

HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

for

FISCAL YEAR 2021: JUNE 2020 – JULY 2021

I. SUMMARY

In FY 2021, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) held virtual monthly meetings because of the coronavirus pandemic. Continuing virtual monthly meetings rather than having a summer 2020 hiatus was necessitated by the number and range of issues requiring attention by the commission and by the need for prompt attention to new issues as they arose. To accommodate better the commissioners' schedules and other obligations, meetings convened at 7:00 pm, and aggressive efforts were made to conclude business within two hours. To aid in efficient and effective attention to the issues addressed by the Commission, several committees continue their efforts and additional committees were established.

Available time during the meetings was focused on active discussions among the HARC members rather than passive listening to presentations. Briefings were scheduled for significant issues facing HARC, but the number and duration of such briefings was intentionally limited. Emphasis was placed on discussion of issues relevant to the HARC mission and goals. Deliberations consistently addressed (1) whether HARC positions should be communicated to other organizations relevant to historic preservation and other areas of concern or (2) whether other actions should be taken.

The Commission has maintained a close and beneficial relationship with key personnel in the Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning. Especially helpful assistance has been provided by Susan Hellman who is the Principal Preservation Planner and Bill Conkey who is the Historic Preservation Architect for Alexandria. One or both of them regularly attended HARC meetings.

II. OPERATING PROCESSES

Meetings began at 7:00 pm on the third Tuesday of every month. As was the case for FY 2020, HARC was led by co-chairs and the secretary position was held by an individual. Election of officers for FY 2021 was held during the October 2020 HARC meeting. The elected FY 2021 co-chairs, Linda Lovell and Danny Smith, alternated presiding at the meetings and conducted the business of HARC in full, continual and open consultation. The position of vice-chair was deemed unnecessary because of the decision to elect co-chairs who share equally the leadership responsibilities. Steve Stuart was elected secretary. The meeting agendas were prepared by the co-chairs in consultation with the director of the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) and were

designed to promote efficient and effective deliberation. Meetings were managed to conclude deliberations by 9:00 pm if possible.

III. COMMITTEES

The following committees were active in FY 2021:

A. Office of Historic Alexandria and Planning Support Committee

Stephen Stuart, Chair

Laura Lieberman

B. Advocacy Committee

Martha Harris and Marth Raymond, Co-Chairs

Gail Rothrock, Michael Hobbs, Sam Hoffman

C. HARC Composition

Richard Kligenmeier, Chair

Michael Hobbs, Linda Lovell, Danny Smith

D. HARC Bylaws

Sam Hoffman, Chair

Linda Lovell, Danny Smith, Steve Stuart

E. Nominating Committee

Laura Lieberman, Chair

HARC members provided representation to the following City committees: Alexandria RENEW Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Combined Sewer Outfall project (Ivy Whitlatch), Open Space Committee (Martha Harris), and the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (Maddy McCoy).

IV. HARC ACTIVITIES

In the past year, HARC continued to limit the number and duration of briefings and presentations to conserve valuable meeting time for commission business. This emphasis allowed more time for identifying current and anticipated issues relevant to historic preservation and other HARC priorities, discussing those issues as needed, and developing appropriate actions. Following are descriptions of the more significant issues addressed by HARC during FY 2021.

- A. Heritage Apartments at Old Town – The owner of this property proposes to demolish the approximately 250 affordable housing units and build several large buildings containing about 750 new units. About 500 of the units will be market rate, and about 250 will be affordable housing units to replace the units to be demolished. The commission found,

among other issues, that the proposed new construction is inconsistent with the height, scale, and character of the surrounding neighborhood. Letters and statements were presented expressing HARC objections to the Board of Architectural Review, the Planning Commission, and the City Council.

- B. 506 North Overlook Street – A developer bought the property and proposed to subdivide it and build two separate dwellings which would require demolition of the existing structure. Research was conducted by the Office of Historic Alexandria and others to establish the historical significance of the building. A statement from HARC was submitted encouraging preservation of the building.
- C. Torpedo Factory Arts Center – Recognizing the important role of the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria’s history, the commission submitted a letter to the mayor, council, and city manager strongly encouraging consideration of the historic significance of the structure and requesting representation on the stakeholder group to be empaneled.
- D. Joint Working Session with Department of Planning and Zoning – During public hearings related to the Heritage Old Town Apartments, the mayor suggested that general discussions between city staff and HARC should be undertaken to define better the appropriate role of historic preservation in the city’s public policies, planning, and projects – especially in its relationship to the goal of preserving and enlarging Alexandria’s stock of affordable housing. This initiative will be pursued in the Fall of FY 2022.
- E. Liberty Service Station on North Washington Street – The commission was alerted that the property underwent substantial alterations many of which were contrary to representations made by the owner to the Historic Preservation Office. The commission continued to monitor the negotiations between the city and the owner and supported the resolution of the violations which included removal of paint from the previously unpainted masonry exterior and replacement of architectural components.
- F. Justice Black House (619 South Lee Street) – The commission continued to track developments related to proposed modifications to this property. HARC was advised in June of 2018 that the owner of this property proposed to make alterations that, in the opinion of HARC, would be inconsistent with the historic easement placed on the property by Justice Black when he was the owner. Extensive efforts were undertaken by HARC to encourage adherence to the easement. Review of decisions by the BAR and the City Council issue were adjudicated in the courts as a result of an appeal by the Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF), and HARC monitored that activity for appropriate engagement opportunities. Ultimately, the Virginia Supreme Court determined that HAF lacks standing in the case. In the absence of further legal action, the current owner of the property will be allowed to commence the desired alterations to the property.

- G. Alexandria Community Remembrance Project – This project is a city-wide initiative dedicated to helping Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes and to working toward creating a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion. A position on the steering committee is allocated to HARC. Commissioner Maddy McCoy was appointed to serve in that capacity during FY 2021.
- H. HARC Composition – There are some positions on HARC for organizations that are no longer active or have not nominated representatives for many years. A committee was empaneled by HARC to review the composition of HARC as currently defined by city ordinance and to recommend changes in HARC composition for consideration by the full commission followed by recommendation of changes to the city council.
- I. HARC Bylaws – Upon notification that city boards and commissions are required to conduct activities under written bylaws, HARC empaneled a committee to develop draft bylaws for submission to and consideration by the full commission.
- J. Small Cell Networks (5G) – This issue surfaced in FY 2019, and this year several proposed installations have been brought before the BAR. Some of the proposed installations are within the Alexandria historic districts, and the commission has weighed in where appropriate on the advanced 5G installations for the networks mandated by federal law. HARC will continue to monitor the issue including inspection of the initial installations when they occur.
- K. Open Space Policy – The city is in the process of revamping its open space policy and has identified HARC as a key participant on the steering committee for that process. Commissioner Martha Harris was selected to serve on the committee to represent HARC and keep HARC apprised of committee activities. Due in part to the coronavirus pandemic, there has been very little activity on this issue.
- L. Freedom House Museum – Now that the building has been acquired by the city, HARC continues to support OHA work to upgrade the Freedom House Museum operated by OHA at 1315 Duke Street. HARC has expressed full support for preservation of the property and is tracking initiatives at the local and state levels to provide funds for rehabilitation of the building.
- M. Elks Lodge 48 – When apprised of the deteriorating condition of this historically Black fraternal organization’s building at 227 North Henry Street, a tour of the facility was requested. The tour and presentations by lodge members made clear that repairs to the building were desperately needed. Fund-raising for such facilities is not within the purview of HARC, so Commissioner Carol Black has independently provided major assistance to lodge members resulting in significant progress in rehabilitating the building.

- N. Combined Sewer Outfalls – HARC has established contact points within Alexandria RENEW to promote full awareness of ongoing and proposed activities and expedient communication regarding actual and potential historic preservation risks. HARC has monitored the issue carefully because of the potential damage that this major construction activity in and near the Old and Historic Alexandria District could cause to historic structures. The final route selected for the main north-south tunnel is slightly offshore under the river, but other portions of the project are within the boundaries of the OHAD. As noted above, commission member Ivy Whitlatch has been appointed to serve on the Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Project.
- O. Waterfront History Plan Implementation and African American Heritage Trail – HARC is monitoring the design and implementation of the first history trails which form a key component of the Waterfront History Plan and are also anchored to the Interim Park area at the foot of King Street. These first trails will focus on African American History, but the templates and technologies developed will be used for a wide range of similar trails with other themes.
- P. Alfred Street Baptist Church – The Alfred Street Baptist Church has proposed a major enlargement of their facility bounded by Alfred, Duke, Patrick, and Wolfe Streets. Apparently, soil and geology issues have arisen that have delayed the expansion plans, but HARC continues to monitor the issue and is prepared to engage should the proposal be reactivated.

V. GOALS FOR FY2022

- A. Support and advocate for the budget, preservation, and operational needs of the Office of Historic Alexandria.
- B. HARC has been monitoring applications docketed for presentation to the BAR and providing input as appropriate. That activity will continue in FY 2022.
- C. HARC will continue to monitor appeals of BAR decisions to the City Council and provide input to those deliberations as appropriate.
- D. Draft bylaws will be completed by the Bylaws Committee and presented to the full commission for review and adoption.
- E. The report of the HARC Composition Committee will be presented to the full commission for deliberation with the intention of preparing a recommendation to the city council for modification of the composition of HARC.

- F. The commission will pursue efforts with city staff to define better the appropriate role of historic preservation in the city’s public policies, planning, and projects – especially in its relationship to the goal of preserving and enlarging Alexandria’s stock of affordable housing.
- G. Plans for expansion of the Alfred Street Baptist Church and development at Christ Church will be monitored if these initiatives are reactivated by the churches.
- H. As the Combined Sewer Outfall Project evolves, HARC will continue to monitor the plans and implementation to identify threats to historic preservation and will seek changes that eliminate the threats or mitigating actions to reduce the impacts.
- I. Enforcement of easements protecting historic properties has precipitated some issues. HARC will continue to monitor developments and will seek to identify effective processes for enforcement of historic easements.
- J. HARC will continue to monitor various threats to the integrity of historic areas including 5G networks and the combined sewer outfalls construction project.
- K. HARC will continue to advocate for and assist in creating a preservation masterplan, and a building/materials/streetscape inventory in collaboration with OHA staff and the Preservation Office of the Department of Planning and Zoning.
- L. Many structures outside the historic districts qualify for listing as 100-year-old buildings. HARC will work with representatives from Planning and Zoning to advocate for additions to this list.

VI. FY 2021 COMMISSION OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND AFFILIATIONS

- A. Officers – Instead of electing a chair and a vice-chair, the commission decided once again to elect co-chairs who jointly and equally execute the duties of chair and vice-chair.

Co-Chairs: Linda Lovell
 Danny Smith
 Secretary: Stephen Stuart

- B. Members and Affiliations – During the fiscal year, the terms of some commissioners expired, and the commissioners were reappointed or replaced. As a result, there are multiple commissioners listed below for some of the organizations and bodies represented on HARC.

Carol Black – Old Presbyterian Meeting House
 Christopher Brownlowe – Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association

John Dumsick – Carlyle House (prior)
Rosemarie Esber – Planning District I
Shawn Eyer – George Washington Masonic Memorial
Jolande Goldberg – Torpedo Factory Artists Association (prior)
Martha Harris – Volunteer (Historic Alexandria Docents)
Michael Hobbs – Civic Association At-Large (Old Town Civic Association)
Sam Hoffman – Planning District I
Richard Klingenmaier – Alexandria Association
Laura Lieberman – Lee-Fendall House
Linda Lovell – Mortar and Pestle Society (Alexandria Historic Landmark Society)
Paul Mazzuca – Planning District III (prior)
Maddy McCoy – Planning District II (prior)
Severiano Ortiz – Alexandria Historical Society (prior)
Deborah Osborne – Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission
Martha Raymond – Planning District II (current)
Gail Rothrock – Historic Alexandria Foundation
Monica St. Dennis – Public Records Advisory Commission
Danny Smith – Business Representative
Stephen Stuart – Planning District III
Stetson Tinkham – Christ Church
Andrea Tracy – Carlyle House (current)
Ivy Whitlatch – Alexandria Archaeological Commission

C. Vacancies:

Visit Alexandria (Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association Board of Governors)
Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage
Business Representative (Chamber of Commerce)
Torpedo Factory Artists Association
Planning District II
Planning District III

Respectfully submitted,

Danny Smith
Chair, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission