

City of Alexandria, Virginia  
*Alexandria Beautification Commission*  
P.O. Box 178  
Alexandria, Va. 22313

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, February 11, 2016, 7:30 p.m.**  
**DURANT ARTS CENTER**

**Attendees:** Sharon Bucci, Patrick Deleonibus, Carol Maxwell, Julie Moore, Cynthia Spoehr, Denise Tennant (Chair), Erich Veitenheimer (New Member)

**Absent:** Cathleen Curtin, Monica Murphy (Vice Chair), Sylvia Winterling

**City Staff:** Oscar Mendoza

**Guest Speaker:** Susan Gitlin, Vice Chair Environmental Policy Commission

**1. Approval of January 14, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

The Commission approved the January 14, 2016 Meeting Minutes, with one amendment. From Section 2.e.iii. “The City will provide matching funds, based on the cost of design fees, for maintenance plantings.” Carol also noted that the due date for proposals in the minutes reflects what was stated last month, but in fact the due date was February 4.

**2. Introduction of New Member(s)**

Erich Veitenheimer, new member, was present. Additional new member Renata Stuebener, will be introduced at the next meeting. There are currently two vacancies being advertised.

**3. Commission Business**

**A. Strategic Plan Implementation Updates**

**i. Educational Programs:**

Cynthia and Sharon met with Kirsten Buhls at the Virginia Cooperative Extension to determine dates and topics for the educational programs. See Attachment 1 for the calendar including topics and dates. The programs will take place 7-8:30 p.m.

**Action Item(s):** Cynthia and Sharon will advertise March program

Earth Day was discussed as best fitting under the Education Programs umbrella because of its focus on education, but it will also help accomplish the goal of community outreach so it should not be solely the responsibility of that subcommittee. Alexandria’s Earth Day celebration this year will be Saturday, April 30 10am –

2pm. The theme this year is “Choose to Reuse - Your Choices Matter”. The event will take place at GW Middle School.

**Action Item(s):** Patrick, Cynthia, Denise and Julie will conduct a planning meeting to determine booth focus, content, activities, and manning.

- ii. **Community Clean Ups:** Patrick and Denise will be meeting with a team from the Natural Resources Division on Wednesday Feb 17 to discuss potential clean-up sites and plans. This will include Robert Taylor (Division Chief), Rod Simmons (Natural Resources Specialist), and John Noelle (City Arborist). Oscar mentioned that this would also provide an opportunity for discussion of our Educational Programming in fall and dovetailing tree education with tree sale. It was decided that because there is no time crunch for the tree discussion, it would be better to discuss that at a separate meeting in the future.

**Action Item(s):** Patrick and Denise will meet with City staff.

- iii. **Gateway:** The proposals are back and the lowest bidder was \$37K for one sign with brick base. Other bids came in as high as \$58K and \$66K. The City has budgeted \$50K for two gateway signs. \$25K from median enhancement funding will be transferred to complete funding for two signs, which the City will order. With regard to selection of the two pilot sites for gateway & landscaping, TES first choice is N. Washington St., second choice is Telegraph Road. Subcommittee to meet and communicate/meet with City to provide input on selection of the two pilot sites next week. TES will walk the sites with us as needed. Once the sites are selected, Monica/Julie will put together site plans.

**Action Item(s):** Subcommittee will determine its preferred locations for the first two signs and communicate them to TES.

- iv. **Vacant Lot Improvements:** No update. Denise discussed handout from last month and ensured all had seen.

**Action Item(s):** Julie and Denise will visit potential sites to determine suitability for the first project.

## **B. Presentation by Environmental Policy Commission**

Susan Gitlin (Vice Chair) spoke to the Commission about the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) and Urban Forestry Master Plan. Eco City Charter and EAP fall under the responsibility of the EPC. They provide 5 year updates on progress toward targets and stated goals. The City is not moving toward the goals as quickly as they would like – in part due to limited resources, in part due to plans not implemented, and in part due to progress not being reported accurately.

As an example, the target for the City's canopy rate is 40% by 2020. The most recent/comprehensive study by RPCA shows us at 34% canopy rate. There are great environmental and aesthetic/quality of life benefits related to increased canopy. There are also questions about the quality of materials planted -- Are we planting natives and such that are of the highest benefit to the local ecology? Are we installing proper trees for cooling benefits and aesthetic benefits? EPC is writing letter to Council asking to put together a working group that cuts across commissions and includes interdepartmental representatives from the City staff. The working group would commit to at least 1 year to look at goals, look at ways to consolidate reporting etc., update and reevaluate goals and measurements, look for faster/better ways to move toward the goals. Working group will then make recommendations to the City Manager including strategies, new policies, public private partnerships, etc. The working group may also look at revising the City's Landscape Guidelines – written in 1997 and last updated in 2007. Guidelines are used by the Planning Department to list suggested plants and canopy coverage allowance (CCA). Revisions are needed because the CCA calculations may be too generous, there may be potential invasives on list, and there may be inconsistencies. The overall goal is to provide more opportunities for canopy and green open space.

The proposed cross-City work group would start meeting in spring. Potentially one member from ABC would be required to attend a monthly meeting. Erich expressed interest in being involved with this work group.

Susan asked for ABC to sign letter to Council in support of creating working group. She will send/ circulate draft letter to Denise ASAP and it will be circulated for our consideration/approval likely prior to next ABC meeting.

Susan also noted that the indicators in the Urban Forestry Master Plan (UFMP) are currently being reworked by EPC and will be revised by the City. She was providing us with a heads up. They are looking at the Sustainability Indicators (Attachment 2) which need to be revised and simplified.

#### **4. New Commission Business**

It was noted that the Commission has a number of new members and the roster currently in circulation is out of date. It was also noted that the websites for the Commission have not been updated to reflect recent changes.

**Action Item(s):** Oscar will email updated roster to all members of the Commission. Denise and Oscar will work together to get the websites updated.

#### **5. Staff Report**

Oscar discussed Park Operations current focus on snow removal and presented the staff report (Attachment 3). He noted that Jim Spengler will attend our next monthly meeting to discuss the Department's budget for the upcoming year.