

## Summary Minutes

### Alexandria Waterfront Committee Marina Subcommittee Meeting January 7, 2010

#### Members Present:

Doug Gosnell  
Linda Hafer  
Nate Macek  
Peter Pennington  
Van Van Fleet

#### City Staff Present:

Byron Andrews, Fire Dept.  
Jamie Bartlett, Police Dept.  
Laura Seidler, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities  
Nancy Williams, Department of Planning and Zoning

#### Marina Market Study Report

Williams introduces report. P&Z is looking for feedback on:

- Numbers to increase marina—how large? 150-to-200 spaces? Is this a good number?
- Thoughts on average slip size? What amenities are required?
- Separation of commercial and recreational boats?
- Number of transient versus leased slips?
- How could it ideally be configured?

Pennington: Every indication that water taxi traffic will increase over next 5-to-10 years: Alexandria to National Harbor, plus Nationals Park and possibly Prince William County. Reversing boats are a dangerous object, and makes sense to keep commercial boats separate from recreational for safety reasons. Alexandria's is part marina, part commercial, part tourist attraction. Always going to be a mixture. Regarding how many slips, City needs to look at it in terms of its goals for the waterfront.

Seidler: Current location of the water taxi dock is temporary—all other commercial watercraft are permanent berths. Planning process needs to determine what the permanent location of the taxi dock should be.

Pennington: Discussion of the size of the slips. How large of boats should we serve? What utilities should we provide them? What costs are involved in doing that?

Bartlett: Chief's office can provide guidance on needs for watercraft on the waterfront.

Gosnell: City has to decide what it wants to be. Should it be a profitable, enterprising marina, or simply have an ambience. City could gradually move to an enterprise, but won't acquire territory required overnight. Identify land for acquisition and build-out over time. Could end up with several remote spots to accommodate the demand.

Seidler: To make financially feasible, need to have a large marina.

Macek: Report outlines the market as it is today, and provides some justification for what Alexandria's market potential is. Does not outline where the market is headed—is there future competition on the horizon? Assuming market is there—and report needs to make that case—the next question is do we want to take the risk of supporting that market?

Gosnell: Decision is either to improve what's already there, or the city make a full commitment to go to a large operation. Needs capital investment in order to do so. Don't do some middle option (~100 slips) that doesn't make any money. Either do it in full, or just modify what you already have.

Van Fleet: Question of where to put the boats. Whose backyard to put them in?

Seidler: 150 boats is not a break-even point for the city. Gosnell: Then the issue is where to stage the improvements.

Seidler: Have very antiquated facilities. May gain some with security advancements. Bartlett: Will still have crime, even with increased security.

Pennington: Worried about local authority's (City's) ability to commit itself to long-term funding. Alexandria only has one funding source—doesn't have separate pots and needs to make decisions about recreation versus human services and other public needs.

Williams: Will happen incrementally. Maybe recommendation is to improve what's already there, and then build on it.

Macek: Marina doesn't have a mission statement. Need to know what the basis is: To serve transients, or not? What about commercial? Lease?

Pennington: Needs to be a hybrid marina, that provides ambience, allows public access to the docks, and is a good front door to the community. Not convinced that it's a good front door at the moment. Not sure that we do that at the moment. A lot more that we could do to support that front door.

Gosnell: At the last meeting, decided that needed to improve existing marina. Expand current, add to it with development at The Strand, and later Robinson Terminal North. Expansion could attract more of the Annapolis-type vessels.

Seidler: Need to determine what type of pleasure boats, and then what type of commercial boats. For example, recent request for cruise ships to dock here. What number of feet are available? How to grow to serve projected transit services, and then what to serve in addition to that?

Gosnell: If want the full commercial route, can't do at the existing marina and not likely desired near neighborhoods. Make piers a condition of permission for development.

Pennington: What do we want from our marina: A full-service, enterprise marina, or marina ambience? Can we agree we want a good-sized commercial berth in the city?

Seidler: Homeland Security requirements are different with a cruise ship than with a recreational marina. Have to provide gated area and other protections. Maybe Robinson Terminal North is a better place to go with those larger watercraft.

Van Fleet: Liners used to run here, but they need a deeper draft than they're able to bring in.

Seidler: Federal navigational channel requirement is 20 feet. Currently at 22 feet. 200 to 300 foot vessels were accommodated at the marina up until a few years ago. Fees were minimal. But now cannot accommodate because of silting.

Williams: Suggests recommendations on what committee's vision is for the waterfront. Helpful to hear committee's vision.

Van Fleet: Building a marina is not the budget priority.

Pennington: Discussions a year ago involved how to make the marina a self-sustaining financial enterprise, responsible for marina operations and, eventually, maintenance. Should there be a financial body responsible for the marina, distinct from the General Fund?

Seidler: Have to make an initial decision about how the marina is financially supported. PRBC was supported by water taxi this year—charters were way down.

Transient boaters help to create an active waterfront. From an infrastructure standpoint, they're the most expensive. Have to help them dock. Will put stress on infrastructure. It's a weekend activity, so transient areas are dormant during the week. Transient boaters do bring people into Old Town—100 or 1000 boats over a season.

Pennington: Could design mooring fields. Seidler: Works for 4-5 hour stay, but can't do overnight. No electricity on mooring field. Gosnell: Can't moor very well here because of tidal currents, mucky bottom. Needs a breakwater.

Seidler: What's in the best interests of the City and the City's residents? We have a marina now, what direction are we going?

Williams: Subcommittee previously answered the question that Alexandria should have a marina. Said marina should look at opportunity for additional private and public moorings.

Seidler: How to incorporate green marina and LEED? How to shield lights from residences? Other improvements that are not constraints.

Gosnell: Recommendation: If there is demand from City residents, then should go to an Enterprise operation. Needs to do in segments. Needs appropriate navigational design—breakwater, channel, beam, electric.

Pennington: Want to see a larger set up, reached through stages, with better quality facilities.

Macek: Need to make sure that any marina improvement is compatible with surrounding facilities, and is self-sustaining. If built, needs to have the amenities required to be self-sustaining given size of facility.

Macek to try to draft text based on comments at meeting.

P&Z needs Waterfront Committee input in form of recommendation.

Hafer: Another option is to state what options are if first option does not succeed.

Seidler: Do we need a tall ship? That's not commercial. That's historic. Commercial is charters and water taxi. Baltimore has a non-profit that pays to bring the tall ships in. Need to determine how to accommodate those. How do you balance these activities along the waterfront, and still encourage tourists to experience the full waterfront. Key issues are economic sustainability and budgetary requirements.

**Outcomes:**

- Pennington to provide initial stab at vision, send to Macek.
- Macek to further draft and send to Gosnell.
- Gosnell to introduce draft at the Committee meeting.

**Marina Night:**

- Waterfront Committee discusses Marina from residents' point of view
- Commercial owners talk about it from business owners point of view
- Then turn over to attendees to provide their vision for the marina.