

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, October 15, 2013
Lee Center
7:30 A.M.

Members:

Present: Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.
Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission
Art Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Stephen Mutty, Citizen Park Planning District I
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council
David Speck, Citizen Park Planning District III
Steven Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St., and Chair,
Marina Committee
Townsend A. (Van) Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St
Ryan Wojtanowski, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission

Excused: Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, and Chair

Absent: Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat leaseholder
Allison Nance, Alexandria Arts Commission

City Staff: Emily Baker, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Francine Bromberg, Acting City Archeologist, Office of Historic Alexandria
(OHA)
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront
Operations, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Tom Canfield, City Architect
Earl Cook, Chief of Police, City of Alexandria
Al Cox, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Battalion Chief Michael Cross, Alexandria Fire Department (AFD)
Dirk Geratz, Principal Planner, P&Z
Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Lt. Don Hayes, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
David Huchler, Deputy Chief, Alexandria Police Department
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager, City of Alexandria

Richard Lawrence, Urban Planner I, P&Z
Hillary Poole, Complete Streets Coordinator, T&ES
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
James Spengler, Director, RPCA
Michael Stewart, General Services
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z
Gary Wagner, Principal Planner, PZ

Guests: Engin Artemel, Rivergate Townhouses
Brian Buzzell, citizen
Austin Flajser, President, Carr Hospitality
Dene Garbow, Harborside Community Association, and Alexandria Art and
History Waterfront Implementation Committee
Mel Garbow, Harborside Community Association
Yvonne Weight Callahan, President, Old Town Civic Association
Val Hawkins, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)
Mike Kirby, business owner
Mindy Lyle, citizen
Nate Macek, citizen
Ruth McKenty, Beautification Committee
Mark Orling, Rust Orling Architecture
Randy Randall, Fords Landing
Larry Ray, President, Blackwall Hitch restaurant
Stephanie Tincher, Rust Orling Architecture
Ken Wire, McGuire Woods, counsel to Carr Hospitality
Dennis Burns, Burns & Associates, Blackwall Hitch, Architect

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chair Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:34 A.M.

Approval of Minutes from September 17, 2013

Moved by Dunn, seconded by Speck, to approve the summary minutes of the September 17, 2013 meeting with corrections. The motion passed by a voice vote with Bernstein and Smedberg abstaining.

Report from Public Safety Organizations

Police Department

Provided by Chief Cook later in the meeting.

Fire Department

Cross reviewed incidents; none major; he reported that the City's new fireboat is now moored at the City Marina.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Marina Security Update

Browand reported that, following the City's transfer of responsibility for Marina security to RPCA, as of July 1, 2013, (the start of FY2014), staff has instituted a variety of new security improvements and continues to look for opportunities for additional improvements.

Founders Park Flexipave Repairs

Browand reported the City is working with the manufacturer and installer to repair several parts of the new Flexipave surface that the City installed in Founders Park as a pilot project to test the surface's effectiveness in park areas close to the water. In response to Bernstein's report that water ponding on trails is blocking access to the trash bins and making portions of the trail in accessible to strollers, Browand said the City will be working to resolve the ponding problem throughout the park during this fall and winter.

Beautification Commission Award – Founders Park Dog Park

Browand reported the Alexandria Beautification Commission honored the Founders Park Dog Park Association and RPCA for the improvements made to the dog park.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts - Mark Jinks

Jinks reported that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA), whose exhibits are currently located only in buildings at its Richmond campus, had been discussing with City officials and the Robinson Terminal North (RTN) contract purchaser, City Interests, the possibility of establishing a permanent Northern Virginia site for its exhibits. Jinks said that the VMFA, as a state agency, recognizes that creating a Northern Virginia presence would help it better serve northern Virginia residents.

Jinks said the City is interested in having VMFA locate a branch here but the museum does not currently have the state or private funding needed to cover the \$50 million cost that would likely be needed to locate a permanent large-scale facility at RTN. Jinks said the City will be looking for suitable City-owned buildings that might suit a smaller-scale VMFA.

Thayer invited questions from Commissioners and the public. There were none.

Earl Cook, Police Chief, Alexandria Police Department (APD)

King & Union Street Intersection

Thayer thanked Chief Cook for accepting the Commission's invitation to discuss continuing concern to the Commission of how the City can improve pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular safety at the heavily congested King/Union Street intersection.

Chief Cook said the confluence of pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles at this location poses special challenges for managing the traffic flow and factors such as speed and pedestrians ignoring traffic regulations further complicate the problem. In response to Commissioners' concerns about cyclists' behavior, he said many cyclists adhere to the rules but APD continues to receive many complaints about cyclists violating traffic regulations.

In response to Commissioners' suggestion that police officers be stationed at the King/Union intersection to direct traffic, Chief Cook said this would not necessarily make the intersection safer because it might encourage both speeding and a false sense of security among those who travel through the intersection. In response to Commissioners' questions about why the officers currently posted there do not also respond to traffic problems when they see them, Chief Cook said that 20 years ago Council directed police be posted at King/Union with the specific mission of improving safety, not to direct traffic. He said if the City were to task APD to provide officers to direct traffic at King/Union the site's heavy pedestrian volume would likely require three additional officers. He said stationing them for six hours a day would cost the City at least \$3000/day and doing so would be unlikely to improve either safety or traffic flow. Chief Cook said he thought a traffic signal at King/Union would be the only way likely to improve the traffic flow or safety.

Manor said the City needs new measures now to improve safety and mitigate traffic congestion at King/Union because it will worsen in coming years as Waterfront development proceeds. Chief Cook said the first choice the City should make is how to reduce and/or address the King/Union pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Bernstein said a traffic light at King/Union would be inconsistent with the nature of the Old and Historic District and the City should instead direct the APD officers there on Friday and Saturday evenings for security purposes also to direct traffic as needed. Chief Cook said Council would need to task APD to add this mission for the officers now there. In response to Chief Cook's statistics showing fewer King/Union accidents than those at other City intersections Speck said APD should include data on the many close calls when assessing the intersection's safety. Speck said a 24/7 measure such as elevating the crosswalks would be more effective than part-time measures like traffic cameras or traffic officers. Van Fleet said a traffic officer should manage the intermodal conflicts, especially those caused by cyclists ignoring stop signs. Smedberg and Bernstein said it creates a poor public impression of the police to see several police cars parked near King/Union and APD officers not responding to traffic problems at King/Union when they see them. Chief Cook said the APD cars need to be parked nearby so the officers can quickly access them when they respond to incidents.

Mutty said the need to improve intermodal traffic safety and traffic flow at King/Union are related but separate challenges and the Commission should define its concerns for the intersection more clearly so that Council can consider them. Bordner said options, including a King/Union traffic light, should be considered. Citizen Buzzell asked how many King/Union APD citations were issued for cyclist violations and fender-benders during the past year and how many cases went to court. Chief Cook said these figures would not provide a complete picture of the King/Union challenges because citations are only issued when an officer is there to witness a violation and officers are there only part-time. He said enforcement of traffic regulations at King/Union does not seem to alter behavior.

Development Presentations

Blackwall Hitch Alexandria, SUP Applicant for the Torpedo Factory Food Court Pavilion

Applicant representative Duncan Blair introduced Larry Ray, a member of Blackwall Hitch Alexandria LLC, and reviewed their Special Use Permit application proposal for a restaurant in

the Torpedo Factory Food Court Pavilion which has been vacant since December 2011. Blair said the company had filed the SUP application with the City in September 2013 for a 450-seat restaurant and said the applicant hopes that the City can approve Blackwall Hitch's plans by December 2013 so the company can move ahead with the building reconditioning and architectural improvements that are needed before the restaurant can open at the site. The restaurant will occupy the entire building and no major changes in the building configuration will occur. He said the owners envision an urban chic design for the restaurant building that will be open and include a Waterfront view of the Torpedo Factory. Blair said Blackwall Hitch plans to encourage use of the underutilized on-site City parking garage and a group is considering how the gazebo might be reenergized. Ray said his goal is to complete work on the Blackwall Hitch building in time for the restaurant to open in fall 2014. In response to Wojtanowski's questions about conservation-related planning, Ray said the Blackwall Hitch management team plans a family-focused and green restaurant and, among conservation-related measures being considered are roof-top solar panels. Wojtanowski said the restaurant should also avoid using styrofoam containers for take-away food.

Smedberg asked if Blackwall Hitch would be willing to include public restrooms in their building since they are needed for Waterfront visitors. Blair said the company is working with the City to determine whether public restrooms can be located in the building in a manner consistent with maintenance and security requirements.

Thayer invited questions from the public. There were none.

Commissioners said they are eager to help expedite the City's review of the Blackwall Hitch proposal and Thayer asked staff to provide the Commission a monthly status report of actions related to the Blackwall Hitch's SUP approval process. Staff agreed to do so.

220 S. Union Street – Presentation by Carr Hospitality

Note: The full Carr Hospitality (Carr) presentation is posted to the Commission's webpage on the City website.

Applicant representative Ken Wire reviewed Carr's updated concept plan submitted to the City for the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) it has requested for the 120-room boutique hotel it proposes for 220 S. Union Street, site of the Cummings Warehouse building at the south end of the Cummings-Turner Block at Union and Duke Streets.

Wire said the hotel plan includes a restaurant, parking and a small conference room to be available for hotel guests' use and requested the Commission's guidance regarding its preferences regarding the hotel's architectural style and other issues. He said the information provided was the same as that given by Carr at the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) at its September 25, 2013 work session and at the Old Town Civic Association on October 10, 2013, with the exception of two final slides added after those discussions.

He said it is Carr's intent to develop a design that incorporates the Waterfront Small Area Plan's goals to provide block porosity and a clear view shed of the water. Among the details provided

Wire said the hotel, as planned, is expected to generate approximately \$1 million per year of net new City tax revenue and will make an affordable housing contribution of \$1.50 per square foot. In response to Wojtanowski's questions about building elevation, active and passive conservation systems and changes to planned open space, Wire said Carr's goal is to achieve a Gold or Silver LEED certification and he would ask the architect about open space.

Smedberg said he is concerned that Carr's desire to incorporate as many features as possible from the many ideas offered during public outreach does not result in a final design that looks like it has been designed by committee. He offered the design of the Time-Life building on Duke Street as an example of how a final design can go very wrong from too much effort to incorporate all the many features requested during the public outreach process. Wire said Carr recognizes this challenge. Smedberg said many Alexandrians have talked with him about this concern and said they hope the final hotel design will be one that can break the bland overall impression created when the current buildings along the Waterfront are viewed from the water.

Van Fleet said the design should be similar in scale to the smaller Morrison House and said he does not think underground parking here is feasible because of its vulnerability to flooding. He submitted for the Commission record a 1933 Washington Post article included in the book, Washington Weather, by Kevin Ambrose, Dan Henry and Andy Weiss, that describes the City's 10-foot flooding on August 23, 1933 when a hurricane's huge tidal surge up the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River flooded the City to a level of 10 feet.

Commissioners said they want to consider the complexity of the issues involved in the proposed hotel's design more carefully than time available at the morning's meeting allowed. Dunn said that because the issues surrounding the proposed Carr hotel are so important and the need to get them right so great, the Commission recommendation should be carefully crafted and made soon enough to influence decision-making in a timely fashion.

Dunn moved and Van Fleet seconded that the Chair appoint a small committee to review issues related to the Carr hotel development concept for the 220 S. Union Street site and to draft a Commission position to be forwarded to the full Commission for action at its next regular meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote

Thayer appointed Commissioners Hall (Commission Chair), Manor, Baum, Delaney, Bethel, Van Fleet, Watters, Bordner and Hoogland to a committee to be chaired by Hall and said the committee's goal would be to meet within the next 10 days to review the issues and develop options that the full Commission will review, amend and finalize at its next meeting and then submit to Council. Browand said he will announce the meeting date when it is set.

Baum said she and a number of Waterfront Plan supporters she has spoken with prefer a design concept for the hotel that focuses less on emulating the boxiness of a warehouse and more on ways to incorporate warehouse-inspired elements within a more innovative design. Wire said it would be helpful to have Commission preferences regarding building design put in writing.

Citizen Garbow said he was concerned the design appears to have hotel guests, an employee parking shuttle and taxis all accessing the hotel via Union Street. Wire said Carr will choose a

design that reflects whatever the overall community preference is determined to be. Citizen Callahan said OTCA's members remain concerned by the hotel's overall mass and scale, the decision to rely mainly on an employee parking shuttle rather than on-site parking, and Carr's estimate that there will be only 10-20 employees per 8-hour shift. Wire said Carr will provide more details about how Carr addresses employee parking at its other Alexandria hotels and said the hotel's proposed size is the minimum for the hotel to be profitable.

Waterfront Plan Implementation

Planning & Zoning

Food Court SUP Application Status

Williams said staff will provide the Commission monthly updates of actions related to the City's review of Blackwall Hitch's SUP application.

Development Updates – Project Matrix Review

Williams said the Project Matrix distributed has been updated as of October 2013.

100 block of King Street – Multimodal Feasibility Study

Williams said the RFP the City plans to issue for a multi-modal feasibility study reflects Commissioners' guidance at previous meetings that outreach be undertaken with businesses in the 100 and 200 blocks of King Street, immediately north and south on Lee and Fairfax Streets, and other parts of the surrounding area. She clarified that this feasibility study is just an initial step and it will determine if the City will proceed further with a design.

Dunn said he thought it crucial to solicit opinions from neighboring stakeholders about how pedestrianization might affect them before the City takes any action. Browand and Baker reiterated that this first RFP is a study to help determine feasibility and it will take into account if and how adjacent local businesses and the surrounding community might be impacted by factors such as access to the businesses, changes in the multimodal flow of traffic through the area, and parking.

Thayer said the Commission wants to ensure that no action be taken that is related to implementing the closure of the 100 block of King Street to vehicles before the Commission has first reviewed the results of this feasibility study. Staff agreed that this would be done.

The Olin Studio Community Meeting Update

Williams reminded the Commission of the City's public meeting scheduled for that evening, October 15, 2013, at which Laurie Olin, award-winning landscape architect and founder of The Olin Studio, would discuss his design philosophy. The City has chosen the Olin Studio to work with the engineering firm URS Corporation to develop the landscape and flood mitigation designs for the Waterfront. She said the meeting will be the first of a series of City meetings on the landscape and flood mitigation design to be developed and urged Commissioners to attend what was expected to be an interesting discussion and kick-off for this process.

General Services***Beachcomber RFP Update***

Stewart reported that General Services continues to review proposals that were received, is using outside economic experts to assess the economic viability of each proposal's business model, and hopes to complete its review by December 2013.

Transportation & Environmental Services***Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Replacement Summary Scope of Work***

Baker reported that, as the first step in a multi-phase process, the City plans to hire a consultant to conduct a concept review of the City's existing Windmill Park Bulkhead Replacement Plan, approved by Council in 2003. She said the review is being conducted to ensure the City has considered the most appropriate bulkhead design options available before it proceeds with the work and that current best practices and regulatory requirements are followed. She said the City also wants to ensure that the community's current preferences for bulkhead replacement can be considered and that they reflect a realistic public understanding of the current schedule and funding constraints. Baker said one additional option staff would like to review is that for a natural shoreline. Browand said the proposed schedule is consistent with the timing of project funding included in the FY2015 operating budget, and the FY2014-23 CIP Budget.

Citizen Buzzell said Hurricane Isabel's impact should be reviewed and citizen Randall said the City should ensure both the basin and shoreline are addressed. Commissioners said they support the proposed Scope of Work.

The Strand Flood Mitigation (Backflow Preventer) Update

Baker reported that the contract had been awarded and work will start once agreement is reached on the contractor's proposed staging of the work.

Report from Commissioners***Marina Committee***

Thayer reported the committee did not meet in October and its next tasks will include developing a recommendation for the full Commission's response to the 2013 Marina Conditions Assessment Report and reviewing the Marina's rules and regulations to identify any needed changes.

Announcements / Public Comments

Browand said the City meeting with Laurie Olin of The Olin Group was set for that evening, October 15, 2013,

Browand said the Waterfront Commission and Park and Recreation Commission would hold a joint meeting Thursday evening October 17, 2013 to hear from the contract purchasers of Robinson Terminal North and Robinson Terminal South.

Browand said a Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday November 7, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. to consider possible options for the City to use when implementing the Waterfront Small Area Plan, including eminent domain as a way to resolve the City's longstanding dispute with the Old

Dominion Boat Club's parking lot and adjacent areas. He said Council has scheduled a November 19, 2013 public discussion and hearing to consider the issue.

Browand said the next regular Commission meeting is November 19, 2013 at 7:30 A.M.

Manor said a party is scheduled for 4 p.m. Sunday November 17, 2013 to celebrate the opening of the Waterfront Market.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 A.M.