

ity of Alexandria, Virginia
Alexandria Beautification Commission
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 10, 2019
7:30 PM
Durant Arts Center
1605 Cameron Street

Attendees: Kathryn Chiasson (Chair), Joseph Crowell, Cathleen Curtin, Mary Enschede, Monica Murphy, Mellenie Runion, Denise Tennant (Vice Chair), Geoff Montross, Christina Mazukevich

Unexcused Absences: Kevin Dunne, Dana Holmstrand, Carol Maxwell, Eleanor Quigley, Donald Kent

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM.

- 1) **Approval of November 8, 2018 Meeting Minutes** – A motion to approve the updated minutes was made by Mr. Crowell and seconded by Ms. Mazukevich. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes.
- 2) **Membership Updates** – Geoff Montross introduced himself to the Commission. At present, there are 4 vacancies. Donald Kent is expected to join the Commission next meeting. Carol Maxwell term ended this month and she will not be reapplying.

3) **Commission Business:**

A) **Determine 2019 Sub-committees and Priorities**

i) ***Review existing sub-committees from 2018***

- (1) **Awards:** Ms. Murphy explained the sub-committee. The theme for 2018 was “How Green Spaces Improve the Quality of Life.” Approximately 20 winners were awarded for their exceptional efforts contributing to the beautification of Alexandria through architecture, landscaping and sustainable practices. Awards were presented in six categories: Excellence in Architecture, Excellence in Sustainable Design, Green Practices in Beautification, Community Beautification, Residential Beautification, and Commercial Beautification. Former Mayor Allison Sillberberg and members of the City Council presented the winners with their award certificates. Prior to the event, the Awards sub-committee began the

full Commission's involvement in awards season by distributing nomination assignments to each of the Commissioners, along with maps and criteria for nomination. After the nominations were in, some of Commissioners attend a van voting tour.

- (2) **Education:** Ms. Tennant explained the sub-committee. The main focus is using the ABC Facebook page to make postings educating and highlighting native and invasive plants of the region. ABC also has an Instagram account. The sub-committee also participated in Earth Day and had an exhibition. City residents were offered seeds and seedlings and learned about the Commission's activities and goals. The ABC Commission slogan is "*Advocate, Educate, and Celebrate.*"
- (3) **Outreach:** Mr. Crowell and Ms. Tennant explained the sub-committee. It's a new sub-committee that started as advocacy. Originally the sub-committee's goal was to provide input on matters under the Commission's purview and express the Commission's position on issues and appreciation of beautification efforts. Now named "outreach" because we cannot advocate.
- (4) **Tree Canopy:** Ms. Chiasson explained the sub-committee. She further expressed that the sub-committee struggled to figure out their current role. Former Mayor Sillberberg was very interested in tree canopy. The idea was to enhance tree canopy and ultimately promote the sustainable development of the city's tree resources. Project ideas started but it didn't really pan out. There is still a lot of opportunity. For example, work with DASH at bus stops and plant trees. The sub-committee also helped promote the native tree sales by posting flyers and posting the sale on Facebook. Sales did increase.
- (5) **Vacant Lots** – Ms. Curtin explained the sub-committee. She said there was lots of progress this year. Worked with Del Ray Citizens Association and with landscape designers and received feedback. The sub-committee applied for the City's matching funds with the idea of raising funds for Simpson Triangle, grant program of \$22,500. The City will match the sub-committee if it can raise that much. So far, the committee has been awarded over \$12,000 - mostly Del Ray Citizens. And \$4-6k for the chili cook off. Money is coming from two different pots. They made the Commission a beneficiary of the chili cook-off. The goal of the beginning of this year is to finish fundraising and plant in the fall.
- (6) **Sustainable Landscaping** – Ms. Murphy explained the sub-committee. The idea is to install native and sustainable plant material in three medians at the heavily trafficked intersection of King St., Quaker Ln and Braddock Rd. The Commission initiated the pilot median improvement project of Oct in 2017 to make the City's medians both more attractive and more sustainable. The sub-committee is also looking at local nurseries to sell native plants. The local Arlington Associations group is also looking for beautification effort on King St near the Bradley Shopping Center.
- (7) **Bylaws:** Mr. Crowell shared the draft bylaws. The Bylaws sub-committee is working to adopt a set of bylaws for the Commission that formalize many of the customary practices and reduce confusion. He hopes for the sub-committee to finish the bylaws in the next couple of meetings.

ii) ***Set sub-committees 2019***

In order to set priorities for 2019, the Commission came up priorities and brainstormed ideas. Since Alexandria City has a new council and new mayor, it would be good to set new priorities. The following ideas were expressed below. After completing the brainstorming, the commissioners volunteered for subcommittee participation.

- Ms. Runion shared that there should be more back-and-forth between the City Council and the Commission should be more aware. **She suggested that an agenda item be in next month's meeting to see who in the city council we could collaborate with.**
- Ms. Chiasson proposed to combine the sub-committees, education and outreach. Mr. Crowell agreed. Ms. Tennant noted that the education sub-committee didn't take that much time. Perhaps one more person is required to join the sub-committee given the current number.
- Mr. Crowell shared concern that the sustainable landscaping sub-committee and vacant lots sub-committee was a lot work.
- Ms. Chiasson also suggested that tree canopy sub-committee fit into education and outreach, and have only 4 sub-committees: awards, vacant lots, education, and sustainable landscaping.

A motion to have only 4 sub-committees was made by Ms. Chiasson. Ms. Curtin seconded. The Commission unanimously approved to the 4 sub-committees: awards, vacant lots, education, and sustainable landscaping.

2019 Committees

Awards: Ms. Tennant (scheduler), Ms. Murphy, Ms. Chiasson, Ms. Mazukevich

Outreach: Mr. Crowell (scheduler) Ms. Tennant, Mr. Montross, Ms. Ensched, Ms. Runion, Ms. Chiasson

Vacant lots: Ms. Runion (scheduler), Ms. Tennant, Ms. Curtin, Mr. Montross

Sustainable landscaping: Ms. Murphy (scheduler), Ms. Curtin, and Ms. Ensched

iii) ***Action needed for committees prior to next meeting***

- Ms. Murphy requested that the awards committee work closely with the support staff. Mr. Mendoza shared that they have a temp one and the person is new.
- Ms. Chiasson suggested to have a kick-off meeting with that new staff person and the subcommittee (Oscar and temp) and continue meeting about file storage.

B) Committee updates:

Awards: None

Outreach: Ms. Murphy suggested to create a new Instagram account. Ms. Chiasson will look into it because the current Instagram account already has a following.

Vacant Lots: Ms. Curtin shared information about the DRCA Chili cook off benefiting the vacant lot project: Feb. 9th, 2019 at 8:00pm to 10:00pm at the Commonwealth Academy, 1321 Leslie Avenue. Ms. Curtin and Geoff expressed attending.

Sustainable Landscaping: Ms. Murphy shared that Mr. Raha discussed green infrastructure coming in January. At some point we should invite him to discuss the scope of the study and how it will impact the median. It's still a work in progress. Two of the trees died on Quaker Lane. The idea is to get sponsors to maintain those trees. Mr. Mendoza noted that he spoke with Bob Williams. The trees will eventually be removed and replaced. We need to put language into an agreement which will say that they will be responsible. Fiscal 2019 ends June 2019. We have coverage for a year. A certain set of standards and criteria as to how we have picked the median.

4) New Commission Business

Bylaws: The committee is seeking everyone's input in the Commission. Particular areas identified were: a) the day of the monthly meeting; b) attendance policies; c) term limits and experience minimums for the Chair; d) the possibility of annual retreats; and e) the responsibility of sub-committees to provide written reports in advance of the usual meetings. Mr. Crowell expressed to send feedback to him personally due to FOIA policy. After receiving feedback, the sub-committee will meet to discuss and incorporate feedback. He will send out an updated draft prior to the next full Commission meeting.

5) Staff Report

Mr. Mendoza is ready to create a dropbox account. Ms. Runion suggested sending the report electronically to the Commission, a week prior the general meeting, so everyone has time to review the report, raise any question or concerns, and identify synergies.

6) February 14th, 2019 Meeting

- a) **Determine Quorum:** Ms. Chiasson agreed to e-mail the Commission to determine when the next monthly meeting will take place.
- b) **Agenda items:**
 - i) Landscaping and forestry guidelines to the City Council. Mr. Mendoza will try to set up a meeting.
 - ii) Mr. Mendoza will follow up Bob Williams per request from Sustainable Landscaping Committee.

7) Public Comment/ Discussion - None

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Alexandria Beautification Commission
Minutes from the January 10, 2019 Meeting