

**HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

PRESENT:

Carol Black
Rosemarie Esber
Martha Harris

Laura Lieberman
Linda Lovell
Paul Mazzuca

Gail Rothrock
Danny Smith
Steve Stuart
Stetson Tinkham

Michael Hobbs
Sam Hoffman
Richard Klingenmaier

Maddy McCoy
Severiano Ortiz
Martha Raymond

Ivy Whitlatch

EXCUSED:

Deborah Osborne

ABSENT:

Christopher Brownlowe
John Dumsick (resigned from commission)

Jolande Goldberg
Monica St. Dennis

GUESTS:

Juliana Henkle

CITY STAFF:

Gretchen Bulova
Bill Conkey

Susan Hellman
Apasrin Suvanasai

CALL TO ORDER:

The virtual meeting was called to order by Danny Smith at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Webinar.

Reading of Virtual Meeting Notice

Tonight's virtual meeting via Zoom is being recorded.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency, the September 15, 2020 meeting of the Historic Alexandria Resource Commission is being held electronically pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), the Continuity of Government ordinance adopted by the City Council on June 20, 2020 or Sections 4-0.00(g) in HB29 and HB30 to undertake essential business. All of the members of the Board and staff are participating from remote locations through Zoom. This meeting is being held electronically, unless a determination is made that it is safe enough to be held in person in the City Council Chamber at 301 King Street, Alexandria, VA. Electronic access will be provided in either event. The meeting can be accessed

by the public through the link or phone number posted on the City calendar. Public comment WILL be received at the meeting by stating name and comment. Questions can be submitted to the committee through the Q&A feature on Zoom. This meeting will be recorded and posted on the alexandriava.gov/historic webpage. Zoom is compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers and keyboard shortcuts.

Approval of Minutes for February 18, 2020

On a motion by, Gail Rothrock seconded by Richard Klingenmaier, HARC voted to approve the minutes from the February 18, 2020 meeting.

Chairs Update

Co-chair Smith welcomed everyone back after the pandemic-required hiatus of meetings. He asked everyone to introduce themselves, since three new members have joined the Commission.

Discussion of Officers for FY 2021

Co-chair Smith presented the option to continue with current officers until election FY 2022. No official vote.

Martha Harris asked if commissioner terms will be extended due to COVID-19. Co-chair Lovell offered to follow up with the City Clerk about this topic.

Co-Chair Lovell excused herself from meeting.

Board of Architectural Review Update – Susan Hellman, Principal Planner and Bill Conkey, Historic Preservation Architect

Susan Hellman introduced Bill Conkey as new Preservation Architect (replaced Al Cox.)

Town Motel

- Received BAR approval to demolish hotel.
- Permits have been submitted.
- Have documented interior and exterior of hotel.
- As part of their development, the house on the corner of Madison Street will be shifted south 19 feet. Will be connected to the new building.

Christ Church

- Development is at a standstill. No updates.

5G Network Installations

- Staff has been working with various applicants.
- Currently working on franchise agreement - includes appropriate designs that will minimize impact on streetscape.

Heritage Apartments

- Last BAR hearing on September 2, demolition was approved.
- Working on next steps. Two concept reviews have been submitted – neither were endorsed.

Martha Raymond asked about the lost green space. Where does HARC weigh in on this issue/project?

Martha Harris, Representative for Open Space Committee responded to question. Due to COVID-19 there has only been one formal meeting and one virtual meeting with Virginia Conservation Trust. Project is designed to look at the definition of open space. Current definition does not include cultural landscape. Would like to establish a system where the public is notified by Planning and Zoning when open space is considered for new development projects.

Co-chair Smith added that in the past (when there is consensus) HARC has provided testimony to city council in both support and disapproval of various projects. Probably too soon to expect the Open Space Committee to weigh in on Heritage Apartments.

OHA Report – Gretchen Bulova

- Dan Lee, our OHA Historian, welcomed his first child 2 weeks ago.
- Sites closed to the public on March 17, 2020 and pivoted to offer virtual programming.
- Created #HistoricALX2U with a variety of content – ranging from Alexandria history facts to hands on activities
- March 25, the sale of Freedom House from the NVUL to the City of Alexandria was finalized. The NVUL will be welcome to use office space in a portion of the building for 5 years and the name of the site, Freedom House, will also be retained for 5 years.
 - Made some necessary short term, immediate repairs (roof, HVAC, plumbing)
 - Painted museum gallery spaces
 - Creating offices for NVUL
 - Creating ADA restrooms on the first floor
 - Added museum and parking signage
 - Historic Structures Report vendor is pending selection. HSR will document the building, create digital drawings, and assist with determining the evolution of the construction of the site.
 - Master Plan is funded, still needs to go to bid.
 - OHA staff created a chain of title and a report on the history of the site. Research team continues to work and hold bi-weekly meetings.
 - \$2.4M was put in the Governor’s Budget for Freedom House, pending vote by the General Assembly.
 - Temporary exhibits planned for the short term, while public engagement process is conducted and a full exhibit is planned.
- Held two virtual remembrances as part of the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project – April 23 Lynching of Joseph McCoy and August 8 Lynching of Benjamin Thomas.
- Using this time to conduct much needed building maintenance on all of our sites.
 - Lloyd House – now, interior painting and floor work
 - Fort Ward, Alexandria Black History Museum, Watson Reading Room – planned for October
 - Lyceum and Friendship – still in the bid process

- Gadsby's – doing a 10-year building assessment and trying to address the HVAC, mildew, and peeling paint issues
- Apothecary – historic window assessment
- Apothecary Museum's National Historic Landmarks nomination went before the NHL Board and was unanimously approved. Awaiting next steps before making it public.
- Appomattox statue was removed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy on June 6th. They initially removed the statue and then the base. The street has been realigned. They have chosen not to disclose the location of the statue. If you are interested in seeing a list of Confederate Statues in VA and their status, visit VPAP.org.
- OHA launched two collecting initiatives: Chronicling the Pandemic and The Legacy of George Floyd, documenting Alexandria's Response. Online, we are accepting digital images and individual stories. This has been very successful, and we will create an online exhibit with the donations.
- OHA has been amazing during the shutdown. Everyone transitioned to telecommuting and virtual meetings. We formed project teams to meet the new work challenges and used this opportunity for staff Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion training as well. Five employees are currently detailed to other departments to assist with vacancies or COVID-related activities.
- 517 Prince Street – currently trying to find a roofing contractor.

Stetson commended the 30-Day Challenge -- Alexandria Social Justice Edition.

- Virtual Ramsey Homes Symposium - postponed due to COVID-19. There could be a virtual symposium. Will have more to report next meeting.

Commissioner Updates

Martha Harris – Historic Property Volunteer

Elks Lodge:

- Last meeting was held in January/February of this year. A lot was learned about their history and the importance of the lodge in the community during Jim Crow laws. A list of maintenance issues was created that HARC could assist with.
- HARC's involvement with Elks Lodge could be a model for future collaborations.

Gail Rothrock – Historic Alexandria Foundation

Elks Lodge:

- Thanks to Martha Harris for creating initial agendas and overall organization of meetings.
- Gail and Carol worked with one of the Daughters of Israel on an application for an endangered properties nomination to Preservation Virginia. Application was submitted on February 29th and was awarded on May 5th. Elks Lodge has been officially added to Virginia's list of Most Endangered Historic Places.
- In addition to the award, they have been asked to participate in a webinar in late May.
- Received a \$10,000 grant from Historic Alexandria Foundation on June 1st for stabilization of property- including water issues.

Carol Black – Old Presbyterian Meeting House

Elks Lodge:

- \$10,000 grant was used for: gutters, patching roof, and brick masonry repair. Planning to use remainder of grant on pumping issues.
- Special thanks to John Dumsick and Al Cox for their help.
- Special thanks to other city departments such as: Transportation and Environmental Services, Code Enforcement, Surveyors, and City Arborist for their help with saving the building.
- Hopefully, Elks Lodge can now begin to offer public programs.

Michael Hobbs – Old Town Civic Association

Heritage Apartments:

- OTCA is very interested in the Heritage Apartments project.
- Supportive of the appeal to the City Council of the Heritage Apartments permit for demolition.
- Two property owners are designated appellants. Being led by a group of neighbors and local property owners.

Sam Hoffman – Planning District I

- Inquired about Liberty Gas Station on North Washington Street.
- Bill Conkey reported there have been numerous meetings with the applicant. They have agreed to most changes, but still finalizing details. Currently working on options to remove the paint.

Richard Klingenmaier – Alexandria Association

- Currently on hiatus due to COVID-19. Looking into hosting virtual lectures for members.

Laura Lieberman – Lee Fendall House

- Lee Fendall House was able to open to the public in July. Currently giving special themed tours and walking tours around Old Town. Adhering to COVID safety guidelines.
- Back garden is open to the public.
- Was able to host trivia night with Carlyle House.
- Upcoming virtual book talks.
- Next month the Speakeasy Fundraiser will be held virtually.

Paul Mazzuca – Planning District III

- Currently a COVID case investigator for the Medical Reserve Corp.
- Special thanks to Larry Jamieson, OHA staff who has also been working with the Medical Reserve Corp.

Maddy McCoy – Planning District II

African American Heritage Trail:

- Have not met in the past six months.

- Was supposed to be testing out the trail over the summer.
- Northern half of the trail is complete. Currently preparing for the south.

Equal Justice Initiative (McCoy is HARC's EJI representative and Head of Research Committee):

- Steering committee stopped meeting in March due to COVID-19.
- Continuing research was deemed necessary to prepare for Joseph McCoy's (April 23, 1897) and Benjamin Thomas's (August 8, 1899) memorials – carried out by a small team.
- Parallels were made to the racial justice equity protests over the summer.
- Although virtual, the memorials had outstanding participation.
- New EJI webpage was created on Alexandria City's website. Encourages HARC to visit.
- James Madison University is writing a book on lynching in Virginia. They have reached out to the EJI research team.
- EJI research is now required reading for Alexandria's Sheriff Departments.
- Next Steering Committee meeting is September 16th.

Severiano Ortiz – Alexandria Historical Society

- Recently held their first meeting (usually do not meet over summers)
- Speakers series was launched virtually
- September 24, 7:30 p.m. - Virtual Lecture: Cartography of a Port City by Dr. Benjamin Skolnik, City Archaeologist
- October 28, 7:30 p.m. - Virtual Lecture: Military Housing in Alexandria

Gail Rothrock – Historic Alexandria Foundation

- In addition to the \$10,000 grant to the Elks Lodge, the board awarded three other grants: \$5,000 to Athenaeum, \$5,000 to Freedom House Digitization, and \$5,000 to TC Williams graduate for studies in archaeology, history, or architecture focused on Alexandria.
- Gretchen Bulova elaborated on the Freedom House grant. Will be used to purchase a large primary source collection.

Steve Stuart – Planning District III

- Commended HARC with their work. Brought attention to the wealth of information and history shared by commissioners.

Stetson Tinkham – Christ Church

- Reaffirmed Bill Conkey's report on Christ Church. Developer withdrew from project.

Ivy Whitlatch – Alexandria Archaeological Commission

- Hiatus for the summer due to COVID-19. Commended the Archaeology Department for being able to provide educational content and resources to the community despite pandemic.
- First commission meeting will be held September 16th.

- Currently three vacancies on the commission (Alexandria Historical Society and Black Historical Society.) Actively looking for members.

Rosemarie Esber – Planning District I

- Introduced herself as a new member: an oral historian who usually focuses on the middle east, but also works on WWII – North African history.
- Concerned about the condition and the historic preservation of the Alexandria African American Cemetery: polluted Hooff’s Run (runs through the cemetery), fallen gravestones, and damaged walkways. Area is also a flood zone.

Martha Raymond – Planning District II

- Planning District II has major flooding issues. Three major floods in the past fourteen months. Drainage from Del Ray and Rosemont, particularly Timber Branch Creek and Hooff’s Run.
- In 2019, a citizen went into the conduits and photographed sections that were 40% blocked.
- Meetings will be held with the Mayor. Will hopefully have more information to report next meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA staff to the commission