

Alexandria Archaeological Commission Meeting
Minutes of February 21, 2024 Draft

Members Present:

Ivy Whitlatch, Planning District I (Chair)
Esther White, Planning District II (Vice Chair)
John Oldfield, Member at Large (Secretary)
Rebecca Doser, Visit Alexandria Representative
Ann Greer, Member at Large
Michael Johnson, Society for the Preservation
of Black Heritage or equivalent
organization
Richard (Dick) Owens, Friends of Alexandria
Archaeology (FOAA) Representative
Edward (Ted) Pulliam, Alexandria Association
Representative
Ralph Rosenbaum, Member at Large
Seth Tinkham, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Representative
Robert (Scott) Vierick, Alexandria Historical
Society Representative

Members Excused:

Dylan Colligan, Area Business Community
Representative
Nicholas (Nick) Dienna, Member at Large
Jason Roberts, Member at Large
Paula Whitacre, Planning District III

Visitors:

Pam Cressey, former City Archaeologist,
Alexandria
Francine Bromberg, former City Archaeologist,
Alexandria

City Staff:

Eleanor Breen, City Archaeologist

At 7:01 p.m., at the Lloyd House, Ivy Whitlatch, Chair, called the meeting to order. AAC members reviewed the Wednesday, January 17 meeting minutes. Ralph Rosenbaum moved to accept the minutes as written. Esther White seconded. Motion passed and minutes were approved.

Chair Report:

- It was recognized that tonight is the 49th anniversary of the AAC.
- Alexandria Waterfront Commission:
 - o Esther White has re-upped her membership on the Alexandria Waterfront Commission.
 - o Several members represented the AAC at the Community Walking Tour for the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Project on Saturday, January 27.

AAC Membership Reports:

- **HARC:** AAC was represented at the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission meeting on Tuesday, February 20. HARC reported the resignation and term endings of several members, including the current Vice Chair and Planning District II representative, which is of concern.
- **African American Heritage Trail Committee:** The ribbon cutting ceremony for the installation of new interpretive signs along the African American Heritage Trail on Saturday, February 10, was well attended and successful.

Break Out Sessions (45 minutes) and Committee Reports (15 minutes)

Cemetery Committee (Seth Tinkham leads; members are Ralph Rosenbaum, Michael Johnson, Dick Owens, Paula Whitacre, Jason Roberts, Nick Dienna, Eleanor Breen)

- The Committee acknowledged gratefully that the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex is a well-researched space, providing a great foundation to AAC's efforts to submit a nomination for the National Register of Historic Places. Next steps are outreach and communication regarding what it means to be listed in the National Register.

- The Wednesday, June 12 meeting of the AAC will be the traditional “walkabout;” it was agreed that doing the walkabout at the Cemetery Complex would be valuable. The AAC agreed to move the June meeting time to 6-8 p.m. to ensure the walk will take place during daylight hours. Ivy agreed to ask City Council to join the walkabout.

50th AAC Anniversary Committee (Rebecca Doser leads; members are Dylan Colligan, John Oldfield, Ivy Whitlatch, Ann Greer, Scott Vierick, Ted Pulliam, Esther White)

- Two former City Archaeologists, Pam Cressey and Francine Bromberg, joined this Committee as guests to help AAC identify what AAC has done over its lifetime to support City Archaeology
- A list of numerous AAC accomplishments was circulated and discussed. Highlights included the founding of AAC (the first in the nation), lobbying for City archaeology staff, community archaeology, collaborating with developers, African American Heritage efforts, and waterfront/maritime history.

Commissioner Reports

- FOAA Update (Dick Owens): There was a great FOAA float and healthy turnout for the George Washington Birthday Parade.
- Visit Alexandria (Rebecca Doser): The ribbon cutting ceremony for the installation of new interpretive signs along the African American Heritage Trail on Saturday, February 10, was well attended and successful.
- Alexandria Association (Scott Vierick): Ted will present “*True Tales of Old Alexandria*” at the Alexandria Historical Society on Wednesday, March 27.
- Alexandria Historical Society (Scott Vierick):
 - o City Archaeologist Ben Skolnik has published “*Photographic Presentments of Them Will Be Accepted By Posterity With An Undoubting Faith*” Correcting Two Civil War-Era Photographs of Alexandria, Attributed to William R. Pywell and Published in Gardner’s *Photographic Sketch Book of the War (1866)* in the latest edition of *The Alexandria Chronicle*. The edition also included a new section called *History Memos* in which Scott published *Why A History Degree Is Still Worth It*.
 - o Upcoming events include “Kidnapped into Slavery,” a lecture by Richard Bell to be delivered on Wednesday, February 28, and special events for the 50th anniversary of AHS.
 - o There is also an ongoing membership drive for the 50th anniversary of AHS.
- Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage or Equivalent Organization (Michael Johnson): Michael reported briefly the archaeological testing Douglass Cemetery in advance of the stormwater drainage improvement project. The test units identified the location of the utility pipe and trench. One unit partially uncovered the top of a grave shaft west of the utility trench.
- Historic Alexandria Foundation (Seth Tinkham): no report
- Business Community (Dylan Colligan): no report
- Planning District Updates (Paula Whitacre, Esther White, Ivy Whitlatch): no report
- Members at Large (Nick Dienna, Ann Greer, John Oldfield, Jason Roberts, Ralph Rosenbaum): Ann Greer reported that she met recently with a City Councilmember (Kirk McPike) who feels that Alexandria Archaeology needs heightened visibility, including moving down from the third floor at the Torpedo Factory; Ann Greer and John Oldfield expressed ongoing interest/concern in the return of the conserved (process underway) hull remnant from Texas A&M (anticipated in late 2025), and options for display and/or storage. Eleanor Breen, City Archaeologist, will soon reconnect with the Conservator at A&M and expects an update by March.

Staff Reports: – Eleanor Breen

- Eleanor mentioned the George Washington Birthday Parade, the state of play regarding the return of the hull remnant from Texas A&M; the upcoming exhibit “*The Buried Ships of Robinson Landing*,” and “*Once in a Blue Moon*,” an article by Tatiana Niculescu, Archaeologist, City of Alexandria, published in the *Quarterly Bulletin* (June 2023) of the Archeological Society of Virginia.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m. The next AAC meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 20, at Lloyd House.