

Summary Minutes
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, June 18, 2013
Alexandria City Hall, Room 2000

Members:

Present:

Dennis Auld, Citizen, Park Planning District II
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.
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat leaseholder
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and Chair
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Stephen Mutty, Citizen Park Planning District I
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council
Steven Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St. and
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

Excused:

David Speck, Citizen, Park Planning District III

Absent:

Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

Vacancy:

Representative, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Representative, Alexandria Seaport Foundation

City Staff:

Rich Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
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
Joel Marcuson, Deputy Director, T&ES
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Steve Sindiong, Principal Transportation Planner, T&ES
James Spengler, Director, RPCA
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

Guests:

Engin Artemel, Rivergate Townhouses resident

Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association
Mel Garbow, Harborside Condominium Owners Association (COA)
Dene Garbow, Harborside COA, Public Art Committee and Art/History
Waterfront Plan Implementation Committee
Val Hawkins, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Ruth McKenty, Beautification Commission
Kathryn Papp, citizen
Joanne Platt, citizen
Julie Wannamaker, citizen

Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the Commission to order at 7:30 a.m. Commissioners, staff and guests introduced themselves. Hall introduced Livingood, executive director of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation, whose appointment as the Alexandria Seaport Foundation's representative on the Commission is pending and Steve Mutty, Planning District I representative.

Approval of Minutes from May 21, 2013

Moved by Fox, seconded by Dunn, to approve the summary minutes of the May 21, 2013 meeting. The motion passed by voice vote with no nays and one abstention (Smedberg).

Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)

Robinson Terminals North and South Request for Proposals (RFP)

Hawkins reported that the Washington Post Company had retained Studley, Inc. as brokers for the sale of the Washington Post Company's Robinson Terminal properties and that AEDP is in regular contact with both Studley, Inc. and the Washington Post Company. He said it was his understanding that approximately 40 property tours had been conducted during spring 2013, offers were called for in May, and offers have since been received for each site. Hawkins said those submitting bids on the properties had proposed a range of potential uses that include residential, office, mixed use and commercial. He said Studley Inc.'s goal is to finalize a purchase deal by August 2013.

Hall invited questions from the public. There were none. She said the Commission would stay in contact with AEDP over the summer so that it could follow events as they develop.

Election of FY 2014 Commission Officers: Chair & Vice Chair

Dunn moved and Fox seconded that Hall be appointed as Commission Chair and Thayer as Vice Chair. Commissioners commended Hall and Thayer for their work in recent months as Acting Chair and Acting Vice Chair. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Hall said she would, when appropriate, recuse herself from consideration of matters before the Commission affecting the Potomac Riverboat Company, her business.

Report from Police Department

Hayes said a formal report was not provided because this was his first day back in the office after several weeks of training and Captain Bartlett was on vacation. He invited questions and comments from Commissioners. Hall reported that peak season for motor coach traffic bringing

visitors to the Waterfront had concluded that week and said traffic along the one hundred block of The Strand had increased significantly after the City had begun its Pilot No Left Turn policy for the King/Union Street intersection. Watters asked whether an officer she had seen stop a large truck unloading a delivery as traffic backed up on Union Street had issued the driver a citation.

Artemel commended APD for its prompt response to a recent report of a crime in progress when attempted break-ins of parked cars had been observed.

Gosnell said that delivery vehicles' unauthorized loading and unloading at King/Union Streets was increasing the congestion and confusion created by the pilot No Left Turn restrictions at King/Union. Baier said traffic enforcement had been issuing citations for unauthorized parking either within an alley or on the street because parking at such locations blocks traffic flow and increases traffic clogging.

Hall asked that the Commission be provided a copy of printed information being provided by the City Manager's office and T&ES to Old Town businesses asking them to advise companies making deliveries to them of which locations are authorized for delivery truck parking. Hall said the City should consider working with ACVA and OTBA to educate Old Town businesses in this regard.

Bernstein and Gosnell said APD should enforce traffic rules rather than simply warn violators.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Marina Facility Condition Assessment Study Update

Browand reported that data collection for the assessment was complete He said staff would present a summary of the assessment's findings at the June 27, 2013 Marina Committee meeting and the City expected the consultants to provide the City their comprehensive assessment during July 2013.

Waterfront Walk Discussion

Browand reported that the June 8, 2013 Waterfront Walk had focused on general information issues and had not uncovered any problems about which staff was unaware. He invited questions and comments from Commissioners. In response to a question from Bernstein, Browand said staff planned to use the same template used to track issues raised during the previous year's Waterfront Walk and related follow-up actions.

Browand reported staff is reviewing Waterfront landscaping needs in two primary areas - north and south of Thompson's Alley and behind the Chart House. He said both issues were noted during the Waterfront Walk. Bernstein asked staff to remove an old Oronoco Bay Park sign at Canal Center. Browand said he would work with the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), the organization that works with Canal Center's owner, to address this.

Hall asked Commissioners for ideas regarding how the annual Waterfront Walk might be expanded and/or improved. Smedberg, Gosnell and Manor said it would be useful to view the Waterfront from the river to observe the view of the City that visitors see when arriving by water. Hall thanked Mutty for the pictures he had taken during the Waterfront Walk to record areas needing attention. Watters said the next year's Walk should focus on Waterfront areas

where there had been particular change during the coming year. Mutty said it is important for the Commission to focus both on current Waterfront conditions as well as changes planned for the future and suggested the Commission might appoint a volunteer to review the area regularly for maintenance issues that can be reported to the City and addressed quickly. Browand said the City will follow up on all issues raised but first priority will be given to addressing health and safety issues identified during the Walk.

In response to a question from Bernstein, Browand said work on the Outfall at the northern end of Founders Park was nearing completion. He said West's Point will remain closed until phase 2 of the project is completed, likely a year from now. Commissioners briefly discussed the need for the City to find a way to dispose of dredging material.

Waterfront Special Events: June-August 2013

Browand invited Commissioners to attend the June 24, 2013 "What's Next Alexandria" meeting. Browand reported that it had been necessary to postpone the planned visit in June 2013 of the Honey Fitz, the Presidential yacht used by John F. Kennedy and several other Presidents. He said the visit might be rescheduled for August 2013.

New City Fireboat

Cross reported that trial runs and other activities related to the City's new fireboat have begun, delivery of the special part ordered by the City for the new fireboat is expected in late July 2013 and delivery of the fireboat itself is expected in August 2013. He said the fireboat should be able to pass under both the 14th Street Bridge and the train trestle.

Waterfront Plan Implementation

Planning & Zoning

Williams reviewed the status of key actions related to the Flood Mitigation Project, the Landscape Design Project, and the Waterfront development projects represented in staff's newly created Waterfront Small Area Plan (SAP) Implementation Project Status Matrix.

Landscape Design and Flood Mitigation Update

Williams said the overall goal for the Waterfront Landscape Design project is to develop a consistent design that will be reflected throughout the Waterfront elements as the Waterfront Small Area Plan is implemented. Williams said consultant teams for the landscape design study and the flood mitigation study will work together and use the same data. She said URS had been chosen as the consultant team working on the flood mitigation study and the City expects to choose a consultant team for the Waterfront landscape design study by mid-July 2013. She said staff expects 15 percent of the design work for the flood mitigation and an equivalent of that percentage for the Waterfront landscape design to be completed within the next year.

Williams reviewed the four stages into which work has been divided and said Commissioners should feel assured that work on these two related projects will be effectively coordinated: She said Phase 1 deliverables include collecting new data and reviewing prior related studies to determine what additional information that is still be needed; and developing a plan to create a 15 percent design over the coming year for both the Flood Mitigation Project and the Landscape Design Projects. She said in Phase 2 of the work, after data has been collected, the consultants

will determine whether all proposed design elements included in the Waterfront Plan are feasible and determine what, if any, refinements may be needed and will then move forward with the design process.

Williams said staff considers the Commission a critical stakeholder in the process and will introduce the consultant teams to the Commission once they have been chosen.

Development Updates

City of Alexandria Waterfront Small Area Plan (SAP) Implementation Project Status Matrix

Williams reviewed highlights of information presented in the City's Waterfront Small Area Plan (SAP) Implementation Project Status Matrix that had been provided to the Commission and said staff would update the information regularly. She reviewed the Union Street Corridor Study's recommendations, the Oronoco Outfall Project, the Backflow Project, and the Utility Master Plan.

204-206 South Union Street

Williams reported that construction was largely finished on the Brandt Warehouse Buildings at 204–206 South Union Street and the tenant is expected to move in July 1, 2013. She said Brandt plans special work to be done in the lobby by fall 2013 and will invite the Commission to view the completed work then.

601 North Fairfax Street

She said the Commission will be invited to view The Oronoco redevelopment at 601 North Fairfax Street after construction to enclose the building has been completed.

220 Duke Street

Williams reported that Carr Hospitality remains interested in 220 Duke Street, which is being leased during the summer by the Art League, , as a potential site for a boutique hotel. She said the OHAD Board of Architectural Review (BAR) had provided comments on Carr's preliminary proposal in a July 2012 Work Session. Staff has now resumed its review of the preliminary proposal due to changes being made by Carr to the design, scale, and massing of the building based on OHAD's comments. She said Carr had not yet submitted an official application to the City regarding the project.

Williams reported that work on the new Waterfront Market continues as planned.

Fox said he thinks the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) should have a representative on the Commission. Thayer said he represents the geographic area in which ODBC is located.

Transportation & Environmental Services

King & Union Street Left Hand Turn Update

Baier reported that the new pilot No Left Turn restrictions imposed at the King/Union Street intersection were creating problems, particularly when a motorist failed to adhere to the No Left Turn restriction and others, particularly pedestrians, were surprised to have a vehicle turn at the site. He said T&ES intends to recommend that the City rescind the No Left Turn policy at King/Union Street.

Commissioners said they were concerned about confusion created by the No Left Turn restrictions and the signage bordering on “visual litter” that has been needed to publicize the new restrictions. They said motorist/pedestrian clogging of the King/Union intersection during peak traffic hours will remain a significant problem without new measures to control it.

Baier said T&ES had installed prominent signage to publicize the No Left Turn restrictions because there were so many motorists who continue to turn left. Bernstein said the prominence of the signage had created a “visual litter” inappropriate for the Old and Historic District. Gosnell said the No Left Turn restriction had encouraged motor coaches traveling north on Union in front Starbucks to turn right, often going onto the sidewalk while doing so. He said a No Right Turn restriction should be considered for Union and King. Thayer said motor coaches have difficulty making either left or right turns at that intersection. He said the No Left Turn restriction had been proposed as a pilot project to address an existing traffic congestion problem.

Thayer requested information about how many of the tickets for No Left Turn violations had been issued to tourists and residents.

Van Fleet said traffic congestion at the King/Union intersection merited a person directing traffic during peak hours. Baier said T&ES recognized additional measures will be needed to address the King/Union congestion and several options had been suggested by Commissioners. He said the proposal for installing a traffic light at King/Union had been opposed by stakeholders as inappropriate for the Old and Historic District (OHAD). Wojtanowski said delivery truck and motor coach violations continue to create problems at King/Union.

Thayer asked how quickly a traffic enforcement official could be placed at King/Union to control the intersection. Hayes said he would convey that question to the APD Chief. Delaney and Hoogland said they supported installing a traffic signal at King/Union. Delaney said he opposed installing three traffic signals on a stanchion hanging across the intersection but that a traffic signal would be the most cost-effective approach. He offered as an example the successful impact a traffic light had had when installed at 22nd and Eye Street NW, on the George Washington University campus.

A member of the public, Wannamaker, said the King/Union No Left Turn restriction had caused motor coach drivers uncertain about where to park to idle on Quay Street.

Hall invited other public comments. There were none.

Van Fleet moved and Fox seconded that a Commission letter be sent to Council stating that the Commission supports rescinding the pilot No Left Turn restrictions at King/Union, removal of related signage and replacing those restrictions with a pilot project stationing a uniformed officer directing traffic at King/Union during peak traffic hours. Baier said he would convey the Commission’s position to the City’s Parking and Traffic Board when he appeared before it on June 24, 2013 to present T&ES’ recommendation that the pilot No Left turn restrictions at King/Union be rescinded.

Lower King Street Pedestrian Analysis

Sindiong, project manager for the project, provided an overview of the study and distributed a draft Scope of Work outline identifying the study's objectives and key elements: to "identify traffic and circulation improvements, operational and maintenance needs, an implementation timetable and process, and budgetary requirements to convert the 100 block of King Street into a pedestrian plaza accessible to the public to enjoy as a meeting and gathering place, and for dining, shopping, and a range of programmed activities." He said various scenarios for making the 100 block of King Street pedestrian-only would be considered and invited Commissioners' comments on the proposed project scope. Sindiong said the study was expected to take between six months and a year and \$100,000 had been budgeted for.

Sindiong said the City's first step will be to choose a consultant for the study, with the analysis work expected to begin in fall 2013. He said the consultants working on the Landscape Design study will coordinate with the consultants working on the Pedestrian Analysis.

Thayer said it would be important for the study to consider the potential impact on neighboring streets, such as Lee Street, of any changes proposed for lower King Street.

Van Fleet, Manor and others said the study should be careful to include the perspectives of business owners as well as residents likely to be affected by a pedestrian-only street because there had been significant opposition to the idea when it was last proposed in 2006-2008 time period.

Delaney and Manor said the potential impact that closing the street to vehicular traffic might have on customer access to businesses located on or near a pedestrian-only street needs to be carefully considered. Delaney said creating a shared street should be considered as an alternative to a pedestrian-only street. Manor said if outdoor dining on the closed street were confined to the middle of the street that should help mitigate business owners' concerns that outdoor dining on a pedestrian-only street might make access more difficult for their patrons.

Smedberg said it is important for the unit block of King Street to be coordinated with the study. Baier said this study's findings would be coordinated with the study of the unit block as well as options being considered for the Landscape Design study. Delaney suggested Shared Streets be considered as an option.

Bernstein thanked T&ES for installing pedestrian paddle signs near Founder Park and requested that signs also be placed at the Princess/Union Street intersection because of its heavy pedestrian use. Baier said new signs should be installed within the month.

Hall said T&ES should speak with all merchants located between 100 and 200 Union Street

General Services

Beachcomber RFP Update

Williams said the period for submitting bids had closed the previous week and three bids were received. Smedberg said that the fact that General Services (GS) had extended the deadline for submitting bids after no offers had been received before the original deadline was inconsistent with the Commission's earlier guidance that staff should return to the Commission for guidance

on next steps if no responses were received in response to the Beachcombers RFP. Williams said GS had not issued a new RFP but had instead extended the due date for proposals responding to the RFP.

Report from Commissioners

Marina Committee

Thayer said the Marina Committee's June 27, 2013 meeting will focus on issues covered by the facilities assessment.

Announcements / Public Discussion

Hall announced that Commission meetings were scheduled for July 16, 2013 and August 20, 2013 but would be cancelled if there were no reason to hold them.

Hall reminded Commissioners the Gaylord fireworks were scheduled for July 5, 2013 and City fireworks for July 13, 2013.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.