

Summary Minutes

Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting January 19, 2010

Members: Engin Artemel
Jay Atkinson
Christine Bernstein
Henry Brooks
Mike Geissinger
Doug Gosnell
Linda Hafer
Nathan Macek
Peter Pennington
Pete Peterson
John Renner
Van Van Fleet

City Staff: Roger Blakeley, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Lt. Len Fouch, Police Department
Jim Hixon, RPCA
Karl Moritz, Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Laura Seidler, RPCA
Nancy Williamson, P&Z

Guests: Michael Anderson
Susan Cohen
Alex Douglas
Councilman Frank Fannon
John Gosling
Poul Hertel
Harry Harrington
Maria Ross
Sarita Schotta
George Stevens

Welcome and Introductions

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Brooks and seconded by Renner to approve the minutes of the December meeting. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Waterfront Planning

Williams provided a report on Waterfront Plan development from P&Z. She said that the consultant's Marina market analysis report had been reviewed by the Marina Subcommittee.

Williams announced that the Waterfront Plan concept plan meeting originally scheduled for February 11, 2010 would be rescheduled for later in February or March. In response to a question from Artemel, Williams said that at this meeting the concept waterfront plan would be released and open for public discussion.

Williams reviewed the format for the Marina Night meeting, co-sponsored by the Waterfront Committee. Pennington stated that he was concerned with the size of the proposed venue for Marina Night, the Sister Cities Room of City Hall.

Marina Vision Statement and Briefing Paper

Macek gave a visual presentation summarizing the points covered in the Marina Vision Statement and Briefing Paper. Macek acknowledged Pennington's role developing the presentation. Brooks commented that the City has higher capital funding priorities than the Marina. Macek responded that the presentation acknowledges that improvements to the Marina have a significant cost, and that Marina projects must compete with other City funding priorities. Artemel and Bernstein expressed concern for the mapped concept for Marina expansion. Macek responded that he would modify the presentation to eliminate the concept map.

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed the content of the Vision Statement and Briefing Paper document. Hertel commented that there were two key issues that the Waterfront Plan must address, scalability and aesthetics, and that development should cause the public to lose sight of the water. Artemel said that the Waterfront Plan should take account of impacts such as cars, and should incorporate the findings of the parking study.

Gosnell said that there was no intent to remove tour boats from the waterfront, but that the waterfront along The Strand could serve as a base for an expanded marina better able to serve transient boaters. He said the current slip count is too low as the Marina could have served a larger market.

Bernstein asked whether an expanded Marina would increase City revenue. Brooks stated that any plan must incorporate a cost analysis plan that accounts for the fixed and variable cost of the Marina. He said any viable concept needs to demonstrate that it will work financially.

Pennington said that the City Marina would never be "profitable" because it does not have the land to offer the full range of services that private marinas do, nor would residents want a Marina that large.

Van Fleet said he agreed with Pennington and said that the Marina should not include additional land. Without the additional land, it cannot have 200 slips. He said the Marina will never have enough slips to meet the demand, and the City doesn't have the money to invest.

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed the Draft the Vision Statement and Briefing Paper. The document was accepted by the Committee following a motion by Geissinger and a second by Bernstein.

Artemel noted that the objective was not to have marinas, but to have a balanced waterfront. He noted that other city's waterfronts, such as San Francisco's, separate commercial activities from the Marina. He said that Alexandria needed to find ways to mitigate conflicts between different users.

Ross stated that the Dandy was concerned about mixing commercial vessels and transient recreational boaters, but welcomed additional foot traffic near their docking location.

Van Fleet moved to approve the Draft Vision Statement and Briefing Paper. Geissinger seconded. Motion carried on a voice vote.

Old Town Civic Association Waterfront Plan Concept

John Gosling, member of the Old Town Civic Association, gave a presentation on his organization's vision for the waterfront plan. The plan urges consideration of the waterfront in a citywide context. Gosling noted that Alexandria's waterfront is not blighted and in need of wholesale gentrification but is generally a well-settled neighborhood in need of improvements at specific locations.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Blakeley reported that the proposed operating budget was as expected, with no proposed decrease in expenditures for FY11. He said that the proposed FY11 capital improvement program had no money for gates on the Marina piers but did include additional funding for video cameras at the Marina. He said that funding for Windmill Park Improvements slipped to the FY17/FY18 timeframe.

Seidler reported that the existing blue dock lights at the Marina would be replaced with marine grade solar powered lights.

Seidler said that the Marina survey results would be forwarded to committee members in advance of the next meeting for discussion in February.

Announcements

Macek announced that the Waterfront Plan Marina Night would be Thursday, Jan. 28, 2010 at City Hall.

The next meeting of the Waterfront Committee would be Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2010 at 7:30 a.m. at the Nannie J. Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson Street. Macek said that topics of discussion would include the City's draft Strategic Plan, the Committee's annual report, and RPCA's Marina Survey.

The Waterfront Plan Art Night would be 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2010 at the Durant Center, 1605 Cameron Street.

Adjournment

Pennington moved to adjourn, Brooks seconded. Motion carried on a voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.