

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

MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 12, 2018
7:30 p.m.
DURANT ARTS CENTER
1605 Cameron Street

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

Unexcused Absences: Cathleen Curtin

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 PM.

- 1. Approval of March 8, 2018, Meeting Minutes** – A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Holmstrand and seconded by Ms. Heinzen. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes.
- 2. Membership Updates** – Ms. Enschede introduced herself to the Commission. At present, all 16 positions on the Commission are filled.
- 3. Commission Business**

A. Presentation of Landscape Guidelines

Due to scheduling conflicts with Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Activities staff, the presentation and discussion of the City's Landscape Guidelines and their update is deferred until the Commission's meeting in May.

B. Amendment to City Code governing the Beautification Commission

Ms. Tennant reminded the Commission that since its strategic planning meeting in the summer of 2015, the Commission has discussed updating the City's Code to require a number of commissioners to have particular skills, knowledge, or certification, or represent certain communities within the city. To that end, the Commission has the opportunity on the Council's May docket to update the Code accordingly.

Ms. Tennant explained to the newer members that since the 2015 meeting, the Commission increased from 12 to 16 members to take advantage of the full number allowed in the city code, and the Commission wishes to consider whether the additional positions could be used to ensure that the Commission has access to particular knowledge or communities. Ms. Tennant reviewed the list of roles/professional skills the Commission has discussed needing or wanting on the Commission:

- Architect
- Landscape Architect
- Landscape Designer
- Master Gardener
- Urban Planning/Design
- Environmental Design
- Expertise in the Arts
- Photographer
- High School Student

The Commission discussed earlier efforts to recruit a high school student. One reason that a student seemed to offer an excellent fit was that the Commission wished to assist with the coordination of community cleanups and a student would likely be in a position to assist with this. Commissioners noted several reasons why reserving a position for a high school student may no longer achieve as much benefit to the Commission. First, the Commission moved away from facilitating community cleanups as it became redundant with the creation of the City's PARKnerships program. Second, the Commission recognizes that a two year commitment to the Commission and the amount of time required of commissioners may place too great a demand on a student's time. As an alternative, the Commission will consider reaching out for a student to attend meetings on an informal basis.

With respect to a photographer, the Commission discussed the important but infrequent need for a photographer. In addition to Ms. Runion, a trained photographer, volunteering as her schedule permits, Mr. Mendoza confirmed that he would find City resources to support the Commission's periodic need for a skilled photographer. Otherwise the Commission believes that reserving a position on the Commission for an individual which such skills has the potential to leave the Commission with less than a full roster when the skill is only necessary to have approximately twice a year.

Addressing the possibility of reserving a position on the Commission for an individual with expertise in the arts, Mr. Veitenheimer related information from a recent Arts Commission meeting wherein that commission showed interested in working with this Commission to augment the amount of outdoor art in the city. Commissioners agreed that such a collaboration can be explored without reserving a position on the Commission for an individual with expertise in the arts.

Several suggestions were made to increase the representation of diverse groups on the Commission, such as individuals from diverse socioeconomic groups. The repeated concern from Commissioners was that reserving positions on the Commission for such individuals has the potential to prevent a full roster from being maintained and as a result, diminishing the capacity of the Commission to carry out its mission and achieve its short- and long-term goals. To address diversity, Commissioners suggested focusing on recruitment from such groups when a vacancy occurs.

With general consensus around the necessity of members with the remaining skills, the Commission discussed the differences among certain groups (e.g., landscape architect versus landscape designer), as well as additional skills and qualifications that would overlap with those listed (e.g., master naturalist as similar to a master gardener) and also meet the Commission's needs. Further, the Commission discussed how many positions to reserve and for which sets of skills or expertise.

The Commission determined that there is a need for a member with an expertise in architecture or urban planning as they would have the ability to consider how these fields contribute to beautification in the City. The Commission determined that an architectural historian or a historian with architectural knowledge would also be able to fill this role.

The Commission determined that there is a need to always have at least one landscape architect or landscape designer on the Commission to assist with the many ongoing projects that require their expertise. While the Commission was in agreement that it would be best to have more than one member with these qualifications, the Commission was unwilling to risk having multiple seats stay vacant if these positions could not be filled.

The Commission determined that there is a need for a member that is a Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, or Tree Steward on the Commission in order to fulfill its goal of educating members of the public on matters of beautification. These certifications focus on different things, but they are all trained educators on matters under the Commission's purview.

Mr. Veitenheimer made a motion to vote on the following proposal for reserved positions on the Commission:

- one member with expertise in the field of architecture, urban planning, or a historian with architectural knowledge;
- one member with expertise in the field of landscape architecture or landscape design; and
- one member who is a Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, or Tree Steward.

Ms. Runion seconded the motion. The Commission voted 14-0 to approve the motion with one abstention. The votes in favor were Ms. Tennant, Mr. Crowell, Ms. McElwain, Mr. Veitenheimer, Ms. Smith Lacey, Ms. Chiasson, Ms. Maxwell, Ms. Runion, Ms.

Murphy, Ms. Enschede, Ms. Heinzen, Ms. Holmstrand, Ms. Mazurkevich, and Ms. Moore. Mr. Dunne abstained.

Ms. Tennant will inform City Council of the Commission's decision and work with the appropriate groups to prepare the legislative text and necessary materials for Council's consideration.

C. Beautification Awards

The Awards Subcommittee 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. The Commission considered an updated map for award regions that was initially presented at the March meeting. Ms. Holmstrand made a motion to approve the new award areas. Ms. Runion seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the new award areas.

A significant enhancement to the nominations process this year is the availability of web-based nominations. With help from Mr. Mendoza, the subcommittee has created an online form for nomination, and Commissioners making nomination will also use this form. The nomination form will be distributed through several outlets, including social media.

Because Commissioners and the public may begin submitting nominations on April 13, 2018, the subcommittee reviewed the award criteria and process. Further, Commissioners confirmed their availability for the voting tour of nominees set for June 9, 2018. The photo tour will be arranged for the following weekend with Ms. Runion. In preparation for the tour, Ms. Holmstrand will map the locations and plan the tour using route optimization software. Ms. Tennant will distribute examples of nomination descriptions to Commissioners to ensure sufficient information for the awards ceremony.

D. Earth Day

The Commission will have an exhibition booth at the City's annual Earth Day celebration on Saturday, April 28, 2018, at the Lenny Harris Memorial Fields at Braddock Part, 1005 Mount Vernon Avenue. City residents will be offered seeds and seedlings and can learn about the Commission's activities and goals. Coordinating the Commission's presence at Earth Day, Ms. Holmstrand confirmed the Commission's needs for the event with Mr. Mendoza. Ms. Chiasson, Mr. Dunne, Ms. Enschede, Ms. McElwain, Ms. Runion, and Ms. Tennant volunteered to participate in staffing the booth.

E. Social Media Plan

The Education Subcommittee presented its draft social media plan for monthly postings of materials. The plan, based on a generic four week month, provides an outline of the types and frequency of social media postings. The data highlighting native and invasive

plants of the region will be taken from Plant NOVA Natives, the Virginia Invasive Species List, and similar resources and organization. Commissioners were encouraged to share ad hoc postings with the subcommittee and Ms. Tennant, Ms. Holmstrand, and Ms. Smith Lacy, who maintain access to the social media accounts. The Commission is enthusiastic about the proposed plan and will hear feedback from the subcommittee's experience at a future meeting.

F. Logo

Due to the amount of time needed for the previous agenda items, discussion and voting on a new logo for the Commission was deferred until the May Commission meeting.

4. New Commission Business – There was no new Commission business to discuss.

5. Staff Report – There was no staff report for this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.