

Summary Minutes – Draft

Alexandria Waterfront Commission Tuesday, May 15, 2012

Alexandria City Hall

Members:

Present: Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association
Art Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat leaseholder
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Trey Hanbury, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Melinda (Mindy) Lyle, Citizen, Park Planning District III
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen from west of Washington St. and Chair
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
James McCall, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Patricia (Pat) Miller, Commission on the Arts
Peter Pennington, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.
Townsend A. (Van) Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.

Excused: Kent Barnekov, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Linda Hafer, Old Town Business and Professional Association
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council

City Staff: Emily Baker, City Engineer, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, Parks Operations, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Al Cox, Department of Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Cheryl Lawrence, Acting Division Chief, RPCA
Sandra Marks Division Chief, Transportation Planning Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
Jeremy McPike, Department of General Services (GS)
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z
John North, Alexandria Fire Department (AFD)
Carrie Sanders, T&ES
Lt. Juan Torres, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z

Guests: Robert Brandt, Brandt Properties
Brian Buzzell
Susan Cohen, Public Art Committee
Charlie Denney, Alta Bicycle Share

Ben Helwig, Park Ranger, George Washington Memorial Parkway,
National Park Service (NPS)
Jonathan Krall, Chair, Alexandria Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory
Committee (Alexandria PBAC)
Joanne Platt
Mike Young, Olde Towne Gemstones

Welcome and Introductions

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

Macek announced he would be leaving the meeting early due to a personal commitment, and that Waterfront Commission re-organization and the Bikeshare program would be the first two agenda items discussed.

Approval of Minutes from April 17, 2012 Meeting

Moved by Pennington, seconded by Hall, to approve the summary minutes of the April 17, 2012 meeting as drafted. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Discussion: Waterfront Commission Organization

Commissioners agreed upon an expanded monthly meeting schedule to accommodate the Commission's broadened jurisdiction to oversee implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

Commissioners agreed that facilitating public attendance at its meetings continued to be a Commission priority and that the existing practice of holding special Commission meetings in late afternoon or evening reflected this. Macek noted that the Commission's decision in 2011 to change the annual Waterfront Walk from a weekday to a Saturday morning also supported public involvement.

Commissioners decided to keep the regular monthly meeting at 7:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday, and to reserve 4 p.m. on the Thursday of the following week for additional meetings as needed for Committee meetings or special Commission meetings. Macek said special meetings could be used to consider topics of special interest and/or those needing further discussion following a regular meeting.

Macek noted that special meetings with a quorum have decision-making authority and that no quorum is required for a Committee meeting since Committee recommendations requiring a formal vote are referred to the full Commission for action. All Commissioners are de facto members of Committees. Macek said the Commission plans to reconstitute the Marina Committee by fall 2012 and invited Commissioners interested in chairing the Committee to contact him.

Macek reviewed some of the current and upcoming Waterfront Small Area Plan implementation items the Commission expected to consider: the Bikeshare program, planned Windmill Hill Park enhancements, the status of the Food Court Pavilion, City plans for its Beachcombers property, development proposals for 204-206 and 220 South Union Street and other parcels, the planned conversion to condominiums of The Oronoco (the new name for the Sheet Metal Workers Building), the City's Waterfront

landscape design solicitation, Dominion Virginia Power's utility master plan, and Waterfront-related Capital Improvement Program budget items.

Macek said the Commission's upcoming schedule included the June 9 Waterfront Walk, the June 19 regular monthly Commission meeting, a June 21 special meeting regarding the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study, and an August 21 regular monthly Commission meeting. There will be no meeting in July.

Update: Bikeshare Locational Analysis (T&ES)

Sanders introduced Denney, with Alta Bicycle Share, and said Alta Bicycle Share was the management company chosen in 2010 by the District of Columbia and Arlington to operate the Capital Bikeshare program. Denney said Capital Bikeshare is the first large-scale bicycle share program in the U.S. and noted New York and Chicago were planning similar programs.

Macek said the question before the Commission was where to place a Waterfront docking station for the pilot program and noted that Council had approved Bikeshare for a summer 2012 startup. He said that following Commission action at its April meeting, the Commission had expressed support for the program in a letter to the City. He noted that Bikeshare's docking stations not only provide bicycles to Bikeshare users but offer places for users to return bicycles once they have arrived at their destinations.

Sanders reviewed the expanded T&ES evaluation of potential Waterfront locations for a Bikeshare docking station, conducted by T&ES at the Commission's direction in April. Sanders said the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan had been used to help identify potential locations for docking stations and that staff considered options 2 (Cameron Street Alley North), 3 (Union/Prince Street) and 9 (west side of Lee Street at King Street) as the most technically suitable locations. She asked Commissioners to prioritize their support for the various location options. Sanders said staff recognized the Commission had in April opposed placing a station in Cameron Street Alley,

Sanders said staff had evaluated the Beachcombers parking lot at the Commission's request, but considered it unsuitable because of the property's poor condition and distance from King Street. Factors that ruled out locations included fatal technical flaws such as regular nuisance flooding, insufficient sunlight to power the station's solar panels, not being on public land, and/or not being within a block of the King Street activity center. Van Fleet said he opposed having a station at Lee and King Streets because of Lee Street's narrowness and noted that buses using Lee Street already clog circulation there.

Sanders said the City expected to launch the pilot Bikeshare program in the summer with about 70 bicycles and eight stations, one of which would be a Waterfront location, and that the Capital Bikeshare program included approximately 160 stations and 1500 bikes in Arlington and D.C. as it continues to grow. There will be an annual evaluation report to City Council and a comprehensive reevaluation of the program after approximately three years. Arlington is expected to have 30 stations and approximately 200 bikes by the end of May. Sanders said that the Bikeshare program is not expected to generate revenue for the City.

Sanders said each docking station would have maps and signage compatible with the wayfinding program to direct users to the City's designated bike routes such as Union Street and to warn users of traffic regulations such as those prohibiting riding bicycles on sidewalks. Some Commissioners expressed concern that designating Union Street as a bike route might worsen pedestrian-bicycle-vehicle congestion in a corridor already congested and that, in general, Bikeshare might add significant numbers of bicycles to City traffic. Staff said bicycle traffic was included among data to be collected for the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study.

Krall said that because Capital Bikeshare carries about 4,000 riders a day throughout its regional system, and 85 percent of an estimated 2,700 daily Mount Vernon Trail users ride bicycles, the City's Bikeshare program is not likely to create a significant marginal increase in bicycle traffic within the City. Krall noted that on May 24 and May 26 Alexandria BPAC volunteers would conduct their annual count of pedestrian and bicycle traffic throughout the City.

Watters said she supported Bikeshare and its potential to decrease vehicular traffic and to help mitigate parking problems. Bernstein, McCall and Van Fleet said they did not think factors affecting suitable locations on the City's 18th century street grid could be compared to those in Arlington and D.C., with the exception of some Georgetown intersections. McCall favored Bikeshare locations that did not undermine Old Town's pedestrian-friendly nature. Bernstein said a docking station would further complicate congestion at the popular King and Lee Street area, already crowded with walkers, strollers, street musicians and others.

Bernstein, Watters, Gosnell, Baum and others said a Strand location would be useful. Sanders said staff was concerned about flooding on The Strand. Hanbury said he supported the goal of having stations near the foot of King Street and other popular destinations.

Pennington said option 4 (Founders Park) offered advantages underemphasized by staff such as proximity to a footpath, adequate sunlight, no lost parking, and creating a hub away from the congested area. He questioned staff's assumption that cyclists would be unwilling to walk more than one block from a docking station to their destination. Sanders said staff was also concerned about Founders Park's proximity to a no-bicycling area and that an impervious surface would need to be added for the docking station to avoid creating additional maintenance requirements.

McCall and Van Fleet said locations with a pedestrian-friendly impact were preferable. McCall said he was concerned about having a station at the pedestrian-heavy Lee and King Street and Van Fleet noted that pedestrian traffic already clogs car traffic at King and Union Streets.

Moved by Van Fleet, and seconded by Fox, that no Bikeshare program should be initiated until completion of the Union Street Corridor Circulation Study.

Baum said that, especially because Bikeshare would be a three-year pilot program, a docking station could easily be moved if it did not work out. Bernstein said she supports Bikeshare in general but questioned the need for a docking station along the Waterfront rather than using the planned Market Square station to service Waterfront visitors.

The motion failed on a voice vote, with two votes supporting it.

Macek suggested a modified Prince and Union Street option on Prince Street (option 3a) be considered, offering a station close to Union Street, visible from bike paths, outside the flood zone, accessible to King Street, that would reinforce the pedestrian nature of Old Town.

Moved by Gosnell, seconded by Baum, that the Commission specify its preference for option 3, to look at options for a Bikeshare location within a half-block of Union and Prince Street in the direction of Waterfront Park, reject the Lee Street option due to concerns regarding traffic, and sustain concerns regarding the Cameron Street Alley option.

After further discussion, the motion was withdrawn in favor of individual votes on each proposed option.

Hall and Bernstein noted that Prince and Union Street is a busy, congested location. Hall supported the Beachcombers site instead, noting that the site's poor condition could be improved.

Bernstein questioned why a Bikeshare station were needed east of Fairfax Street with a planned Market Square station nearby, and said she thought it inappropriate to have a station next to an 18th century building. . Bernstein proposed that there be no docking station east of Fairfax Street. It was agreed that this would be considered as an additional option when Commissioners discussed their preferences for a docking station location.

Macek said that having a Bikeshare dock near the Waterfront would, by letting visitors drop off their bicycles, discourage them from riding along the Waterfront in no-bicycling areas.

With 15 Commissioners voting, a majority supported a docking station at either the Beachcombers parking lot or within a half-block radius of Union and Prince Streets, towards Waterfront Park (10 votes each). A lesser Commission preference (6 votes) supported having a station at Union and Prince Streets.

- Option 1 – Cameron Street Alley South: 0 votes
- Option 2 – Cameron Street Alley North: 3 votes
- Option 3 – Union/Prince Streets: 6 votes
- Option 3A – within 1/2 block radius of Union/Prince Streets toward Waterfront Park: 10 votes
- Option 4 – Founders Park, SW corner: 0 votes
- Option 5 – Waterfront Park/Strand: 3 votes
- Option 6 – Unit block of Oronoco St: 1 vote
- Option 7 – Unit block of Duke St: 0 votes
- Option 8 – Beachcombers Parking lot: 10 votes
- Option 9 – west side of Lee Street @ King St: 3 votes
- Option 10 – Nothing east of Fairfax St.: 5 votes

Marks thanked the Commission for its inputs on Bikeshare locations and said the City would make a final decision with the expectation that the pilot program would be implemented in summer 2012. She said staff would advise the Commission of its location choice for the Waterfront dock but did not expect to return to the Commission to discuss the item further.

As previously announced, Macek left the meeting at 9:10 a.m. and Pennington assumed the chair.

Report from Police Department

Torres reported that officers had been reminded of the importance of enforcing traffic regulations along the unit block of King Street for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians and that two officers had been assigned to King and Union Streets from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday evenings to enhance enforcement of traffic regulations.

Bernstein reported that she had witnessed and documented on May 9 excessive congestion created by at least 11 tour buses circling around Market Square, Fairfax, Cameron and Union Streets. She said that although the City should not discourage visitors from coming to the City, traffic congestion is seriously worsened when buses block crosswalks and discharge and pick up passengers at unauthorized locations and she said improved enforcement is needed. Pennington noted ACVA had recommended to the Commission that tour bus violations be reported to the APD non-emergency number and then reported to ACVA. Torres said he would provide the Commission information on traffic citations issued recently to tour buses and noted that APD and Parking Enforcement were responsible for enforcement. Baum said that after she had provided T&ES photographs of tour bus traffic violations on Fairfax Street the situation had improved.

Hall said businesses are responsible for educating their tour bus drivers about appropriate passenger drop-off and wait locations and suggested police provide bus drivers ACVA information about tour bus drop-off and wait locations when they intercede with drivers. Bernstein said she would submit her documentation of recent tour bus violations to ACVA and APD.

There was a consensus among Commissioners that tour bus violations of traffic regulations are a continuing problem, that ACVA should be more pro-active in educating tour bus operators about traffic regulations, that improved parking enforcement is needed for tour buses, and that ACVA should be invited to discuss the problem with the Commission. Manor noted that ACVA is responsible for issuing permits, but not for enforcing regulations,

Discussion with National Park Service (NPS) re Jones Point Park and other NPS Properties

Helwig, Park Ranger, George Washington Memorial Parkway, reviewed National Park Service jurisdiction within Alexandria and noted that the NPS George Washington Memorial Parkway office, for which he works, covered Daingerfield Island through the G.W. Parkway easement along Washington Street to Jones Point Park. He noted the City Waterfront is overseen by NPS National Capital Area office, not by the Parkway

office for which he works. Helwig said NPS currently has no planning efforts underway for the Daingerfield Island area and that the last NPS management plan effort for that area had been done in the mid-1980s. He said the City had discussed with NPS the idea of conducting a small area plan for Daingerfield, especially in light of the GenOn site's planned closing, and NPS is open to the idea but there is no NPS funding available for a study.

Helwig reported NPS had taken over all responsibilities for Jones Point Park and noted that the land had always been federal land under NPS jurisdiction that the City had previously operated the park under an NPS permit. Browand said NPS is now fully responsible for all Jones Point Park management, including maintenance, operations and reservations. Helwig said Park Police are responsible for enforcing regulations at Jones Point but that City Police respond in emergencies as needed. Helwig said that when Jones Point Park reopens, NPS would handle reservations by the same process used for Gravelly Point Park and Fort Hunt Park, working through the website recreation.gov and NPS headquarters.

Helwig said NPS had no plans to privatize the Jones Point Lighthouse or to reopen it at this time because, although its exterior is being redone, there is no funding available to upgrade and repair the lighthouse interior. He said the Alexandria chapter of the Daughters of the Revolution, the lighthouse's original owners who had donated it to the City, had mentioned to NPS the possibility of DAR redoing the lighthouse interior. Pennington suggested NPS work with the Commission and/or with Volunteer Alexandria to identify potential volunteers interested in helping to restore the lighthouse interior so the lighthouse could be reopened.

Helwig said that regarding implementation of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, NPS would make case-by-case decisions as needed, consistent with existing agreements, regarding parcels and easements under NPS jurisdiction.

Report on Waterfront Plan Implementation

Engineering Implementation/Flood Mitigation RFP Summary (T&ES)

Baker briefly reviewed the specifications for the RFP scope of services for a study to develop, consistent with the Waterfront Small Area Plan, the engineering implementation plan and flood mitigation plan. She said the end product would include a preliminary design and engineering plan that would provide up to 15 percent design of infrastructure and other capital investments in the public realm elements in the Waterfront Small Area Plan. It would first focus on The Strand area from King to Duke Street. Additionally, the RFP also included developing a design and engineering plan for the King Street/Strand flood mitigation. Baker noted this new study would create an implementation plan that follows up on the City's 2010 Potomac River Flood Mitigation Study, conducted by URS Corporation and modified by the Waterfront Small Area Plan.

Baker said a concept plan for overall grading of Waterfront parks would be included, as would public meetings and outreach, with a particular interest in receiving comments on how proposals might affect businesses and building entrances in the area. Baker said Part I of the study, collecting survey data such as topographic information, would proceed over summer 2012 and staff planned to return to the Commission before moving ahead to choose a consultant for Part II of the study, developing a 15 percent

design concept for the plan. Baker said the study would include Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) permitting requirements related to the work and that T&ES had consulted with NPS regarding the study's scope. T&ES had not consulted the Corps because the study's scope is outside their jurisdiction.

Baker invited Commissioners to contact her directly with any additional questions. Pennington said he would discuss with her his concern about the use of the term "nuisance flooding". In response to a question, Baker offered to provide the Commission details of the current storm water system at a future meeting.

204-206 South Union Street Informational Update (Brandt Properties)

Brandt said he had not provided a formal presentation because Brandt Properties was not planning any significant changes to the properties' structures and noted that the buildings had been constructed during the mid-19th century.

He said Brandt Properties had bought 2 Union Street (Big Wheel Bikes), with two years remaining on the tenant's lease; 10 Prince Street, with two years remaining on the tenant's lease, and 204-206 South Union Street, which is currently vacant. He said final permits for the 204-206 building's renovation had been received that day and internal renovation work had begun. For example, paint had already been removed from the internal walls and beams. Brandt reported they have an agreement with an office tenant for about two-thirds of the building, once it is renovated, and about 2,000 square feet on first floor remain available for lease. Brandt said he hoped that the eventual first floor tenant might be for a soft purpose such as a City museum and noted that, regarding parking, Brandt Properties had signed an agreement with the Solo Garage parking lot at Duke and Union Streets to have spaces available for the use of tenants. Brandt expects the office tenant for the building's upper floors to move in not later than June 2013.

Brandt said a historic plaque would be installed on the building, as requested by the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review (BAR), and he reviewed some of the completed and planned restoration work for the building. He said, for example, the eventual office spaces would have interior glass walls to offer an unobstructed view of the building's historic interiors and that plans include restoring the nine bricked-in windows for 204 Union Street.

Union Street Corridor Circulation Study Update (T&ES)

Marks reported that T&ES had hired the study's consultant, the start of data collection was expected in May, and that T&ES looked forward to briefing the Commission in June about the study's preliminary data and receiving Commissioners' inputs into the process as consultants proceed with their analysis over the summer.

Old Town Alexandria Parking Study (OTAPS) Status Update (T&ES)

Marks reported that the first meeting of the reconvened Old Town Alexandria Parking Study (OTAPS) Working Group was planned for June and advised the Commission it would be invited to appoint two representatives to the Working Group. It was agreed that no action would be taken until the letter of invitation had been received.

The Beachcombers Restaurant Status Update (General Services)

McPike reported that in early April the City had presented its request to the BAR that the old Beachcombers Restaurant building be deemed historically significant and

recommend that it be retained for adaptive reuse with any needed alterations and modifications to be approved to the BAR in the future as they become known. He said the City's report on the Beachcombers building is available online.

McPike reported that the BAR had deemed the building an historic structure based on its character and use and requested that the City document the current structure before any elements are removed.

McPike noted that because the City had used Open Space funds to purchase the property, the City expected to return funds generated by a land lease to the Open Space Fund. Van Fleet said that if the City were to sell rather than lease the property, returning sale proceeds to the Open Space Fund, a commercial owner would be likely to rehab the building more quickly than would the City. McPike said the City plans to maintain the building, conduct a structural and architectural analysis over the next two months, complete the technical evaluation by fall 2012, issue an RFP for the land lease by fall 2012, and begin by end of summer to remove property elements such as the balconies and gate.

McPike said the City anticipates a land-lease agreement whose terms would facilitate the success of a business located on the property, avoid a long-term lease that could lock the City into an agreement with a company unable to create a successful business operation there, and avoid a the possibility of the City would needing to deal with a lender trying to recoup its losses after a business there had failed. McPike said that because the City wants to avoid making intermediate property improvements that would need to be removed after a land lease had been signed or making capital investments in the property, the City anticipates a lease term of at least 10 years to let a lessee recoup its property investments. Baum said that, to avoid repeating the Food Court Pavilion experience, a lease should include an "out clause" letting the City cancel the lease if a lessee failed to meet the terms and expectations of the agreement.

Commissioners requested that, in light of the substantial time that had passed without the property being improved, General Services provide at the Commission's October meeting a formal status report and timeline of actions related to the Beachcombers property.

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

Marina Pilings Informational Update

Browand reported that installation of the pilings has been completed.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Informational Update

Browand reported that the City's plans to install the safety fence around the concrete bulkhead are moving ahead and that a community meeting had been planned for June 5 to receive comments on the fence and also on planned park enhancements included in the Windmill Hill Park Concept Plan passed by Council in 2003. Browand said that prior to the meeting the City planned to install a demonstration section of the safety fence for public review and comment and that details of the fence's location were being finalized. The City expected BAR to consider the proposal in June and installation was planned during the summer after approvals had been received.

Restroom Options Analysis

Browand said staff was working to develop signage consistent with wayfinding to publicize for visitors the location of existing Waterfront restrooms. He reported that a site and condition analyses had been conducted for the Food Court Pavilion restrooms, identifying repairs and other work needed to convert them to a condition suitable for external use. Staff had developed \$25,000 and \$50,000 options for renovating the Food Court Pavilion bathrooms but Browand said no funding was currently available for either renovation option. Browand said staff is considering whether it was appropriate to spend any funds to upgrading the Food Court Pavilion as a Waterfront restroom option since this would likely be a short-term use if the lessee finds a tenant for the building.

Commissioners said that the need to provide convenient public restrooms for Waterfront visitors should continue to be considered an urgent priority.

Park Naming Protocol

Following up on Van Fleet's suggestion at the Commission's April meeting that the Commission consider the idea of renaming Waterfront Park Fitzgerald Park, in honor of George Washington's aide-de-camp, Browand reviewed the process for naming public parks. He said that RPCA receives recommendations from community groups, commissions, individuals and others and once a formal request proposing a name has been received, a 30-day public comment period was announced and all comments received were forwarded to the City Manager's office for consideration by the City Council Naming Committee which considers naming proposals, and then forwards its recommendation to Council for action. Council's Naming Committee consists of two Council members and the City Manager. Browand noted the Park and Recreation Commission does not play a role in the naming of parks.

Commissioners agreed to defer discussion of the Waterfront/Fitzgerald Park idea to a future meeting.

Adjournment

Without objection the meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.