

## Summary Minutes

### Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting February 15, 2010

#### Torpedo Factory Food Pavilion

#### Members

Present: Engin Artemel, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.  
Jay Atkinson, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.  
Mel Fortney, Citizen east of Washington St. and south of King St.  
Linda Hafer, Old Town Business Association  
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce  
Nathan Macek, At-large citizen and Chair  
Peter Pennington, Environmental Policy Commission  
Pete Peterson, Archaeological Commission  
Van Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association  
Robert Taylor, Alexandria Seaport Foundation

Excused: Christine Bernstein, Founders Park Community Association  
William Cromley, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission  
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina pleasure boat lease holder  
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association  
Paul Smedberg, Alexandria City Council

**City Staff:** Sgt. Courtney Ballantine, Police Department  
Pam Cressey, City Archaeologist  
Jim Hixon, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Randy Jones, RPCA  
Adrian King, General Services  
James Spengler, RPCA  
Jack Browand, RPCA  
Jenna Wiesenhahn, RPCA  
Nancy Williams, Planning and Zoning

**Guests:** Susan Cohen, Alexandria Commission for the Arts Public Art Committee  
Linda Couture, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)  
Mel Garbo, Harborside  
Harry Harrington, Old Dominion Boat Club  
Matthew Harwood, ACA Public Art Committee  
James McCall, Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC)  
Kelly O'Brien, Torpedo Factory Arts Center (TFAC)  
Joann Platt  
Lisa Schwimmer, TFAC  
Allison Singletary, TFAC  
Mike Young

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

### **Call to Order**

Macek called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m. A quorum not being present, the Committee deferred approval of minutes until a quorum was reached.

### **Presentation: Alexandria Waterfront History Plan**

McCall briefed on the Alexandria Waterfront History Plan's process, principles, and illustrative suggestions developed by the City's history community as a proposal for how Waterfront history – from colonial to modern times – should be woven into the Waterfront Plan.

A key goal is to incorporate history into the Waterfront experience while avoiding artificiality, instead creating an authentic historical and cultural attraction for Alexandria visitors that balances history with the day-to-day life of the community.

McCall urged that historical aspects be woven throughout the Waterfront plan and not be added as an appendix to it. AAC, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, and ACA collaboratively developed ideas in response to the City's concept plan. AAC and the Public Art Committee have been working for the past two years on ideas for incorporating public art into the Waterfront Plan.

Citizen experts have been advising City planners on how to incorporate history into the plan. Ideas proposed include self-guided tours, guided tours with instructive wayfinding materials created by artists, and events depicting historical elements. A goal of the Waterfront Arts and History plans is to encourage circulation both along the Waterfront and east-west from the Waterfront into the City. Cultural and historic anchors along the Waterfront were identified at the TC Williams public meeting held early in the planning process – highlighting Waterfront history from Colonial times through the Civil Rights movement and up to current times.

McCall requested that the Committee endorse the report's proposals. Artemel noted that he's been a long-time advocate of including animation and Waterfront activities that balance Waterfront history with the needs of today's Waterfront residents. McCall noted that P&Z's December 13 meeting presentation reflected an awareness of the arts and history plans but the Commissions have not endorsed the City's content for these aspects.

Pennington emphasized the importance of including family-friendly activities along the Waterfront. Since children bring families back, he suggested a focus that will make the Waterfront's educational and historical aspects fun and interesting to children as part of a family outing. Peterson urged that the Committee communicate to City Council that it's essential to recognize the City's historical legacy, noting a generally weak City

emphasis on its history. A strong historical advocacy and commitment to stronger stewardship of resources is needed.

Pennington emphasized the need for the City to balance recognizing and conveying Alexandria's history with its living "organic" nature, recognizing that Alexandria cannot and should not "fossilize" its historic sites. The challenge is how to balance a desire to preserve historic accuracy with the need for new development. Peterson urged a strong Committee statement to City officials that the City not slight its history and culture, but recognize the value of its historical place in American history, and pursue that.

Having achieved quorum, moved by Artemel, seconded by Peterson, to endorse the AAC Alexandria Waterfront History Plan. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

Macek would write a letter to P&Z, with copies to other City officials, urging that the History Plan's ideas be incorporated into the Waterfront Plan, that Alexandria's historical place in American history be represented, and restating the Waterfront History principles adopted in 2009.

#### **Approval of January Minutes**

Moved by Pennington, second by Hall, to approve the December 2010 minutes as drafted. Motion carried on a voice vote.

#### **Waterfront Small Area Plan**

Williams reported that the plan's release was expected within the next week. Since the proposal's December 13 release, P&Z had met with 15 community groups, property owners, and internal departments – primarily to discuss parking issues, solicit comments, and incorporate feedback at meetings into the plan. P&Z has been working with the Arts and Archaeological Commissions since October, including joint appearances before the Boards of Architectural Review to discuss the plan. P&Z is now working to incorporate goals and ideas developed by the Arts and Archaeological Commissions into the Waterfront Small Area Plan (SMAP) implementation process.

A Planning Commission public hearing is planned for April/May. The plan will be posted on the website for public review with public comments accepted by email and at the hearing.

Artemel expressed concern that although P&Z has been updating the Waterfront Committee on its SMAP activities the Committee has not received the detailed P&Z presentations briefed to Planning Commission. Committee members have not had the opportunity to review and discuss the plan's specifics as they were evolving. Artemel also questioned whether the P&Z community briefings were answering community concerns about the plan, advising that some who'd been at the P&Z briefings had left with significant concerns. Artemel suggested that Waterfront Committee members might be able to help P&Z staff consider how best to respond to community concerns about the plan's impact in its current form.

Pennington urged that Jones Point under-bridge parking be revisited, Spengler said he knew of no plans to reduce the 120 under-bridge spaces now being constructed for special events parking, but the City is discussing with National Park Service the possibility of opening up under-bridge parking spots for regular parking. Macek noted that Congressman Moran, at a public meeting held last fall, had said he intended to meet with Department of Homeland Security officials to discuss Jones Point parking.

The Waterfront Committee will hold a work session March 3 to review the plan's details and identify issues for the full Committee to consider at its next meeting on March 15.

Williams will send the parking plan details and a hotel analysis to Committee members prior to the March 3 work session.

### **Waterfront Nest Exhibition Proposal**

Harwood briefed the Committee on a proposal for a temporary outdoor exhibit this spring of approximately 12 artist-created nests to be installed in the vicinity of the Alexandria City Marina. Art groups within the DC area would design the nests; Habitat for Humanity would cooperate with the Torpedo Factory Art Center Target Gallery on the exhibit. The exhibit is envisioned as a subtle art project that could set a precedent for other Waterfront public art. It may include a lighting component and is planned to last less than two months. It was agreed that if the art nests became used as actual nests they would need to be kept up until they were no longer being used for nesting. An exhibit map or rack card of the various locations will be widely distributed to publicize the public art. The gazebo would be used by Habitat for Humanity staff and volunteers to interact with the public about issues raised by the exhibit. Related indoor art projects are being planned. The exhibit would coincide with Earth Day.

Committee members were concerned about whether security could be provided for the public art, since Waterfront visitors often create mischief with items located on the Waterfront. Police will be advised of the project. Fortney noted that artists need to consider that art nests put on the ground that attracted nesting birds could be vulnerable to ground animal attack. RPCA staff is being consulted on the art project. Harwood confirmed that the existing environment will be factored into the exhibit designs and locations. Cohen offered to answer questions about the project. It was agreed that National Park Service should be advised of the project. Virginia Tech and other organizations are planning to build one of these artistic "nests" as well. The Public Art Committee is hoping the Nest project might become part of an annual Waterfront celebration.

Moved by Artemel, second by Pennington, to endorse the Nest exhibition. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote. Macek would follow-up with an endorsement letter on behalf of the Committee.

### **Report from Department Of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities**

Spengler reported that RPCA staff responsibilities for the Waterfront have been reorganized reflecting the eventual implementation of Waterfront Small Area Plan.

Browand is now responsible for all Waterfront-related activity, including the Marina, special events and maintenance, offering a single point of contact for all Waterfront-related issues both for the public and within the department. Staff working on Waterfront-related issues was introduced.

Pennington asked whether the Waterfront Plan had taken into account feedback provided by Waterfront Committee on ideas to enhance the economic viability of the Marina, noting that analysis had been done on steps that could be taken to make the Marina economically self-sufficient. Spengler encouraged the Committee to evaluate these long-term issues within its work meetings, noting that most of his attention was taken up in 3-5 year planning rather than 30-year planning. Spengler noted that he views the Marina's economic value to the City as primarily commercial in light of the water taxi, Potomac Riverboat Company, dinner cruises, and other commercial ventures located there that also draw people to aspects of the City beyond the Marina.

Atkinson disagreed with Spengler's view of the Marina's value as being primarily commercial, noting that as a private boat owner he feels like a second class citizen. In response to Atkinson's question whether Browand had experience relevant to managing a commercial marina, Spengler explained that Browand has general responsibility for the Marina and Hixon, the dockmaster, would handle the details. Hixon's responsibilities and authority for Marina decision-making has been expanded. The line of authority at the City Marina is Hixon, Dockmaster; Browand, Division Chief; and Spengler, Director.

#### **Report from Department of General Services**

King reported that mold and mildew remediation has been completed. Centennial Construction has a purchase order and will begin construction when materials are in place. The same inspector who did the initial environmental report will do re-inspection. On Wednesday, Centennial will erect a chain link fence for the staging area. Construction planning meetings have been held. A portion of the water taxi waiting area will be used to store materials. Full construction begins February 23-28, with completion anticipated by the end of March. Hall thanked King for General Service's regular progress reports on the project.

#### **Report from Police Department**

Ballantine provided an update. 13 calls were received for matters near the Waterfront, but only 2 pertain to Waterfront, an I-Pod theft at the Chart House and a trespassing incident at Founders Park. Human remains were found near Fords Landing, but there are no further details known beyond those released publicly to date.

Van Fleet is concerned about the need to watch for damage from inebriated individuals near the foot of King Street. Artemel urged bike enforcement along Union Street, especially at the Montgomery and Madison intersections, noting that hazards are created by cyclists not stopping at the stop signs. The police are planning to increase monitoring of Waterfront areas when the Water Taxi resumes operation March 1, and motor coaches will begin then too.

**Report from Economic Development Subcommittee**

Hall reported that there is no news to report since the last Committee meeting. Conversations continue with promoters of family-friendly activities. Hall proposed that the Committee be briefed in the next couple months by Farm Fresh, the company that may be tapped to operate a farmers market at the Waterfront. Hall says that Gary Baker (landlord) is aware of the interest in a farmers market and supports it as a way to attract additional people to the area. The farmers market would start in June or July rather than starting up in March as previously discussed. A list of activities and proposed events through September and October should be available at the March meeting. The Committee will arrange a Farm Fresh briefing, likely at the April Committee meeting.

**Discussion: Waterfront Committee Meeting Venue**

Macek invited discussion of future venues for Committee meetings, noting that the January and February meetings at the Food Court had been viewed as a temporary location. Venues considered included the Torpedo Factory (first or third floor), City Hall, and Lee Center. Though members enjoyed being at the Waterfront, the poor acoustics of the Food Court were a concern. They appreciated having had the opportunity to see the facility.

Moved by Pennington, seconded by Van Fleet, to meet at City Hall the next two meetings. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote. The Committee has reserved a room at City Hall for the next four months, and will revisit the issue in April.

**Announcements**

Pennington reported the City will launch its climate action and energy plan on March 26 at Polk School at a 9:30 a.m. workshop presentation. On March 15 the City is planning to bring in an EPA expert to discuss climate change science. In the same week the Sierra Club (independent of the City) plans its own evening presentation on the politics of climate change.

Fortney reported that he is retiring from Simpson Development and provided a new email address.

Taylor reported that on May 9 the Seaport Foundation will hold its annual golf tournament, with literature available at next month's meeting.

Atkinson reported that the Founders Park lights do not work, leaving the park dark at night. Staff will look into it.

**Adjournment**

Pennington moved to adjourn, Hafer seconded. The meeting was adjourned without objection at 9:28 a.m.