

Alexandria Archaeological Commission Meeting
Minutes of October 18, 2023

Members Present:

Ivy Whitlatch, Planning District I (Chair)
Esther White, Planning District II (Vice Chair)
John Oldfield, Member at Large, (Secretary)
Dylan Colligan, Area Business Community Representative
Nicholas (Nick) Dienna, Member at Large
Rebecca Doser, Visit Alexandria Representative
Richard (Dick) Owens, Friends of Alexandria Archaeology (FOAA) Representative
Edward (Ted) Pulliam, Alexandria Association Representative
Robert (Scott) Vierick, Alexandria Historical Society Representative
Seth Tinkham, Historic Alexandria Foundation Representative
Elizabeth Vehmeyer, Member at Large

Paula Whitacre, Planning District III (by phone)

Members Excused:

Ann Greer, Member at Large
Michael Johnson, Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage or equivalent organization Representative
Ralph Rosenbaum, Member at Large

Visitors:

Jason Roberts

City Staff:

Eleanor Breen, City Archaeologist

At 7:02 p.m., at the Lloyd House, Ivy Whitlatch, Chair, called the meeting to order. AAC members reviewed and amended the September 20 meeting minutes. Dylan Colligan moved to accept the minutes as amended. Esther White seconded. Motion passed and minutes were approved, as amended.

Chair Report:

- **Budget Letter** – AAC owes the City Manager the annual budget letter by Friday, November 3. Ivy and Eleanor Breen have been discussing the content of the letter and will submit it. The letter will make it clear that the hull remnant is coming back to Alexandria from Texas in December 2025, after its conservation, and if the City of Alexandria does not have a location for it (either for display or storage) it will cost \$5,000 per month to store it in Texas. AAC members suggested linking the budget letter to the priorities outlined in the City Manager’s letter of September 14, including “Economic Development Growth” and “Our Youth and Families,” with tourism and education as key drivers. The letter will include the ongoing request for a \$50,000 reserve fund for contingencies. There was also a brief discussion of the importance of multilingual displays.
- **Joint Storage Letter** – Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC), AAC, and the Archives Commission sent a letter to the City Manager stressing present and upcoming storage needs for paper and digital records and archaeological artifacts. There is grant funding available to fund a storage needs assessment, including the conserved hull remnant.
- **Cemeteries Committee Formation Discussion** – AAC agreed last month to set up a committee to explore the possibility of nominating the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex to the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. Seth Tinkham will spearhead, joined by Nick Dienna, Dick Owens, and Ivy.
- **Awards and Social Committee Discussion** – Liz Vehmeyer moved to expand the current Awards Committee to Awards and Social Committee. Ted Pulliam seconded; motion passed.

AAC Membership Reports:

- **HARC Update** – Ivy Whitlatch

- Ivy made a presentation for AAC at a recent HARC meeting. Her presentation included Alexandria Archaeology's new van, the ship timber monitoring report, and recent progress with the [Veterans Curation Program](#). The HARC meeting also focused on the Joint Storage Letter.
- **Waterfront Updates**
 - Waterfront Commission – Esther White – Esther attended the Waterfront Commission meeting. Enhanced community engagement was discussed, as was the [Business Improvement Service District \(BISD\)](#). Eleanor Breen says she is discussing a preliminary Shovel Test Pit (STP) study of Founders Park. This type of survey is relatively non-invasive, and will help understand the stratigraphy of the park. This survey will be complemented by Abby Schreiber's (Waterfront Historian, Office of Historic Alexandria) research on maps, deed, and insurance records. AAC members suggested collaborating with the City Arborist to discuss the linkages between root balls, archaeology, and witness trees.
 - African American Heritage Trail Committee – Ted Pulliam – The Committee met recently and discussed their presentation at the upcoming [Alexandria Forum](#) and the new African American Waterfront Heritage Trail brochure.
- **Samuel Madden Redevelopment** – no report

Break Out Sessions and Committee Reports:

- Awards Committee (Nick Dienna, Liz Vehmeyer, Paula Whitacre) – no report
- 50th Anniversary (Dylan Colligan, Rebecca Doser, Ivy Whitlatch, Ann Greer, Scott Vierick)
Rebecca Doser reported on low budget and high impact activities that the Committee will undertake to celebrate the AAC's 50th anniversary:
 - work with OHA in planning for the City's 275th anniversary in summer 2024; anticipated audiences are residents and tourists; the Committee will involve Friends of Alexandria Archaeology (FOAA) and Emma Richardson (Museum Educator, Alexandria Archaeology) for both oral and hands-on activities
 - raise the profile of AAC in the national archaeology community; anticipated audience is professional archaeologists
 - develop a national media pitch about AAC being the first archaeological commission in the country; the Committee is considering state-level recognition as well, e.g. a resolution in the State legislature

The Anniversary Committee is working on a calendar, and the Award and Social Committee will be involved with the anniversary, as well as next year's Ben Brenman awards. AAC members also discussed representation at next year's [MAAC Conference](#), State Historic Preservation Officer conferences in Virginia and beyond, Preservation Virginia gatherings, the developer community, and Preservation Law conferences. Scott Vierick will determine the potential role of oral history throughout this process, beginning with Pam Cressey, Alexandria's first City Archaeologist. AAC members also suggested a "Top Ten" list of AAC's major accomplishments over its 50 years.

- African American Initiatives (Ted Pulliam, Paula Whitacre, Esther White) – no report
- Museum (Dick Owens, Ralph Rosenbaum, Michael Johnson, Scott Vierick) – no report
- Waterfront (Ann Greer, Seth Tinkham, John Oldfield) – no report

Commissioner Reports:

- FOAA Update (Richard Owens) – no report
- Visit Alexandria (Rebecca Doser)
 - Condé Nast Traveler honored Alexandria as the [#3 Best Small City](#)

- Alexandria Association (Ted Pulliam) – no report
- Alexandria Historical Society (Scott Vierick)
 - The next Alexandria Historical Society (AHS) meeting will be Wednesday, October 25, and will feature Dr. Abby Schreiber’s talk “*New Perspectives on the Old Waterfront: Early Wharves of Alexandria*”
 - AHS will soon be collecting nominations for its Adult History awards
 - For its 50th anniversary, AHS and partner organizations will organize a series of lectures related to Alexandria, and specifically about how the preservation of Alexandria’s history has evolved over years
- Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage or Equivalent Organization (Michael Johnson) – no report
- Historic Alexandria Foundation (Seth Tinkham) – no report
- Business Community (Dylan Colligan)
 - The Business Improvement Service District debate will likely have no impact on AAC
- Planning District Updates (Paula Whitacre, Esther White, Ivy Whitlatch)
 - Planning District 1 – Ivy – Alexandria’s Board of Architectural Review has approved a proposal to raze several properties on King Street
- Members at Large (Nick Dienna, Ann Greer, John Oldfield) – no report

Staff Reports: Eleanor Breen

- Archaeology Updates
 - Emma Richardson, Archaeology Education Coordinator, was [interviewed](#) on WJLA TV about Archaeology Month
 - An Archaeology Month event at Robinson landing was cancelled because of weather; walking tours have been rescheduled for November
 - Bronze plaques at Freedmen’s Cemetery are being professionally cleaned by a conservator
- Social Media and Events Update
 - October is Virginia Archaeology Month; events listed [on](#) the City website, alexandriava.gov/archaeology/celebrate-virginia-archaeology-month
 - Great turnout is expected at the Alexandria Forum on Friday, October 20; the Forum will be an annual event

Next AAC Meeting – Wednesday, November 15 at the Lloyd House

AAC agreed that the November 15 meeting will be the annual potluck, and to cancel the December meeting.

Adjournment 8:38 p.m.