront, as well as issues surrounding current or potential uses. The walk was facilitated by City Archaeologist Pamela Cressey and members of staff of the Departments of Planning and Zoning and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs. The walk, which was attended by upwards of 50 people, was videotaped and posted on the City Planning and Zoning website at www.alexandriava.gov/waterfront.

Members of the Waterfront Committee also participated in a day-long planning session sponsored by the Department of Planning and Zoning, as well as a boat ride on the river to assess the river view of Alexandria, and a tour of several parks in New York City.

Waterfront And Marina Security - The Committee continued its advocacy for the safety and security of the Marina, Waterfront, and nearby neighborhoods.

- The Committee protested reductions in security staff at the Marina, and advocated for a number of increased security measures, including gates controlling access to boating piers.
- In response to Committee concerns, the City installed security cameras at the Marina, increased police patrols, temporarily increased security staff, and approved procurement of security gates.
- The Committee was regularly briefed by RPCA, the Police Department, Planning and Zoning, General Services, Transportation and Environmental Services, and the National Park Service, and continued to work with staff to direct attention to problems identified by residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

Waterfront Maintenance And Improvements – The Committee expressed concern regarding the impact of the 20 percent decrease (\$3.2 million) in the RPCA budget on maintenance of Waterfront parks and the Marina. The Committee also stressed the need to complete the deferred plan for Windmill Hill Park and improvements to seawalls. The Committee Chair discussed Committee's concerns at the City Council budget hearing.

A Visitor-Friendly Waterfront – As a participant on the City's National Harbor Collaborative Working Group, the Committee monitored implementation of City improvements to meet the needs of tourists from National Harbor, including water taxis and trolleys.

The Committee was also briefed on City task forces regarding wayfinding and motor coaches.

Development Proposal – The Committee was briefed on a proposal to redevelop Robinson Terminal North, and offered feedback on the proposal.

Flood Mitigation - The Committee monitored progress of the Transportation and Environmental Services project on flood abatement.

Environmental Issues Needing Attention - The Committee commented on the City's proposed Phase I Environmental Action Plan.

Protecting Wildlife Habitat – The Committee continued to work with staff to insure that Waterfront actions protected and preserved wildlife habitat.

Windmill Hill Park Improvements - The Committee continued to advocate for completion of the City plan for Windmill Hill Park.

Panoramic Photograph – Together with the Chamber of Commerce, the Committee presented to the City a panorama of the Waterfront, photographed and prepared by Committee member Mike Geissinger.

Facilitating Liaison Between The City And Public Stakeholders Affected By Waterfront-Related Activities –The Committee discussed with staff issues raised by residents, businesses and other organizations such as the Alexandria Convention and Tourist Association and Arts Commission, and received public comments at each meeting

GOALS FOR 2010

- Continue to be actively involved in the City Waterfront planning process, advising the City and commenting on plans to promote the best Waterfront for Alexandria's citizens and visitors.
- Monitor implementation of the City's new Waterfront Plan.
- Support a vibrant Waterfront that capitalizes on Alexandria's maritime heritage, that serves the needs of residents and visitors, and that includes residential and mixed-use developments.
- Monitor and make recommendations to the City on issues related to the Waterfront, including but not limited to maintenance, uses, safety, improvements, historical and artistic interpretation, commerce and development.
- Advocate for adequate resources to maintain and improve the Waterfront, marina and related parks.
- Advocate for environmental quality in the Potomac River, along its shores, and in adjacent land in Alexandria.

The Committee welcomes citizens to its meetings, which are held at 7:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday of each month September through May at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. The committee hosts its annual Waterfront Walk on the third Tuesday in June.