

MINUTES – Working Draft
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 16, 2013
Alexandria City Hall, Room 2000

Members:

Present:

Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission
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 and Chair
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation)
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
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:

Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.
Stephen Mutty, Citizen Park Planning District I
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council

Vacancy:

Representative, Alexandria Commission for the Arts

City Staff:

Emily Baker, City Engineer, Engineering Division, Transportation and
Environmental Services (T&ES)
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)
Battalion Chief Michael Cross, Alexandria Fire Department (AFD)
Farrol Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Lt. Don Hayes, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Lt. Shirl Mammarella, APD
Joel Marcuson, Deputy Director, T&ES
Jeremy McPike, Director, General Services
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

Guests: Ruth McKenty, Beautification Committee
Mike Young, Olde Town Gemstones

Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Approval of Minutes from June 18, 2013

Moved by Dunn, seconded by Watters, to approve the summary minutes of the June 18, 2013 meeting with corrections.

Report from Police Department.

Hayes reviewed crime statistics for the previous month for the area bordering the Waterfront, including South Union Street and King Street extending from the Waterfront to Washington Street. Hayes introduced Assistant Commander Mammarella who had assumed responsibility for overseeing parking, traffic and special events in the Old Town area in April 2013. She said the City is considering options to address current congestion problems, including possibilities for modifying loading zone-related policies within the King//Union corridor.

Fire Department Report

Cross reviewed Waterfront-related incidents the Fire Department had responded to and reported that the City's new fireboat is now in the water, and expected to be ready for its final inspection in August 2013. Wojtanowski asked that information about the new fire boat's vertical clearance be provided to the Commission.

Cross said the first of the City's new fleet of fire engines, which have enhanced safety features and higher capacity than do the City's current engines, had begun to enter service and that the City would store the new engines at Robinson Terminal North on a short-term basis, at no cost, to the City. He said the City will keep the current engines until Alexandria Fire Department (AFD) has certified the new engines as problem-free. Hall asked that AFD reports be made a regular part of the Commission's monthly meetings.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Browand said he is coordinating with AFD to develop a schedule for regular testing of the fire suppression system. McPike said maintaining the fire suppression system in peak condition has been an ongoing challenge that General Services (GS) and RPCA staff address each spring.

Marina Facility Condition Assessment Study Update

Browand reported the assessment's conclusions were presented at the Marina Committee's June 27, 2013 meeting and the City expects to receive the report's final detailed assessment, including cost estimates, by the end of July 2013. Thayer summarized the report's highlights as presented at the Committee meeting and said the consultants had identified no significant safety issues.

Browand reviewed City follow-up plans to implement the assessment recommendations and said a detailed report, including cost estimates, will be presented at the Marina Committee's August 2013 meeting. He said staff's next step will be to prioritize the report's 'must do', 'should do',

and ‘could do’ recommendations. Thayer said the need to upgrade Marina utilities was an important issue raised during the Marina Committee’s July discussion.

Waterfront Walk Follow-up Items Update

Browand reviewed the “Items for Follow Up” chart provided to the Commission, created to track staff actions taken in response to questions raised during the Commission’s June 8, 2013 Waterfront walk. Among the issues discussed by Commissioners was the problem of cyclists exiting the Wilkes Street Tunnel at excessive speeds and Baum asked how Council’s recent approval of bicycles being ridden on the sidewalk might affect this problem. Van Fleet said the new ordinance does not include King Street sidewalks from West Street to the river and Union Street sidewalks, from Prince to Cameron Street. Browand said the City’s Union Street Corridor study’s traffic calming measures would help address this.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Replacement Next Steps

Browand reported that now that the City had moved funding to replace the bulkhead from FY2016 to FY2015 staff is developing a draft Scope of Work for the project that should be ready for the Commission to review at its September 2013 meeting. He said the City’s community outreach process soliciting comments on the draft scope would then follow. Browand said staff will be working during the public engagement process to develop realistic community expectations that are consistent with the funding available to replace the bulkhead. Baker said the goal is to finalize the project’s scope of work by fall 2013

Waterfront Plan Implementation

Planning & Zoning

Landscape Design Update

Williams reported that, after conducting a broad international search, the City had chosen award-winning U.S. landscape architect Laurie Olin, winner of the 2012 National Medal for the Arts, and his Olin Studio’s inter-disciplinarian team of designers, engineers and public space, lighting and other professionals, to develop the world-class design envisioned by the City’s Waterfront Small Area Plan. Williams said examples of the Olin Studio’s waterfront, flood mitigation and public space designs throughout the region, country and abroad include well-known projects such as New York City’s Bryant Park, Washington D.C.’s Canal Park (opened in 2012), the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden (1993), the design for the National Monument Grounds for Sylvan Theatre (May 2012), and the Annapolis’ City Dock Master Plan. Williams said the Olin team will work in close partnership with the URS Corporation, the City’s flood mitigation consultants, to ensure continuous coordination of the landscape and flood mitigation components of the Waterfront design.

Williams said members of The Olin Studio and URS Corporation teams will be at the Commission’s September 17, 2013 meeting to provide an overview for Commission discussion of the design and community participation processes they plan to follow over the next 12-14 months. She said Laurie Olin plans to be at the Commission’s October 2013 meeting and information about previous Olin projects can be found at theolinstudio.com and at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurie_Olin#United_States.

Browand suggested the Commission might want to use its process of scheduling a special Commission meeting on the Thursday following its regular monthly meeting to meet with Olin in October 2013.

Development Updates

Williams reviewed information that had been updated on staff's chart of development activities provided to the Commission.

204-206 S. Union Street (the Brandt warehouses)

Williams said the tenant, Columbia Capital, has moved in and a Commission building tour is being planned by the Brandts for September 2013.

601 N. Fairfax Street – The Oronoco (EYA)

Williams said she and EYA have discussed having an October 2013 building tour for Commissioners after the building has been fully enclosed.

Robinson Terminals North & South

Williams said it is the City's impression that the decision process has entered its final stages.

220 S. Union Street (Carr Hospitality)

Williams said Carr has met with City staff and will file a revised proposal for the site that reflects significant changes that were made in response to BAR inputs.

101 and 107 N. Union Street - Waterfront Market

Manor, owner of the planned market, reported that construction should begin shortly and a late summer opening is planned.

Potential Lower King Street Closure

Williams said that, as a follow up to Council's decision to study the concept of closing lower King Street to vehicular traffic to create a pedestrian plaza, staff is finalizing the Scope of Work for the Request for Proposals (RFP) and has incorporated all the Commission comments about the idea that were offered at the Commission's June 2013 meeting. Delaney said he thought the Commission should have a second opportunity to discuss the scope of the RFP, especially the option of converting the street to a shared street for pedestrian and vehicular traffic rather than one closed to vehicular traffic. Delaney said he thinks closing lower King Street to vehicles would impact local businesses inappropriately.

Browand said the scope of work is not for a design RFP, but instead for an RFP for the City to hire a firm to identify the full range of traffic-related issues, including potential cost, that would need to be addressed if the City were to decide to close lower King Street to vehicular traffic. He said the consultant will also reach out to all stakeholders potentially affected by such a closure, including merchants. Williams said the lower King Street study is separate from but will be coordinated with the City project examining the potential closure of the Unit block of King Street. Commissioners requested a copy of the revised scope of work before the RFP is released and Williams agreed to provide it. Hall reminded Commissioners to share information about the scope with their respective constituencies.

***Transportation & Environmental Services
King & Union Street Left-Hand Turn Update***

Marcuson said the City had ended the pilot program to test the impact on the intersection's traffic congestion and removed the signage. He said the observed impact of the signage and the no-left turn restriction had been a net negative since were not adhering to the policy and confusion among drivers and pedestrians had resulted. Hall said she would invite the Police Commissioner to discuss at the Commission's next meeting the possibility of stationing a uniformed police officer at the intersection to regulate traffic.

Strand Street Flood Mitigation (Backflow Preventer)

Baker said the City had received construction bids in response to the City's RFP issued after completion of the design chosen for the Backflow Valve Project for King Street/The Strand, a project designed to lessen the area's nuisance flooding events caused by tidal back-up in the storm sewer system. Baker said the procurement office had not yet forwarded the bids to T&ES for review, but that T&ES expects construction of the backflow valve to begin in late summer 2013 and will keep the Commission advised of the project's progress.

General Services

Beachcomber RFP Update

McPike reported that the City had received three proposals in response to the Beachcomber RFP and would review those proposals carefully. He said the RFP's original closing date of June 10, 2013 had, on June 4, been extended to June 14, 2013 in response to a request from interested parties that the site's square footage be clarified. McPike said he expects the City review of the proposals received to take two to three months.

Dunn asked if all the bids received had proposed a restaurant use for the Beachcombers site. McPike said the City is legally prevented from revealing the nature of bids received in response to an RFP until the proposals have been thoroughly evaluated. He said all three bids received had responded to the criteria of restaurant use included within the RFP. Hamer said the City will review the bids using the criteria included in the RFP.

Browand said staff had previously told the Commission that if none of the bids received in response to the restaurant-only RFP were accepted by the City, the City had the option of modifying the criteria and reissuing a modified Beachcombers RFP.

Torpedo Factory Food Court

Browand said staff had received no new information from the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership about actions related to efforts to lease the Food Court. Van Fleet said he thought the City should consider non-restaurant uses for the site such using the site by a museum, the Seaport Foundation, or another organization. Speck said he thought the priority was to have a single use for the site, but not necessarily a single restaurant at the site.

Speck asked why a sawhorse is still be used to mark the one-way traffic pattern at King/Union. Williams suggested that Assistant T&ES Director Sandra Marks be invited to discuss the

question with the Commission at its next meeting. Livingood said Seaport Foundation interns could construct a structure such as a planter for the intersection.

Report from Commissioners

Marina Committee

Thayer said that, as a follow-up to the Committee's June 27, 2013 meeting at which the overview of the Marina assessment's conclusions had been discussed, he expected the Committee to hold an August 8, 2013 meeting at which information about the final, more detailed, assessment would be presented.

There were no other Commissioner reports.

Announcements / Public Discussion

Williams proposed, and the Commission discussed, conducting a tour by boat of the D.C. waterfront and the Canal Park site designed by the Olin Studio in place of the Commission's regular August 13, 2013 meeting. Hall and Browand said they would provide Commissioners date options for upcoming Waterfront tour dates for the Commission.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.