

Summary Minutes

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 19, 2013

Alexandria City Hall, Room 2000

Members:

Present:

Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission
Art Fox, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Melinda (Mindy) Lyle, Citizen, Park Planning District III
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen from west of Washington St. and Chair
Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council
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
Ryan Wojtanowski, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission

Excused:

Dennis Auld, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)
Patricia (Pat) Miller, Alexandria Commission on the Arts

Absent:

Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat leaseholder
Trey Hanbury, Citizen, Park Planning District I

City Staff:

Emily Baker, City Engineer, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)
Francine Bromberg, Acting City Archeologist
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Faye Dastgheib, T&ES
Farroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Lt. Don Hayes, Alexandria Police Department
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Eugene Lowe, Park Manager, Waterfront Operations, RPCA
Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, P&Z
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)

Guests: Stan Aldridge, URS Corp.
Duncan Blair, Land, Carroll, & Blair PC (representing Robinson Terminal Warehouse Corporation)
Cathleen Curtin, FoundersDogPark.com
Harry Harrington, Old Dominion Boat Club
Val Hawkins, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Ruth McKenty, Alexandria Beautification Commission
David Miller, Pillsbury Winthrop (representing Robinson Terminal Warehouse Corporation)
Joanne Platt, citizen
Mary Roman, URS Corp.
Robert Taylor, President, Robinson Terminal Warehouse Corporation
Denise Tennant, Alexandria Beautification Commission

Welcome and Introductions

The Commission was called to order at 7:35 a.m. and Commissioners, staff and guests introduced themselves

Approval of Minutes from January 15, 2013 meeting

Moved by Dunn, seconded by Bernstein, to approve the summary minutes of the January 15, 2013 meeting with several technical corrections. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. Macek said the February 14, 2013 meeting minutes, sent to Commissioners the day before, would be considered at the Commission's March meeting.

Discussion: Waterfront Dog Parks

Commissioners discussed whether they would like to include Waterfront dog parks, such as the one in Founders Park, among the many Waterfront issues for which they are responsible.

Bernstein said dog parks were a Waterfront element affecting public safety just as the Windmill Hill Park bulkhead safety fence and Point Lumley lighting were.

In response to Commissioners' questions Browand said the City's dog exercise areas are governed by the rules set out by the City's Dog Park Master Plan and that if the Master Plan were opened up for review the Founders Park dog park area would be included in that review. He said that of the City's 18 dog exercise areas throughout the City five are fenced and 13 are unfenced, as is the dog park area within Founders Park.

Macek said the City's upcoming development of a landscape architectural design for the Waterfront would provide an opportunity to consider Waterfront dog parks within a broader context and Commissioners agreed to follow the issue over time.

Introduction of Flood Mitigation Engineering Study Consultants: URS Corporation

Baker introduced URS representatives Roman and Aldridge. Roman said she had been project manager for the City's Flood Mitigation study done previously by URS and had a

background in water resources engineering. Aldridge is leading the design team. Roman said the team would include structural engineers, civil engineers, structural engineers, pumping experts, and environmental planners.

Baker said that the City had considered additional options for flood mitigation at the intersection of King and Union streets in response to comments received at the Commission's December meeting. She described a potential approach to install a back-flow valve with catch basin accessible via manhole at the intersection of King Street and The Strand, for installation in late spring 2013. The basin will require periodic pumpout and cleaning, but will allow the City to determine whether nuisance flooding may be considered here without raising grades.

Wojtanowski commended the speed with which T&ES had responded to the Commission's suggestion.

Williams said data generated by the URS study would be used for both the flood mitigation and landscape architecture projects.

Report from Police Department

Hayes reported that Alexandria Police Department (APD) is developing a way to track complaints received about tour bus traffic and parking violations and is also developing a system that would break out Waterfront crime data of interest to the Commission from data for the general Old Town area. Hayes said weekend disorderly conduct complaints continue to be the area's biggest problem and provided an overview of additional occurrences within the Waterfront area during the previous month. He reviewed burglaries, larcenies, parking complaints received and parking citations issued. He said that because several of the larcenies had been thefts from pocketbooks left unattended in restaurants and offices, APD was considering how to improve public awareness of the importance of not leaving valuables unattended.

Smedberg said that when he had called APD to report that he'd observed a bus unloading passengers in traffic at the intersection of King and Union street the staff who answered the call was not enthusiastic about responding. Hayes said it helps APD follow-up with bus companies regarding violations reported by citizens if observers take a picture of violations and forward it to APD.

Report from Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

Park Manager Introduction

Browand introduced Eugene Lowe, the new park manager for the new Waterfront District within RPCA.

Marina Facilities Assessment Study

Browand reported that the contract for the study had been executed, work on the Marina's underwater assessment would begin that day and likely finish within two days, and the study's remaining assessments were to be completed within 60 days of the contract's initiation.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead Update

Browand said fence posts for the nautical safety fence were expected to be installed in **by mid-March.**

Waterfront Parks Project Updates

Browand reported that the Founders Park trail resurfacing was complete and minor re-grading remained to be done.

Browand said that soil remediation continues in the creosote outfall area near Wests Point. He noted that the overlook there would remain closed once soil remediation is complete as the river bottom in that area would first need to be dredged.

Marina Fees

Browand said the proposed new fee structure for the City Marina had been presented to Council the previous week and would be considered at Council's public hearing on February 23, 2013. Macek said he would attend on behalf of the Commission.

Waterfront Plan Implementation

2012 Waterfront Implementation At A Glance

Williams said staff was preparing a brief summary of actions related to the Waterfront Small Area Plan that had been taken during CY 2012 and that she expected the report to be available for the Commission's March meeting.

RFP Updates

Williams reported that the Beachcombers RFP, originally planned for release by General Services by the second week of February, had been delayed. She said it was expected that the RFP would be issued the following week. Williams said that, consistent with what he had advised Commissioners at their January 2013 meeting, General Services Director McPike intended to issue an RFP for the property's redevelopment that would invite only restaurant uses that were both economically viable and capable of generating daytime and evening activity along the Waterfront.

Commissioners identified a variety of concerns about the restaurant-only focus of the RFP. Baum said there seemed to be insufficient public awareness of the fact that the City would consider plans for redeveloping the building that could include replacing the existing building with a replica if it were determined that the costs of bringing the existing building up to code might undermine the economic viability of locating a restaurant on the property.

Williams and Moritz said the City's priority is to preserve as much of the existing building as possible and that two structural analyses of the building, one conducted within the previous year, had indicated that preservation of the existing building should be viable. She said the priority is for the redevelopment, consistent with the goal of the Waterfront Small Area Plan, to include a use for the property that would be economically viable and generate both daytime and evening activity.

Smedberg said that, because he does not believe redevelopment of the existing building would prove to be economically viable for a restaurant, he did not think the building should be saved. Smedberg and Dunn said they thought activity could be generated by activities along the periphery of a park located on the property if the existing building's redevelopment did not prove to be economically viable and the building removed. They opposed building a replica of the existing building. Macek said he did not think there would be public support for reconstructing a replica of the existing building, especially since its design is unattractive.

Wojtanowski noted that the Beachcombers building had been determined to be historically significant by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) for the Old and Historic Alexandria District for its cultural significance because building represented the first non-industrial use of Waterfront property.

Bernstein said that an RFP that invites only restaurant-only proposals for the property risked creating an unnecessary delay in redeveloping the property because a second, non-restaurant related RFP would need to be developed if no viable restaurant-related proposals were submitted in response to the first RFP.

Bernstein and other Commissioners recommended that the RFP about to be issued invite redevelopment proposals that could be either restaurant- or non-restaurant related. Moritz said that the City had previously received some general indications of interest in the property from within the restaurant community.

Williams said she would convey Commissioners' concerns to the City's Waterfront staff work group when it met that day.

Dunn said three issues should be considered: (1) should the building be preserved; (2) what uses should the City invite for the property; and (3) what activities along the property's periphery might generate comparable Waterfront activity if the Beachcombers building were not preserved. He said he doubted the Waterfront Plan's goal of generating daytime and evening activity along this part of the Waterfront would be met by putting a retail shop rather than a restaurant at this site.

Moritz said the BAR's goal has been to preserve as much of the Beachcombers building as possible, including its design and dimensions, but that the BAR had not, for example, been concerned about preserving the building's cinderblock construction.

Macek said the Waterfront Plan Work Group was interested in preserving the Beachcombers building if an economically viable restaurant or other use that would generate Waterfront activity could be attracted, but they had not been interested in a replica of the existing building being put at the site.

Moved by Dunn, seconded by Wojtanowski, that the Commission is interested in seeing the Beachcombers RFP proceed with due haste. If it is economically viable to use the

present building as a restaurant or another use that generates activity comparable to a restaurant, the Commission supports preservation of the building. If, however, preservation of the current building is not economically viable, the Commission believes it should be demolished and revert to Open Space.

Baum and Lyle said that non-Open Space public uses should also be considered for the site if the building needs to be taken down. Smedberg said the idea of putting another building on the site had been soundly rejected because of the costs involved and that activities around the site's periphery could fill this same purpose.

The Dunn/Wojtanowski motion was approved by a vote of 10 in favor, none opposed, and three abstaining (Lyle, Van Fleet, and Smedberg).

Development Updates

204-206 S. Union Street: Williams reported that move-ins are expected to begin in Spring 2013 and an event will be scheduled to celebrate the restoration of these historic buildings.

The Oronoco: Williams said the building's redevelopment continues and construction on the building would begin as soon as demolition on the project is finished.

Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion: Williams said The Rappaport Companies is actively marketing the space and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership is working with them.

Planned sale of Robinson Terminal North and South: Blair and Miller reviewed the information included in Robinson Terminal's recent press release announcing that it had hired Studley, Inc. to put the property on the market and determine interest in the property. He said no particular timeline had been created to pursue a sale, that there would be a national and international marketing effort with no pre-conceived idea regarding what type development might be put at these sites, and the two sites will be marketed separately.

In response to Commissioner's questions, they said that the sites would not be marketed as active terminals as the infrastructure to operate as a terminal would likely be problematic. The railroad tracks to Robinson North are owned by Norfolk Southern, and have been proposed to serve a trolley or other use but are not part of the Robinson Terminal sale. Seifert said that the Alexandria Seaport Foundation had been considering downsizing from its existing space at Robinson Terminal North, and Robinson Terminal has been supportive of the Foundation.

Other

Old Town Alexandria Parking Study (OTAPS): Dastgheib said the draft report would be sent to the OTAPS work group shortly.

Status of Union Street Study: Dastgheib said that T&ES would post the final report of the Union Street Corridor Study to the City website shortly and would advise the Commission when that had been done. She said that T&ES had requested FY2014 funding to implement the study's medium-term recommendations. Short-term recommendations, including the bike corral, bike lane, and other improvements would be implemented with next few months. The left-turn restriction proposed for King and Union would also be piloted.

Landscape Architecture Design RFP: Williams said she expects a contractor to be chosen in spring 2013.

Waterfront Commission Tour of Washington Waterfronts: The tour would include waterfronts in Georgetown, the Wharf (Southwest Waterfront), and Canal Park and the Yard Park near Nationals Park. Williams said she would begin to make arrangements for the trip when she had more details about how and when the Commission would like to proceed. The Commission suggested a late weekday afternoon in April.

Zoning text amendment: Hamer provided a brief review of Council's guidance to the City Manager that staff should request the Planning Commission to initiate and consider a text amendment to the W-1 Waterfront Mixed Use Zone at its March 5, 2013 meeting. She said the Planning Commission action would then be considered at Council's March 16, 2013 public hearing.

Hamer said that the City Manager would also ask the Planning Commission and Council to consider a text amendment amending Section 11-808 of the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that the protest petition provision that triggers the supermajority vote applies only to map amendments, not to text amendments and alleviate the confusion that the unclear text has raised.

Reports from Commissioners

Marina Committee

Thayer said the Committee was focusing on three activities – the marina facilities assessment study, the flood mitigation study, and planning for its annual meeting with Marina slipholders. He said the slipholders meeting was being planned for April 2013. He said a Committee meeting would be held not later than March 14, 2013 so that Commissioners could provide early inputs into the facilities assessment study as consultants develop it. Browand said the consultants intend to meet with both the Commission and Marina users to solicit inputs into the process.

Williams said staff will provide the Committee information generated for the URS flood mitigation study but she did not expect there to be sufficient information available for a presentation at the Committee's March meeting.

Arts and History Waterfront Plan Implementation Committee

Browand reported that he was working with the applicant to revise the application to rename Waterfront Park to Fitzgerald Park.

Announcements/Public Discussion

Macek reviewed the schedule of upcoming meetings. Seifert said the Alexandria Seaport Foundation was hosting an open house on Saturday, February 23, 2013 to demonstrate a whaling boat they are building for Mystic, Connecticut.

Macek invited public comments on any Waterfront-related issue. There were no public comments offered.

Adjournment

Moved by Thayer, seconded by Wojtanowski, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote and the meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

DRAFT