

Summary Minutes

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 16, 2013

Alexandria City Hall, Room 2000

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
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission
Art Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and Acting Chair
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Patricia Miller, Alexandria Commission on the Arts
David Speck Citizen Representative from Park Planning District III
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Acting Vice Chair,
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

Absent:

Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat leaseholder
Trey Hanbury, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Kathy Siefert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council

City Staff:

Captain James Bartlett, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Battalion Chief Michael Cross, Alexandria Fire Department (AFD)
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Deputy Chief David Huchler, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Dan Imig, Civil Engineer III, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
Sandra Marks, Acting Deputy Director, T&ES
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Marti Reinfeld, Chief, Transit Division, T&ES
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

Guests:

Engin Artemel
Howard Bergman, FPCA

Renee Cordone, ACVA
Harry Harrington, Old Dominion Boat Club
Lorraine Lloyd, ACVA
Ruth McKenty, Beautification Commission
Jeanne Theisen, Gazette Packet
Julie Wannamaker, FPCA
Mike Young, Olde Towne Gemstones

Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the Commission to order at 7:32 a.m. and welcomed John Bordner and David Speck as new members of the Commission. Commissioners, staff and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from March 19, 2013

Moved by Thayer, seconded by Manor, to approve the summary minutes of the March 19, 2013 meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Report from Police Department

Hall introduced Bartlett and Huchler and said Huchler had previously worked with the City’s Motorcoach Task Force. Bartlett reviewed crime statistics from January 1, 2013 through 6 a.m. April 16, 2013 for the areas bordering the Waterfront, including South Union Street and King Street from the Waterfront through Washington Street. He said the incidents reported had been minor and there had, for example, been no robberies within this area. He said there were four fewer offenses within this area during this time period as compared to the same period the previous year.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Marina Facility Condition Assessment Study Update

Browand said he expected the assessment to be completed by June 2013.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Safety Fence Update

Browand said installation was expected to be finished within the next few weeks.

Proposed Special Events Policy Amendment – Commission Action

Commissioners discussed the City’s proposed policy amendment to create new criteria for holding events in Founders Park. Thayer moved, Van Fleet seconded, that the Commission table consideration of the proposed policy change until its May 2013 meeting at which time it will consider the value of the proposed change and potential modifications to the proposed change. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Annual Commission Waterfront Walk – Set June Date

Commissioners decided to schedule the Commission's annual Waterfront Walk (the Walk) for Saturday, June 8, 2013 at 9 a.m. and agreed that the Walk would begin at Oronoco Bay Park and move southward to Windmill Hill Park.

New Fire Boat

Cross (FPD) reported that delivery of the City’s new fireboat is expected by early June 2013 and operator training will follow. He said it will be moored at the south side of the G/H pier. Cross said the current fireboat was put into dry dock in Woodbridge to avoid the need for additional repairs after the City had replaced one of its motors in summer 2012, for \$35,000, and mechanical problems with its other motor had developed in fall 2012.

Waterfront Plan Implementation

Planning & Zoning

Food Pavilion

Williams (P&Z) reported that Rappaport Companies continues to market the Food Court actively and that the restaurant *Not Your Average Joes*, a potential lessee, had decided to choose a D.C. location instead of the Food Pavilion.

Torpedo Factory Waterfront Market

Williams reported that Jody Manor, Waterfront Market, LLC, had applied for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to locate a restaurant and market near the Torpedo Factory with outdoor seating along King Street and a portion of the Marina. (Manor provided additional details later in the meeting.)

Baum asked that the realtors be invited to discuss with the Commission why *Not Your Average Joes* chose a DC location rather than the Food Pavilion. Commissioners said it was important to identify which issues the City might need to address to increase the Food Pavilion’s appeal to potential tenants.

Williams said staff had briefed Rappaport representatives in November 2012 on the many improvements the City is either planning for the area or is currently undertaking to increase the appeal of this area in general pursuant to the Waterfront SAP and other related plans and policies. Speck said that while a Council Member the previous year he had been told by realtors for prospective Food Pavilion tenants that issues of concern include the building’s physical infrastructure needing major improvements, difficulty seeing the site from the street prevents passers-by from seeing that a restaurant is there, and the location needs to be brightened to increase its visibility at night. Manor said his previous experience operating a business in the Food Pavilion had shown the building’s infrastructure to have significant problems.

Williams said the increased activity that would be generated by Manor’s proposed Waterfront restaurant/market would, if approved, help enliven the Marina area, and the City had already trimmed trees back to increase the views of the location. She indicated the City has also shared information with Realco and its brokers on how other issues raised by realtors can be addressed by potential tenants. Baum said the Commission should consider how to address the question of whether the building has become physically obsolescent.

Development Updates

Robinson Terminals North and South (RTN and RTS)

Williams said Studley Inc. continues to market the RTN and RTS properties actively and both properties have been shown a number of times.

The Oronoco

Williams reported construction continues on its planned schedule and staff will arrange a site tour for the Commission after construction has been completed and the building is enclosed again.

204-206 S. Union Street

Williams reported completion of the renovation is expected in June 2013 and a ribbon-cutting would then be scheduled.

Art and History Waterfront Plan Implementation Committee

Williams said the Committee continues to meet alternate Thursdays at the Durant Center.

Landscape Design Update

Williams said the final contract is expected to be finalized by late spring.

Commission Waterfront Boat Tour of D.C.

Williams reported that the Commission tour of D.C. waterfront areas is set for Thursday, April 25, 2013; boarding will start at 1:45 pm at the City Marina and the boat, to be provided by the Potomac Riverboat Company, will depart at 2 p.m.

Beachcombers Restaurant RFP - Update

Browand (RPCA) reported on behalf of General Services (GS) that the RFP was issued February 28, 2013 and is posted at www.alexandriava.gov/GeneralServices. He said GS opened the building on March 29, 2013, during which potential applicants were invited to tour it; the submission deadline for proposals is June 10, 2013; and more information about the next steps in the RFP process should be available for the Commission's June meeting.

Transportation & Environmental Services, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association, and Alexandria Police Department

Motorcoach Awareness and Enforcement

Marks (T&ES) and Lloyd (ACVA) updated the Commission on the City's motorcoach awareness and enforcement campaign, the first update since T&ES Director Rich Baier had briefed the Commission on motorcoach planning for the 2013 season at the Commission's October 2012 meeting.

Lloyd said ACVA is conducting an education campaign directed at both tour operators and the community to increase awareness of City rules and regulations that affect motorcoaches. She said ACVA had increased the prominence of links on ACVA's website to the City website's information and on-line registration, City businesses are supporting ACVA's education efforts, and door hangers listing dos and don'ts for motorcoaches are being printed for distribution. She said complaints about tour bus violations have been declining each year. ACVA distributed copies of the cover of *Destination Magazine*, published by the American Bus Association, featuring an article on Alexandria as a destination.

Van Fleet said he thought the City should change its rules to ban motorcoaches from the Old and Historic District and that he had been advised by a former City Attorney that General Assembly

approval would not be needed to do that. Van Fleet handed out language from the City Charter which he said is related to his claim. Dunn said this judgment was at odds with information provided by T&ES Director Rich Baier at the Commission’s October 2012 meeting when Baier had said the City Attorney had advised staff that City restrictions on motorcoaches visiting the City would need State approval. Dunn indicated that he did not think it was advisable for the Commission to discuss the matter without the benefit of the Director of T&ES seeing the language and hearing from him again.

Speck said prohibiting tour buses from the Old and Historic District would substantially undermine ACVA’s mission of attracting visitors to the City. Speck and Bernstein said consistent enforcement of the rules should be the priority. Hall said that as an issue whose geographic impact extends beyond the Waterfront area, and beyond the Commission’s jurisdiction, the problem of motorcoach traffic violations should be addressed in a broader context and include the relevant Commissions with that broader jurisdiction.

Captain Bartlett (APD) said two key factors will influence APD’s ability to address the problem effectively: (1) Improved education about locations authorized for passenger loading and unloading because when a motorcoach stops at an unauthorized location the action usually takes only a few minutes and the violator has left before APD can respond to a report of the violation; and (2) APD’s difficulty pulling motorcoach-specific traffic violations from the APD databases because violations are not coded as motorcoach-specific. Deputy Chief Huchler (AFD) said enforcement alone will not resolve the problem because tour bus operators often consider traffic tickets part of the cost of doing business.

Thayer asked if the City can ban a tour bus company from traveling into Old Town after excessive traffic violations and Deputy Chief Huchler said that would be a policy issue for the Commission, not APD, to address. Lloyd said that when the ACVA calls a motorcoach company’s owner directly about traffic violations the owner usually addresses the problem. She said violations should be reported to Renee Cardone (ACVA) who will then contact the company’s owner. Speck and Bartlett said it is important to ensure that APD officers are familiar with the authorized loading/unloading locations. Contact information was provided for Renee Cardone:

Renee Cardone
Manager of Visitor Services
Alexandria Visitors Center at Ramsay House, ACVA
221 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
703.746.3301 – main, **703.746.3313** – Renee’s Direct Number
RCardone@VisitAlexVA.com – Renee’s Email Address

King Street Trolley Budget Reductions Update

Reinfeld (T&ES) reviewed the cost analysis behind the City’s proposed FY2014 budget proposal to change Trolley headways from 15 to 20 minutes in response to Commissioners’ having said at their March 2013 meeting that they think the frequency of the King Street Trolley headways should be decreased not increased. Commissioners, also at that time, added that the Trolley should operate on a continuous loop rather than a fixed schedule to better respond to peak ridership demand; that headways between trolleys should not be changed from 15 to 20 minutes; and asked the City to investigate ways to reallocate funds to support the Trolley service,

Reinfeld said the proposed reduction in headway would save approximately \$140,000 in annual operational costs (fuel and labor).

In response to Commissioners’ concerns raised at the March meeting that City resources are being wasted by requiring Trolley drivers to park and wait so they can depart on the current 15-minute schedule instead of running continuously on an at-least-every-15-minutes schedule, Reinfeld said the City’s goal is to have a simple Trolley system that operates on the same predictable schedule throughout the year. Thayer said the current policy responds to December and July passenger demand as though they were the same rather than providing more frequent service during higher-use times. Thayer said keeping trolleys on the same schedule year-round leads to trolleys often needing to pass waiting passengers during high-usage times like summer and travel half-empty during low-usage months. Watters said visitors to the City are more interested in being able to board a bus with available seats than about keeping a predictable bus schedule that lets buses leave at a predictable time but are full.

Watters, Manor, Baum and Dunn said it seems the Commission consensus is that the Trolley should either run continuously like systems used in many other cities, or the City should explore ways to run them every 12 to 15 minutes at peak demand times. There was a Commission consensus that when a Trolley sitting at its Waterfront or King Street Metro stop reaches full capacity it should be able to depart and that the process should not let two Trolleys sit together waiting to depart. Manor said Trolley ridership had significantly increased when the headways were changed from 20 to 15 minutes and using a continuous loop schedule should be doable.

Reinfeld said a question is whether the Trolley should be schedule-based or headway-based. She said a continuous loop works best when it leaves every 10-12 minutes to avoid people having to wait 15 or 20 minutes if they had just missed a Trolley. Marks said additional funding would be needed to increase the frequency of Trolley service.

Oronoco Street Outfall Project Update

Imig (T&ES) said the major visual construction presence is expected to be removed within a month and the goal is to finish the project by early June.

Flood Mitigation “As Built” Survey Update

Browand reported for T&ES that the project’s survey work is nearing completion and additional details would be provided at either the May or June Commission meeting.

Waterfront Market SUP Update

Manor, on behalf of The Waterfront Market, LLC, provided a PowerPoint presentation titled “Transforming our Waterfront: A Proposal for Progress”, that reviewed the proposal he submitted in February 2013 to the City requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) to create a Waterfront Market with food service. He said the City’s three-mile Waterfront currently has only one location with seating outside for eating/drinking, and the proposed Waterfront Market project would significantly increase the area’s vibrancy in a way that will appeal to both residents and visitors. He said the project as submitted to the City includes three elements to be implemented incrementally: a quick-service restaurant, a market, and outdoor seating on King Street and at the Marina.

Manor said his goal is to implement the project by summer 2013 and noted that the space, located in the unit block of King Street at 101 N. Union Street, is currently occupied by the Office of Historic Alexandria. He said the space has not had a long-term paying tenant for 10 years. The project would include a new entrance to the restaurant/market from the unit block of King Street. Manor said the next steps in the review process will include a May 7, 2013 Planning Commission Public Hearing on the SUP application and, if approved, it would likely be docketed by the Council for its May 18, 2013 Public Hearing.

Discussion

Thayer said the Market proposal would substantially enhance the area for neighborhood residents and their opinions should be solicited. Baum said the Waterfront Market concept would also increase the appeal of the Food Court to potential tenants.

Fox proposed and Thayer seconded a motion that the Commission send a letter supporting the concept of The Waterfront Market as proposed by the Manor presentation. The motion was approved by a voice vote with none opposed and two abstaining (Van Fleet and Dunn).

Speck said two elements of the plan are key to the Waterfront Market’s potential success: having an entrance to the Marina area from the unit block of King Street, and having outdoor seating. Commissioners said having such a market area would further increase the importance of the City having public restrooms in the Marina area.

Manor said a broader issue he would like the Commission to discuss at a future time is the need for the City’s continued actions to create an attractive and vibrant Waterfront area that is welcoming to visitors.

Reports from Commissioners

Marina Committee

Thayer reviewed the Committee’s April 11 meeting with the Marina’s slip leaseholders to review Marina rules and receive feedback from leaseholders and he thanked staff for their overview of ongoing projects in the Marina area. He reported that leaseholders complained at the meeting about bicycle riding within the Marina area and said the Committee had recommended that appropriate signage prohibiting biking on the City Marina be installed. It was also noted by staff that a new bicycle corral has been placed on the south side of the unit block of King Street and bike arrows have been painted on Union Street near Queen Street.

Speck said he would raise for discussion at a future meeting the issues of food and beer truck loading at inappropriate locations.

Announcements / Public Discussion

Hall said cyclists participating in the George Washington Parkway Classic Saturday April 20, 2013 would finish the race at Oronoco Bay Park.