

Meeting Minutes

Project: Murray-Dick-Fawcett House - Stakeholder Meetings

Project Number: GHA# 21561PW01

Meeting Date: May 14-15, 2024

Location: The Lyceum

Subject: Stakeholder Sessions

Participants and Organizations

Name	Organization
Gretchen Bulova	City of Alexandria
Qiaojue Yu	City of Alexandria
Eleanor Breen	City of Alexandria
Benjamin Skolnik	City of Alexandria
Michele Longo	City of Alexandria
Melanie Gonzalez	City of Alexandria
Al Cox	City of Alexandria
Liz Williams	City of Alexandria
Julia Walsh	City of Alexandria
Kristin Lloyd	City of Alexandria
Terry Healy	Healy Kohler
Diamone Scott	Healy Kohler
Richard Chenoweth	Glave & Holmes
Steven Blashfield	Glave & Holmes
Stakeholders	Selected by the City of Alexandria

Meeting Notes

I. Meeting Summary - 5/14 - 5 PM

- a. The meeting was opened by Gretchen Bulova to introduce the participants and the process.

- b. A prepared presentation was presented to the participants by Steven Blashfield, Gibson Worsham, Terry Healy and Diamone Scott. The presentation outlined the history of the site, the anticipated uses and use patterns, diagrams of proposed uses and a preliminary storyline diagram to discuss the interpretation.
- c. Participants provided the following comments during and following the 5/14 presentation:
 - i. Is an event size of 40-50 persons reasonable for an event?
 - ii. Consider Lincoln's Cottage as a precedent - this follows the ideas of limited display of artifacts, use of technology for interpretation, changing exhibit opportunities and incorporation of visitor seating
 - iii. Consider including a rear gate for access to the back courtyard; this could allow for better access
 - iv. The building is evocative; its historic patina should be retained; consider the model of the Aiken-Rhett House in Charleston.
 - v. Like the idea that is modeled by the Apothecary Museum, where visitors have the impression of being the first people to walk in to a long abandoned property
 - vi. People are attracted to the authenticity of place here; good stories are important; architecture is highly popular for visitors to Alexandria
 - vii. Consider using models to allow people to understand the evolution of the structures; these could be a part of the exterior interpretation on the ground. The idea was suggested that a series of models could be placed in the garden to show the different physical manifestations of the property and the sequence of variation.
 - viii. Consider an interpretive approach where the exterior interpretation uses the factual voice and the interior uses the first person voice
 - ix. Evolution and changes to the house are best suited to the exterior interpretation
 - x. Consider the main functional entrance to the site to be from St. Aseph's Street; consider giving the property a different address from this side to allow people to find it easily. Access from this side will have less impact to residential neighbors
 - xi. Consider the possibility of gaining more space to the rear by taking down or moving the wall. Front wall could be lowered or rebuilt as it is not historic.
 - xii. Look to the Tenement Museum in NY as a possible precedent.
 - xiii. Some interpretation can be online / virtual tours would be a possibility.

II. Meeting Summary - 5/15 - 1 PM

- a. The meeting was opened by Gretchen Bulova to introduce the participants and the process.
- b. A prepared presentation was presented to the participants by Steven Blashfield, Gibson Worsham, Terry Healy and Diamone Scott. The presentation outlined the history of the site, the anticipated uses and use patterns, diagrams of proposed uses and a preliminary storyline diagram to discuss the interpretation.
- c. Participants provided the following comments during and following the 5/15 presentation:
 - i. Tours moving onto the public sidewalk would be a concern; groups of people on the sidewalk is not safe
 - ii. The construction and evolution of the site is a big draw to this property.
 - iii. For a thematic interpretation approach, entering through the front door is not important
 - iv. Like that this is not proposed as just another historic house museum.
 - v. This house is unique in its age to Pre-Revolution, built in 1774. This may be the only pre-Revolutionary site in Alexandria.
 - vi. People/ home / work - tie these together to tell the story of this integration in this house historically and how that might compare to today.
 - vii. Use all the doors for access at different times.
 - viii. Another house with typical historic furnishings is not needed.
 - ix. The Clara Barton House could be a precedent to consider - allow for technologies.
 - x. This site has the most historic fabric of any home in Alexandria - it is very important to express this.
 - xi. Like the Work & Home theme, includes interpretation of class demarcation, gender roles, women, everyday life writ large
 - xii. It would be good to have different experiences that allow you to participate
 - xiii. This house is exciting as an average house of lower/middle class
 - xiv. Sitting areas would be desirable.
 - xv. Bring in a younger audience; works better without period furniture
 - xvi. Encourage people to engage with the front of the house.
 - xvii. Would you be interested in a name change?
 1. Include the Reeder name in the name - Joe had a significant influence on the preservation of this house.
 2. The existing name is problematic, not memorable
 3. Consider 1774 House

4. Witness to Alexandria - the Alexandria house; or An Alexandria Family home
 5. Change the address
 6. Not everyone here is part of the family.
 7. The "Timeless House"
 8. Working Class House
- xviii. The side door was probably the most used entry in early history; this is not a formal axial house.
 - xix. This can be a draw for local residents and community; connect to people who see themselves in this place
 - xx. This can be an experiential site; a non-traditional name tells people its different; a traditional name (such as exist now) creates an assumption of a traditional experience.
 - xxi. Consider making the garage bigger and use back alley
 - xxii. Finds a way to interpret inaccessible spaces.

III. Summary

- a. General feedback appeared to positive on the proposed uses, frequency and approach to treating the house.
- b. Participants seemed supportive of the idea that this would not be a traditional house museum but would have the opportunity to tell stories of the living situations of the more average member of the community through time, including non-traditional family groupings, the enslaved, apprentices, and others that inhabited this site through its history.
- c. The concept of using limited artifact placement, incorporating visitor seating in the spaces, utilizing technology, and allowing for a more thematic interpretation rather than one based on a linear timeline were all ideas that resonated with the group.
- d. The consensus seemed to be that the architectural evolution of this property, its age, the retention/visibility of significant levels of patina from the history of the site, and the complex stories of its inhabitants are key elements that make this site compelling to visitors. Retention of the house with minimal interior changes is desirable.
- e. Exterior changes to the site are acceptable and several participants discussed considerations such as lowering or moving the walls on the perimeter of the property, increasing visibility into the garden from the street and improving access to the rear of the house, the privies and the back courtyard.
- f. Multiple suggestions were made about reorienting the address and focus of visitor arrival on the St. Aseph's Street side of the property. Changing the name of the property was also discussed, with multiple ideas considered. Participants did not feel that the current name was particularly compelling or significant to retain.

Submitted by:
Steven Blashfield, AIA