

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

*Alexandria Beautification Commission*

*P.O. Box 178*

*Alexandria, Virginia 22313*

**Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, March 8, 2018

7:30 PM

Durant Arts Center, 1605 Cameron Street

**Attendees:** Kathryn Chiasson, Joseph Crowell, Kevin Dunne, Archer Heinzen, Dana Holmstrand (Vice Chair), Carol Maxwell, Christina Mazurkevich, Beth McElwain, Julie Moore, Monica Murphy, Mellenie Runion, Denise Tennant (Chair), Erich Veitenheimer

**Excused Absences:** Cathleen Curtin, Anna Smith Lacey

**City Staff:** Suzanne Bouchard

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 PM.

- 1. Approval of February 8, 2018, Meeting Minutes** – A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Veitenheimer and seconded by Ms. Holmstrand. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes.
- 2. Membership Updates** – Upon the appointment of Ms. Mary Ensich by City Council two nights ago, the Commission has a full roster.
- 3. Commission Business**

**A. Update of Commission Logo**

New ideas for updating the Commission logo were presented by Ms. Mazurkevich and Mr. Crowell. Ms. Mazurkevich presented several designs for Commission feedback, including reimagined versions of the current logo. Mr. Crowell presented a logo incorporating a garden pineapple finial suggestive of the city's colonial beginnings. Ms. Tennant reviewed the options Ms. Curtin had been working on and had shared with the Commission previously. Ms. Tennant reminded commissioners that the logo has several uses, including the award signs, flyers, a banner, the web site, letterhead, and a podium sign, and that the design needed to scale across the uses. All proposal were made cognizant of needing copyright coverage for any images. Ms. Tennant proposed that the next Commission meeting would select a very limited number of proposals to develop for

a final vote. That timeline should provide enough lead to have the logo available for the awards ceremony.

## **B. Subcommittee Reports and Goals**

**Sustainable Landscaping of Public Spaces.** The subcommittee reviewed its one- and five-year goals. One year goals focus on completing the current Quaker/King/Braddock median landscaping project, spending funds already allocated, and initiating another median project. Five year goals focus on developing plans and policies in conjunction with the City for its landscaping needs. The subcommittee would like to assume a primary role for median landscaping. The initial work on policy development will be with the Tree Canopy Subcommittee to update the City's Landscape Guidelines this year.

**Tree Canopy.** The subcommittee shared the minutes from its February 27, 2018, organizational meeting which includes its one- and five-year goals. With a desire to enhance the canopy through both policy recommendations and direct planting, one year goals range from advising the City in updating the Landscape Guidelines and Urban Forestry Master Plan, to improving the City's fall tree sale and ensuring 10 trees are planted during the year as a direct result of the subcommittee's action. Over the next five years, the subcommittee wants to ensure a network of groups and activities can sustain the development of the city's tree resources. Due to the loss of a member, the subcommittee appealed to the Commission for an additional member or two in order to accomplish its goals. Ms. Ensich was suggested as a potential new member.

**Education.** During its organizational meeting on March 3, 2018, the subcommittee considered its role in providing education as one that could include facilitating information for residents. In 2018 the group will focus on pollinators as a theme, handing out milkweed seeds at the City's Earth Day festivities. The subcommittee's one year goals include holding two large events, potentially including a film screening as with Hometown Habitat and a lecture on green walls and alternative green spaces. The group set a one-year goal of posting on social media more regularly, including items such as Commission meeting minutes and events by groups supporting beautification. Providing an example of the format the subcommittee might use, Ms. Mazurkevich relayed how she worked with the editor of the Alexandria Gazette to advertise the Commission's work. Her effort led to the offering of a regular column in the paper that she will discuss with the Education Subcommittee.

**Awards.** The subcommittee wishes to build on last year's success by further improving the nomination and review portions of the awards. In the short term, as discussed next on the agenda, the subcommittee will make greater use of electronic forms. Commissioners suggested emphasizing the advocacy role of the Commission at the annual ceremony as an additional goal.

**Advocacy.** The subcommittee shared the attached minutes from its February 13, 2018, and March 6, 2018, meetings which include the subcommittee's one- and five- year

goals. The subcommittee envisions its primary tool will be letters providing input on matters under the Commission's purview. Initially these letters are expected to introduce or reacquaint public and private groups with the Commission's work, but the letters also provide an avenue to express the Commission's position on issues and appreciation of beautification efforts.

**Vacant Lots.** Members reported that, during the subcommittee's February 27, 2018 organizational meeting the group discussed the existing project at Simpson Triangle, and brainstormed ideas for new projects. In the coming year, the subcommittee will be applying for the City's matching funds and will raise funds for the Simpson Triangle project. Although breaking ground is not expected until 2019, a one-year goal includes resuming the search for small projects in the future. The subcommittee's five year goal is to improve two acres of land, comprising two or more projects. The subcommittee solicited ideas for areas/lots of improvement, noting that private property would be an option under certain circumstances and agreements.

A partial summary of the Commission's goals for 2023 are as follows:

- Sustainable Landscaping of Public Spaces: Improve 5 medians and work with the City to create a cohesive landscaping plan.
- Tree Canopy: Facilitate 5 improved tree sales and plant (or generate the planting of) 150 trees.
- Education: Educate 500 Alexandria residents.
- Advocacy: Send 15 position letters.
- Awards: Host 5 streamlined ceremonies.
- Vacant Lots: Improve 2 acres of land as part of 2 or more projects.

After all subcommittees presented their one- and five-year goals, Ms. Runion motioned for a vote of approval on the subcommittees' goals. Ms. Maxwell seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the goals.

### C. Beginning of Awards Season

The Awards Subcommittee kicked off the 2018 awards season by reviewing the process with the Commission. Several handouts were provided, including a summary of key dates, the award categories and criteria, sample score sheets and nomination forms, and maps of the proposed nomination areas and award regions. In comparison with recent years, the number of nomination areas was increased in order to more efficiently identify nominees. A theme for the 2018 awards is being developed, though continued emphasis will be placed on sustainability, native plants, and maximal use of space. Nominations will be due May 29, with the Commission's group tour to follow shortly thereafter. The award ceremony is tentatively scheduled for the week of October 15, 2018, and the subcommittee is actively seeking ideas for speakers. More information will be presented at coming Commission meetings.

Ms. Tennant presented maps for the Commission to consider that would change the nomination areas and award areas for 2018 forward. She suggested increasing the number of nomination areas from six to eight to in recognition of the larger number of members on the Commission. Each area would still have two Commission members assigned to it, but they could submit fewer nominations per area. The map for award areas changed the boundary between the East and Central areas of the City. The boundary has been the railroad tracks that run east of Potomac Yard, then south through the Carlyle neighborhood. The proposed change would move the boundary to Mount Vernon Ave, then follow the railroad tracks south starting from where they meet Braddock Rd at the southern end of Mount Vernon Ave. The advantage of the proposed change is that the East area currently consists only of Old Town, guaranteeing the neighborhood a full slate of winners while other award areas hold multiple neighborhoods and are more competitive. The new proposal would place part of Del Ray in the East area to make it more competitive.

Ms. Holmstrand motioned to adopt the map for nomination areas. The motion was seconded by Ms. Runion and the Commission voted unanimously to approve. The Commission deferred a decision on the award areas map until the April meeting to allow additional time for consideration.

- 4. Staff Report** – Ms. Bouchard provided a written staff report.
- 5. Agenda Items for April 12, 2018, Meeting** – Multiple subcommittees have requested a presentation on the current Landscape Guidelines and proposed changes to them. Ms. Tennant will work with Mr. Mendoza to arrange a speaker. The agenda will also include discussion of the Commission’s Earth Day activities, updates from the landscaping and advocacy subcommittees, and further discussion of the award ceremony and nominations process.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM.