

The City of Alexandria
WATERFRONT COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2010 July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010



INTRODUCTION

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee is an advisory body to the City Council and to the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. It was established by City Council on April 25, 1989, based on the recommendation of the Alexandria Waterfront Task Force, which was appointed by Council on June 29, 1988.

The function of the Committee is to study issues relating to the Alexandria Waterfront, and to make recommendations to City Council, the City Manager, and appropriate City departments.

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee meets every month from September to June. The Chairperson may call special meetings. The Committee's meetings are public, and notification of meetings is circulated via the City's eNews email service and to local newspapers by the City's Office of Citizen Assistance and posted on the City's website. Summary Minutes of its meetings, and briefings presented at those meetings, are posted to RPCA's Waterfront Committee meeting page on the City website.

COMMITTEE

The Alexandria Waterfront Committee is composed of 15 members. Each member represents a particular neighborhood, community, City committee, or civic organization.



SERVING DURING FISCAL YEAR 2010

Councilman Paul Smedberg
City Council Representative

Susan Pettey, Chair
Old Town Civic Association Representative
(partial term)

Nathan Macek, Chair
Citizen, At-Large
(elected chair December 2009)

Engin Artemel, Citizen
E. of Washington St., N. of Pendleton St.

Jay Atkinson, Citizen
E. of Washington St., N. of King St.

Christine Bernstein
Founders Park Community Association
Representative

Henry Brooks
Parks and Recreation Commission Representative
(partial term)

William Cromley
Parks and Recreation Commission Representative
(partial term)

Mel Fortney, Citizen
East of Washington St., South of King St.

Michael Geissinger
Chamber of Commerce Representative

Douglas Gosnell
Pleasure Boat Lease Holder Representative

Linda Hafer
Old Town Business Association Representative

Peter Pennington
Environmental Policy Commission Representative

Pete Peterson
*Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Representative*

John Renner
*Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association
Representative*

Robert Taylor
Alexandria Seaport Foundation Representative

Townsend Van Fleet
*Old Town Civic Association Representative
(partial term)*

CITY STAFF

James Spengler, Director
Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director
Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Laura Seidler, Recreation Supervisor
Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Highlights of the Alexandria Waterfront Committee during FY 2010:

WATERFRONT PLANNING

The Committee was actively involved in the development of a new Waterfront Plan for the City of Alexandria. Waterfront Committee members participated in several Waterfront Plan charrettes and public meetings throughout the year, including:

- Field trip to New York City, August 5, 2009
- Community Meeting at the Torpedo Factory, September 29, 2009
- History Night, January 14, 2010
- Marina Night, January 28, 2010
- Art Night, March 8, 2010
- Potomac Waterfront Flood Mitigation Study Meeting, March 16, 2010
- Waterfront Concept Plan Community Meeting, May 3, 2010

MARINA NIGHT, Co-hosted by the Waterfront Committee and the Department of Planning of Zoning

The evening featured an update on Marina planning studies completed to date, a presentation by the Waterfront Committee on the critical issues facing the Marina, a panel discussion on Marina issues from the perspective of commercial and pleasure users and the City's hospitality industry, and group break-out sessions in which participants were asked to identify and map key characteristics of their ideal City Marina. The findings from this session were incorporated into the Waterfront Concept Plan developed by the Department of Planning and Zoning.

MARINA VISION STATEMENT

In advance of Marina Night, the Waterfront Committee adopted a Marina Vision Statement and Briefing Paper. According to the Vision Statement:



The Alexandria Waterfront Committee envisions an Alexandria City Marina that facilitates the recreational, commercial, historical, transportation, public service, and public safety objectives of the City's residents, businesses, visitors, non-profit organizations, and government.

The Marina will facilitate activities that promote and preserve Alexandria's maritime heritage. This will be accomplished through such enhancements as:

- A central gathering place that preserves open vistas of the Potomac River and attracts residents and visitors alike
- A modern, well-maintained facility for docking boats that meets the technical specifications and market demands of recreational boaters
- Sufficient dock space and other facilities required to support commercial vessels, including tour boats
- An inviting permanent portal to the City for visitors arriving via ferry services such as the water taxi
- Continued space for river-oriented public service organizations such as the Alexandria Seaport Foundation
- Landside and dock facilities required to meet the needs of the Alexandria Fire and Police Departments
- A dock suitable for the permanent or temporary mooring of historic watercraft such as tall ships
- A berth adequate for visiting large ships such as cruise ships and warships

Marina improvements shall be compatible with the historic character of the Waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods, and preserve the scale of the current Waterfront area.

Marina improvements shall apply environmentally

friendly design and construction, and meet the objectives of the City's Environmental Action Plan.

The City shall fund policing, security patrols, and capital investments required to ensure that the Waterfront and Marina remain a safe and secure place to recreate.

The City, in tandem with other government entities, shall ensure that Potomac River waterways remain accessible to watercraft eligible to use the Marina and other docking facilities.

Transportation and parking are required to promote commerce and access recreation at the Marina, but should not impinge on the Waterfront experience. This requires a comprehensive parking plan. In addition, access to the Marina shall be facilitated by a variety of transportation modes, including transit, bicycle, boat, and foot.

The Marina shall be a self-sufficient enterprise, with user fees covering the cost of operations, maintenance, and capital improvements that primarily benefit boaters.

REVIEW AND COMMENT ON WATERFRONT CONCEPT PLAN

In April and May the Committee reviewed the City's Waterfront Concept Plan. The Committee's comments on the Concept Plan were summarized in a letter

organized into the topical areas of General Vision, Uses/Zoning, Commerce, Environmental Constraints/Impacts, Parks and Open Space, Historic Preservation, Transportation, Arts, Safety and Security, Marina, Waterfront Attractions.

The Committee applied its Waterfront Plan Principles adopted in May 2009 as the objective basis for its review of the Concept Waterfront Plan. Highlights, excerpted from the Committee’s letter to the City include:

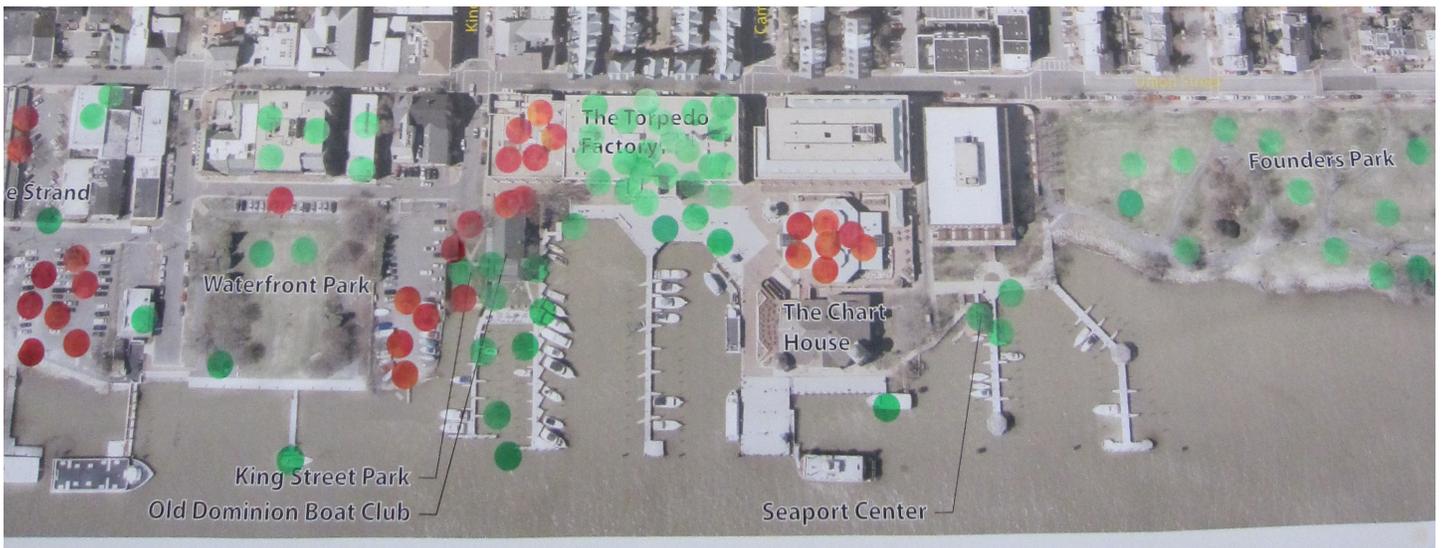
Alexandria is embarking on a once-in-a-generation planning effort for its Waterfront, stating that it is crucial that the Plan balance the residential, commercial, and tourist interests as it seeks to enhance the enjoyment of the Waterfront by City residents, workers, and visitors alike. We note that

of the eventual plan, which must be addressed in subsequent drafts.

Care must be taken . . . to ensure that any monuments proposed for street ends or other locations along the Waterfront not obstruct water views.

The Concept Plan provides a vision for expansion of Waterfront parkland, but notably sacrifices a portion of Waterfront Park in exchange for property currently owned by the Old Dominion Boat Club. Ideally, the City could identify an alternate location for Boat Club parking that does not sacrifice parkland.

The Concept Plan’s proposed pier . . . should consider including amenities that make it a welcoming place to view the river by residents and visitors not using the pier to access boat services, e.g., porch swings, a



compromise and discussion will be required to achieve a Waterfront Plan that will be enthusiastically supported by all Waterfront Stakeholders, and are optimistic that we will find common ground.

The Concept Plan contains no vision for programs and activities . . . [and] does not address budgetary requirements or investment by either [the public or private] sector, a crucial element for implementation

pavilion or gazebo, and café-style tables and chairs.

The Concept Plan succeeds in developing a Waterfront pathway from north to south along the River.

The Concept Plan incorporates existing historic structures into the plan, but does not outline viable options to preserve existing historic buildings such as the former Beachcombers Restaurant at 0 Prince

Street, or the vacant warehouses on South Union Street. . . Subsequent drafts of the Waterfront Plan must acknowledge that prime locations for Waterfront redevelopment are located in the Old and Historic District, and provide additional details on the incorporation of historic preservation into any redevelopment.

The Concept Plan does not address parking in the vicinity of the Waterfront, a significant omission that must be addressed in subsequent drafts.

Subsequent drafts of the Waterfront Plan must detail options for ensuring a safe and secure environment, as well as estimated costs for securing new public facilities proposed for the Waterfront area.

[T]he Concept Plan does not describe how elements of [Marina improvement] objectives could be phased in advance of—or in lieu of—any large-scale Marina redevelopment. For example, existing Marina infrastructure—including dockmaster facilities and electrical supply—are in need of immediate attention, and should be addressed now irrespective of the timetable for future Marina redevelopment.

The Concept Plan includes a dramatic expansion of the City Marina, but it is not clear whether the proposed expansion is guided by the economic drivers recommended by the Waterfront Committee.

The Concept Plan does not make a compelling case for proposed improvements within the context of Alexandria’s uniqueness. Subsequent drafts of the plan must justify the improvements contemplated and relate them to the City’s Waterfront history.

The Concept Plan proposes a large plaza for the foot of King Street, as well as a pier extending into the Potomac River. Enhancements to the foot of King Street are welcome, but should not sacrifice existing public park space in Waterfront Park as the proposed swap for Old Dominion Boat Club parking would do. The pier, while an intriguing concept, may be problematic to deliver as proposed given the jurisdictional issues involved with extension into the District of Columbia. It is also likely to be costly and must be considered in terms of City resources available to fund Waterfront investments.



Opportunities should be identified for multiple spaces and activities for children along the entire extent of the Waterfront. With careful design, art installations and interpretive signage may engage children (as well as adults) without being overtly aimed at children. Ideally, Alexandria’s Waterfront will be viewed as “fun” place that children want to return to with their parents again and again.

The Concept Plan succeeds in designating space in Oronoco Bay Park and elsewhere along the Waterfront for large gatherings, and provides space for Tall Ships in a revamped City Marina. On the other hand, provisions for small groups are scarce. Accommodations should be arranged for small groups, picnickers, and wedding ceremonies.

WATERFRONT WALK

The Waterfront Committee led its annual Waterfront Walk in June. This year the walk was devoted to reviewing the proposed Waterfront Concept Plan in situ, as well as issues surrounding current or potential uses. The walk was facilitated by members of staff of the Departments of Planning and Zoning and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs. The walk was attended by approximately 25 people.

MARINA OPERATIONS AND PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE

The Committee established this subcommittee to review planning and operational issues at the City Marina. In addition to leading development of the Marina Vision Statement and assisting with arrangements for Marina Night described above, the Subcommittee addressed the following issues during the year:

- **Marina Security:** The Subcommittee considered actions by the City to maintain public safety and security at the Marina, including the installation of video cameras to deter crime in this vicinity.
- **Management of Marina During and Following Snow Emergency:** On the recommendation of the Subcommittee, the full Committee wrote the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services urging it prioritize the various users of the Marina in planning snow removal, including public safety and emergency services, commercial and institutional users, pleasure boaters, and pedestrians and visitors.
- **Facilitation of Additional Commercial Users of City Marina:** On the recommendation of the Subcommittee, the full Committee wrote the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities stating that the Alexandria City Marina does not have the capacity to accommodate



additional commercial services at this time, but that potential services may use the Marina up to four times per month without a lease. The Committee also urged the City to provide sufficient accommodations for new commercial services in the future as part of the Waterfront Plan.

- **Endorsement of removing speed limits for high-speed commuter vessels on the Potomac River:** On the recommendation of the Subcommittee, the full Committee supported the amendment of District of Columbia Municipal Regulation, Title 19, Chapter 10 to allow for all commercial vessels engaged in water transportation to be allowed to transit the Alexandria Waterfront at speeds greater than 10 knots, so long as those vessels are responsible for their wake and remain at a minimum of 100 yards east of the pier head line.
- **Transient Boat Slips at Alexandria Marina** The Subcommittee discussed with City staff the re-allocation of slips at the City Marina from use by transient boats to leased slips. The discussion resulted in a letter to area boating organizations welcoming them to the Alexandria Marina and summarizing the City's new policy.

Waterfront Maintenance and Improvements

The Committee discussed sustained cuts in the capital and operating and maintenance budgets of RPCA given the impact on Waterfront parks and the Marina, and noted the continued deferral of proposed improvements to Windmill Hill Park. The Committee also discussed such emerging issues as the replacement of the Marina dockmaster hut and Jones Point Park redevelopment.

Parking and Transportation The Committee reviewed proposals for valet parking on Lower King Street, and was also briefed on City task forces regarding Old Town parking and motor coaches. The Committee requested direct membership on the Old

Town Parking Committee task force, but was denied.

City Strategic Plan The Committee reviewed the City's proposed Strategic Plan and commented on the impact of the proposed Strategic Plan on the Waterfront. Specifically, the Committee sought to clarify that its implementation be consistent with the Waterfront Plan and 2) that the City define its intentions regarding "historic preservation."

Flood Mitigation The Committee monitored progress of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services Potomac Waterfront Flood Mitigation Study, and encouraged incorporation of the findings of the study in its Waterfront Plan correspondence.



Development Proposals The Committee was briefed on a proposal to redevelop the Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion and 106 South Union Street. The Committee supported the 106 South Union Street proposal with a letter to the Planning Commission.

Cultural and Community Resources The Committee received presentations from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on an interpretive buoy to be installed in the Potomac River at Alexandria as part of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and from the

Alexandria Seaport Foundation on the organization's public service to the community. The Committee also supported the use of the City Marina by the Tall Ship Peacemaker during May 2010.

Facilitating Liaison Between The City And Public Stakeholders Affected By Waterfront-Related Activities The Committee discussed with staff issues raised by residents, businesses and other organizations such as commercial water taxi service providers, the Old Town Civic Association, and the Arts Commission, and received public comments at each meeting.

GOALS FOR FY 2011

- Continue to be actively involved in the City Waterfront planning process, advising the City and commenting on plans to promote the best Waterfront for Alexandria's citizens and visitors.
- Monitor implementation of the City's new Waterfront Plan.
- Promote adequate City funding of Waterfront capital programming and operating and maintenance expenses.
- Support a vibrant Waterfront that capitalizes on Alexandria's maritime heritage, that serves the needs of residents and visitors, and that includes residential and mixed-use developments.
- Monitor and make recommendations to the City on issues related to the Waterfront, including but not limited to maintenance, uses, safety and security, improvements, historical and artistic interpretation, commerce and development.
- Advocate for adequate resources to maintain and improve the Waterfront, Marina and related parks.
- Advocate for environmental quality in the Potomac River, along its shores, and in adjacent land in Alexandria.

RECRUITMENT AND LEADERSHIP PLANS

Much of the Waterfront Committee's membership is appointed by constituent member groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Old Town Civic Association, and the Founders Park community Association, among other groups (see complete list on page 1 of this report). These groups are active participants in the Committee and have quickly replaced their membership when vacancies arise. Four seats are held by citizen members who do not represent a constituent organization; competition for these positions has been vigorous, with numerous applications to the City Clerk's office when terms expire.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Waterfront Committee will once again sponsor the Waterfront Walk as its major outreach effort in the spring of 2011. In addition, the Committee will for the first time sponsor a community park clean-up day during this fiscal year. The Waterfront Committee will also continue its tradition of open citizen participation at its meetings, welcoming public comment on all agenda items.



LEADERSHIP TURNOVER

The Committee elected a new Chair, Nathan Macek, in December 2009 and will hold elections for the positions of Vice Chair and Secretary in September 2010 (following the departure from the Committee of members previously holding these offices, John Renner and Michael Geissinger.) Given the recent turnover in leadership, the Committee does not anticipate holding leadership elections again until the autumn of 2011 at the earliest, but will schedule a special election in the mean time if an unexpected vacancy should arise.

The Committee welcomes citizens to its meetings, which are held at 7:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday of each month September through June at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. The Committee hosts its annual Waterfront Walk in June.