

HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, August 20, 2019

PRESENT:

Martha Harris	Elizabeth McCall	Stephen Stuart
Bill Hendrickson	Severiano Ortiz	Monica St. Dennis
Richard Kligenmaier	Deborah Osborne	Severiano Ortiz
Laura Lieberman	Gail Rothrock	
Linda Lovell	Danny Smith	

EXCUSED:

John Dumsick
Michael Hobbs
Paul Mazzuca

ABSENT:

Jolande Goldberg

GUESTS:

Bill Dickinson

CITY STAFF:

Eleanor Breen, OHA
Susan Hellman, BAR
Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Smith at 7:05 p.m. at Lloyd House.

Approval of Minutes for July 16, 2019 Meeting

On a motion by, Linda Lovell seconded by Stephen Stuart, HARC voted to approve the minutes from the July 16, 2019 meeting.

Chairs Update

HARC Elections Nominating Committee – Linda Lovell

- Co-chair duties are to facilitate meetings and delegate.
- Co-chair McCall added that duties include, acting as an intelligence officer and working closely with OHA staff (Gretchen Bulova.)

HARC Term Limit Notifications & Updated Roster – Co-chair McCall

- Lots of issues with city staff. Report issues to the City Clerk, Gloria Sitton.
- HARC members should check roster for any mistakes.
- Stephen Stuart will email the roster, currently not online.
- Martha Harris urged HARC members to act as ambassadors for the commission. Recruit potential members at events, lectures, etc.

Construction Projects – Co-chair McCall

- Not all contractors are aware of the historic property regulations.
- Contact Susan Hellman and Al Cox from BAR about any questionable construction projects that you see that may not be consistent with preservation requirements.

Bank of Alexandria – Bill Dickinson

- The Bank of Alexandria at Cameron and Fairfax Streets was the first bank in Virginia chartered by the 1st and 2nd Bank of the United States and one of the few extant bank buildings of that period south of Philadelphia. This Bank contributed greatly to Alexandria becoming a major mercantile and regional finance center. The bank also financed Franklin & Armfield's slave pen operation (Freedom House Museum.) The BOA was dissolved in 1833 with the dissolution of the 2nd Bank of the United States and the economic panic of 1833.
- The former Carlyle House Apartments (including BOA) and the Historic 1752 Carlyle House were acquired in the period from 1970-1971 by NVRPA (now NOVA Parks) for a total of \$717,996.
- Alexandria City code prevented demolition of the BOA building due to its age (1807) as compared to the other portion of Carlyle Apartments (1855.)
- BOA was beautifully restored in the 1980s under a very creative adaptive use arrangement with its current owner, NOVA Parks. The bank lobby on the first floor has been restored, including the original iron safe door and furnishings appropriate to the early 1800s. Starting in the early 1980s the first floor of the building was used for many years by the Bank of Virginia as a branch office and museum. The Bank of Virginia was acquired by a larger bank in the early 2000s. Unable to find another bank interested in using the site, NOVA Parks agreed to a sub-lease to a finance company that informally agreed to allow the use of the lobby for outside groups (primarily Carlyle House.)
- The 40-year adaptive use lease will terminate on December 31, 2020. On July 16, 2019 NOVA Parks issued an RFP for the building's sale or lease with responses due by September 12, 2019. No mention is made in the document of who will own and occupy the bank lobby on the first floor, the most important historical aspect of the property. Provision is made in the RFP for NOVA Parks staff to occupy 800 sq. feet of office space somewhere in the BOA as well as use of several parking spaces.
- An addendum to the RFP dated July 29 states that it is NOVA Parks' intent that exterior maintenance or repair will be the responsibility of the new lessee/owner.
- No public hearings are scheduled by either the City of Alexandria or NOVA Parks. Also, no legal advertisements have been found announcing the availability nor is it known if a realtor has been engaged. No mention can be found in NOVA's FY 19 budget about the impending sale/lease of BOA.
- There is considerable confusion as to who on city staff NOVA Parks consulted prior to the issuance of the RFP and whether the City of Alexandria has expressed their approval of the RFP.
- The historic exterior and interior of the building must be maintained and no structures may be erected in the building's existing parking lot. No mention has yet been made about public use or ownership of the bank lobby, the most historic parts of the building.
- Communications expressing your views on the future of the BOA should be addressed before September 12 to:
The Alexandria City Mayor and members of Council.
The Chair of NOVA Parks Board – Michel Nardollili
Alexandria's members of the NOVA Board – Scott Price and Sean Kumar

Susan Hellman from BAR –

- Exterior of building is protected; interior is of concern.
- Draft easement for the building's interior was written and presented to NOVA Parks. No response yet.
- Not yet determined who would hold the easement.
- City is not necessarily interested in public use.

On a motion by, Martha Harris seconded by Severiano Ortiz, HARC voted to approve Co-chairs McCall and Smith writing a letter on behalf of the commission to Mark Jinks, City Council and the Alexandria members of NOVA Board to address the Bank of Alexandria and the following issues:

1. The importance of the building to the city and community.
2. The need for public consultation in regards to future use and possible renovations.
3. Which organization will hold the easement.
4. Support of public access through the easement.

Board of Architectural Review Update – Susan Hellman

- Ross Dress for Less – Christ Church has retained an architect to create a massing diagram so the church can modify the RFP accordingly. They will then determine the value of the site and whether they want to lease or sell.
- 502 Quaker Lane – Maps were distributed to HARC members. Hooff family wants to subdivide their lot into two lots. BAR would like owners to put the house on the 100 year building list to provide some level of protection/attention to the historic property.
- VA American Water is installing a 6' water line along the center of Prince Street. They are carefully removing and salvaging as much of the historic brick as possible. This will be used to patch and repair.
- The Office of Historic Preservation is finishing up the historic sidewalk map and uploading it into GIS. Maps were distributed. Red buildings are pre-1931; blue are post-1931. Red lines are brick streets, green are concrete, dashed lines signify Urban Design Streets. Urban Design Streets require brick sidewalks.
- Gadsby Street Lights Replacement: Maps were distributed. The Historic Street Light District map shows where existing Gadsby lights are now. Those in the King Street Metro Improvement District, i.e. King Street west of the OHAD (which ends at Harvard), those near Braddock Metro, and random others you see on the map will be replaced with a modern, less expensive version like those in the Carlyle (acorn heads.) The Gadsby lights in front of the Lee Boyhood Home and those on Prince Street will remain in place. Small cell 5G antennae can't go on Gadsby lights.
- Finished phase 2 of the digital OHAD survey. Phase 3 begins in the fall and we're looking for volunteers. NPS has upgraded the software so it should be easier to use.
- VA Tech Innovation Campus will open in five years. This and the Health School in Roanoke are now VPI's top priorities. Everything else will be closed if not self-sustaining. This means that the Prince Street school may very well close in 3-5 years.

Christ Church – Co-chair Smith

- Letter was sent to Rector, Noelle York-Simmons expressing HARC would like to be involved with the development of the current Ross building.

- Two representatives, including the Rector are expected to attend the September HARC meeting to update the commission.
- Linda Lovell will invite TWIG to the meeting as they are also interested in the developments.

City Hall Visioning Study – 7/31/2019 Meeting Presentation

Co-chair McCall attended the meeting and provided a recap.

- Plans to renovate the building.
- McCall expressed at the meeting it would have been more helpful to have contextual history before the public survey.
- No plans to relocate city government or council.
- Discussion about using the first floor for historic interpretation.
- Planning to have another public meeting.

Linda Lovell also attended the meeting and provided input.

- In addition to the building, the garage will need to be renovated.
- Some offices will be relocated, not city government/council.
- Planning District 1 would like all offices to stay. Planning District 3 was more receptive to creating satellite offices.

Deborah Osborne noted using the first floor for a museum exhibit would not be ideal because of climate control problems.

Freedom House Museum Update – Eleanor Breen

- Freedom House was closed for three weekends as a result of water damage from the flash flooding in July. The basement flooring was found to be mildewed and was removed and concrete was painted. The mold/mildew has been remediated and the museum is open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays once again.
- OHA staff had the opportunity to show Governor Ralph Northam and members of his staff both the Freedom House Museum and the Freedmen’s Cemetery. The Governor asked excellent questions and was particularly interested in the children who were buried at Freedmen’s Cemetery.

Equal Justice Initiative

- Informational Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, September 21 from 1-3 p.m. at Charles Houston Recreation Center. Flyer was distributed to HARC members: “The City of Alexandria invites the public to attend the first of several community meetings on the Equal Justice Initiative’s Community Remembrance Project, associated activities to memorialize the victims of two lynchings that occurred in Alexandria, and the retrieval of Alexandria’s lynching pillar from the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.” Special guest speaker, Kiara Boone, Deputy Director of Community Education for EJI.
- Committee’s will be formed after public meeting.

In addition to EJI Update:

- August 8th – Adrienne Fikes held a community commemoration for Benjamin Thomas who was lynched on the corner of N. Fairfax and Queen.

HARC Committee Reports

OHA & Planning Support – Nothing to report.

Advocacy & Preservation – Nothing to report.
Finance – Nothing to report.

Commissioner Updates

Linda Lovell – Mortar and Pestle Society

- Apothecary floor mats have been installed.
- International Committee for the History of Apothecaries will be meeting in Washington D.C. Will be touring the Apothecary Museum.

Laura Lieberman – Lee Fendall House

- August 24 – Hands-On History Day: Sports 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- August 31 – Under the Same Roof: Enslaved and Free Servants at the Lee Fendall House
- September 14 – Annual Fundraiser: Sips & Secrets.

Severiano Ortiz – Alexandria Historical Society

- September 25 – They Came for Freedom, lecture by Char McCargo Bah at The Lyceum from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Deborah Osborne – AHRPC

- August 22 – Meeting on Alexandria Alleys Survey

Bill Hendrickson –

- Distributed an article via email, “We Cannot Save Everything: A Historic Neighborhood Confronts Rising Seas.”
- Relates this article to Alexandria’s Waterfront and the Flood Mitigation Plan.

Danny Smith –

- George Washington’s Alexandria Tour, August 24.

OHA Report- Eleanor Breen

1. The Eyemats for the Apothecary Museum have been installed and look fantastic! The installation took two days. This project was funded through the Mortar & Pestle Society, the Historic Alexandria Foundation, and private contributions.
2. OHA staff created a hand-out on the history of City Hall and staffed a booth at the City Hall Visioning Public Meeting on July 31. Staff plan to do a small exhibit on the history of City Hall and City Government in the Vola Lawson Lobby.
3. The new interpretive panel for Alexandria Union Station was installed that talks about the history of the site and its role in WWI and II. If you ride the train, stop by and take a look! More panels will be added by September.
4. Staff is starting to work on the FY21 budget. HARC has the opportunity to provide input on the FY21 budget to the City Manager through October 6.
5. Staff are working on the program for the 5th anniversary of Freedmen’s Cemetery. The weekend’s events (September 13 and 14) will include a Friday night lecture by Char McCargo Bah, and a full program on Saturday that will range from a wreath laying, to a luncheon/lecture, to a bus tour of Alexandria’s African American sites, to an evening Vigil. We anticipate more than 100 descendants will participate in the weekend events. In addition, two granite markers are being installed in the sidewalk in front of the cemetery to draw attention to burials outside the cemetery gates. We encourage HARC members to attend!

In time for this event, a new website and brochure will be made available.

6. OHA will be participating in the Oct 12th Portside Festival with Visit Alexandria – showcasing a variety of Portside History activities.
7. Interpretive markers for Windmill Hill and the Wilkes Street Tunnel are ready for installation. Keep an eye out!

The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA Staff to the Commission