

**HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
Tuesday, July 20, 2021

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**PRESENT:**

Carol Black  
Rosemarie Esber  
Shawn Eyer  
Martha Harris  
Michael Hobbs  
Sam Hoffman

Richard Klingenmaier  
Linda Lovell  
Deborah Osborne  
Martha Raymond  
Gail Rothrock

Danny Smith  
Tom Soule  
Monica St. Dennis  
Steve Stuart  
Ivy Whitlach

**EXCUSED:**

Laura Lieberman  
Stetson Tinkham  
Andrea Tracey

**ABSENT:**

Christopher Brownlowe  
Paul Mazzuca

**GUESTS:**

**CITY STAFF:**

Eleanor Breen, OHA  
Bill Conkey, BAR  
Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Smith at 7:00 p.m. at Lloyd House, 220 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA.

**Approval of Minutes for June 15, 2021**

On a motion by, Monica St. Dennis seconded by Tom Soule, HARC voted to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2021 meeting.

**Chairs Update**

- Reminder: Items not germane to HARC business should be postponed to the social hour following the meeting.
- Heritage Apartments – The Certificate of Appropriateness hearing has been postponed to July 29<sup>th</sup>. The letter from October 2020 which was sent to the BAR during concept

reviews will be resent. Michael Hobbs has provided additional points which will be incorporated into Chairman Smith's statement during the hearing.

- Subcommittee Emails Reminder: Start emails with "Do Not Reply All" to comply with FOIA regulations. Either Chair or Vice Chair can be notified in order to cut down on number of recipients in an email.

### **New Business**

#### **Thank You Letter to City Council, ARPA Funding**

The American Rescue Plan Act allocated \$600,000 to history related projects in Alexandria. Chairman Smith and Vice Chair Lovell will draft a thank you letter.

#### **Reminders from the City Clerk (Annual Report, Bylaws, Hybrid Policy)**

HARC needs to submit the Annual Report, Bylaws, and Hybrid Policy. The Annual Report will be finished by the end of the summer. The Bylaws and the Hybrid Policy have no deadline.

#### **Motion to take an August Meeting Break, Resume on September 21**

On a motion by, Gail Rothrock seconded by Ivy Whitlach, HARC voted to cancel the August 17 meeting and resume on September 21.

#### **New Council Packets for January 2021, Thank You Letters to Outgoing Council Members**

Will send copies of the HARC operations manual to the three new and incoming city council members. Will also try to meet with each new member to talk about HARC's key responsibilities. Council members Del Pepper, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, and Mo Seifeldein will not be returning. Thank you letters for their service and support of historic preservation will be sent.

### **Old Business**

#### **OHA Deaccessioning Process**

Deferred until next HARC meeting in September. Current Chair of Living Legends, Jeanne Theismann accepted HARC's invitation to attend the September meeting to present her arguments for deaccession.

#### **Justice Black House Update (Gail Rothrock)**

- Permits were issued; work can begin on existing structures, which includes demolition of curved wall and kitchen.
- Martha Raymond notified HARC of a Facebook post made by the group, "Stop Overdevelopment in Northern Virginia," which references the Justice Black House – Supreme Court case.

Facebook post (Martha Raymond stated she will email the full post to HARC members):

*On July 16, Arlington judge DiMatteo dismissed our lawsuit against Arlington County Board's rejection of local historic designation of the Febrey estate saying that only property owners of a*

*historic property or a property owner of an adjacent property has any appeal rights and citizens have no rights to appeal denial of historic status.*

#### **Elks Lodge Update (Carol Black)**

- Preservation Virginia has agreed to make a banner for Elks Lodge.
- A future HARC meeting will be held at the Elks Lodge (possibly in October) with a short tour beforehand.

#### **GenOn Power Plant Update (Sam Hoffman)**

No new updates.

#### **River Farm Update (Danny Smith)**

- River Farm is currently owned by the American Horticultural Society. Their board of directors are divided on whether or not to sell the property. Whether River Farm continues to be the home for the American Horticultural Society is uncertain, but the site will most likely remain open to the public either way.

### **Standing Committee Reports**

#### **Advocacy Committee – Martha Harris, Co-Chair**

- Last meeting was held on July 6.

#### **Heritage Project (major subject)**

- HARC remains concerned about the project. The committee recommends that HARC send a copy of previous letter and add additional points for presentation at the upcoming BAR meeting subsequently rescheduled for July 29.
- Michael Hobbs, in particular, has developed additional talking points for HARC's comments (presented by Chairman Smith) at the meeting. Those points emphasize that city zoning ordinance requires new structures in the Old and Historic District to be in harmony with their historical and architectural surroundings, and that they not overwhelm adjacent buildings.

On a motion by, Michael Hobbs seconded by Martha Harris, HARC voted to request Chairman Smith keep his public comments, regarding the Heritage Project, at the July 29 BAR meeting consistent with previous comments he has made on behalf of HARC.

#### **Torpedo Factory**

- HARC commissioners are encouraged to watch the recorded City Council session held on June 22 to understand the strong concerns raised by some council members about the vibrancy study and the "lack of trust" with artists.
- Mayor Wilson expressed dissatisfaction with the length of time the process is taking.
- At the end of the meeting a vote was taken, but was not recorded in the official minutes. The minutes reflect a study was simply "presented" to the Council.
- Gretchen Bulova has repeatedly communicated HARC's interest in participating in stakeholder discussions and the Advocacy Committee hopes that Linda Lovell (HARC's

representative) will follow closely and communicate with the committee as meetings are organized with stakeholders.

#### Justice Black House

- Discussed the unsatisfactory ruling of the VA Supreme Court on the Justice Black House, denying the Historical Alexandria Foundation standing.
- Gail Rothrock will keep HARC posted on the issue as it evolves.

#### Availability of Housing in Alexandria, Sam Hoffman

- Researched the supply in the housing market, specifically multi-family homes in order to understand the need for affordable housing.
- Looked at new construction developments, which include thousands of units in the next 5-6 years.
- HARC should consider whether city should provide subsidies/incentives for historic preservation and if the city should engage in conversations about historic designations with developers.
- Old Town office market is experiencing 26% vacancies. Many buildings are currently empty. Should some office buildings undergo rezoning for adaptive reuse and residential use?
- This research will be useful when speaking with planning commission, city council and BAR.
- To Do: Carol Black, Ivy Whitlach, and Deborah Osborne shared various resources and experts to speak with; commissioners should send their suggestions to Chairman Smith.
- The city is considering making the 100 Block of King Street a permanent open pedestrian space. How will this impact the 100 block of Prince Street? The cobblestone road will see an increase of redirected traffic, which will advance wear and tear. Should this be considered in the City Council decision?

#### **OHA Support Committee – Steve Stuart, Chair**

#### **Ad Hoc, HARC Composition – Richard Klingenmaier, Chair**

*Handouts of full report and draft were distributed to HARC commissioners.*

#### Alexandria, VA Code of Ordinances

- The present City Ordinance creating HARC provides for twenty-six seats on the commission. These seats are as follows:
- Category A – City Commissions; four representatives  
Category B – History Organizations; ten representatives  
Category C – Other; twelve representatives; Tourism and Business, Art-Affiliated Groups, At-Large: seven, of which at least two are members of Alexandria civic associations and at least two are appointed from each of the three planning districts of the city; Historic Site Volunteer

#### HARC Ad-hoc Subcommittee on Composition – Recommendations

- A. Specified seats for the following organizations currently represented on HARC should be discontinued from the Commission through attrition as their representatives' terms of office expire because 1) the organization has declined to designate representatives for years 2) the organization is no longer active and able to designate representatives, 3) the organization is a single member of a larger class with other organizations that merit equal consideration for representation, or 4) the organization's primary interest is not in the protection of historic resources within the scope of the Commission's charge per se, but on a broader artistic, cultural or social interest. These organizations are:

- \*Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association
- \*Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage
- \*Mortar & Pestle Society
- \*Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association
- \*Torpedo Factory Artists Association
- \*Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

- B. At-Large Representation:

In order to comply with the requirements of the present Ordinance (a total of no more than seven at-large representatives, but including two from civic associations and two from each of the three planning districts), it is necessary that at least two of the seven at-large members be both a member of a civic associations and a resident of one of the planning districts – a formulation that has proven to be awkward and confusing in practice.

The committee recommends that the number of representatives from each category be specific, precise, and not overlapping, and further recommends reducing the number of At-Large representatives from the three Planning Districts from two to one each, and Alexandria civic associations from two representatives to one.

- C. Business Representation:

With discontinuation of the seat specified for the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, the number of representatives from the business community would be reduced from two to one.

- D. Historic Churches:

Currently, two churches (Christ Church and the Old Presbyterian Meeting House) are represented on the Commission in the category of "history organizations."

The committee recommends that, when the terms of the current representatives of the two designated churches expire, eligibility for appointment to two "historic church" seats be broadened to encompass "two representatives of houses of worship, congregations or sites which have played significant role in the diverse cultural, social and religious history of the city."

- E. Volunteers at Historic Sites:

The commission currently has "one member who serves as a volunteer at an historic property or attraction which is open to the public on a regularly scheduled basis."

However, the committee notes the value not just of individual volunteers, but also of members of “Friends” or similar organizations that help support historic properties, both private and city owned. Therefore, the committee recommends that the number of “volunteer” representatives be increased from one to two as follows:

1. One representative who serves as a volunteer at a public or private historic property or attraction which is open to the public on a regularly scheduled basis.
2. One representative who is a member of a “support” organization for a public or private historic property or attraction which is open to the public on a regularly scheduled basis.

F. Community Organizations:

The present ordinance specifies a seat under “Category B – Historic Organizations” for the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage, Inc.; but the society has not been active for some time, and the seat on HARC has remained vacant.

The committee recommends that the vacant seat be designated instead as representing the general category of “Community Organizations”, and that eligibility be extended to one member whose qualifications, or membership in a relevant community organization, reflect the importance of the city’s diverse social, ethnic and cultural heritage, as well as its sites and structures, among Alexandria’s historic resources.

G. Transition:

The committee recommends that transition from the present to the proposed composition of HARC be accomplished by attrition: i.e., that no member’s service on the Commission be discontinued before the conclusion of the term to which they have previously been appointed and are presently serving.

H. Quorum Requirements:

The committee reviewed an analysis of the effect of the Commission’s membership size on the Commission’s ability to meet quorum requirements. The committee concluded that quorum requirements would not be negatively affected by either an increase or a decrease in the Commission’s size.

Open Discussion:

- **D- Historic Churches** – Could be potential problems with determining what a “house of worship, congregation or site” is. Also, could run into an issue of subjectivity regarding their significance.
- **B – At large representation** – Concerned with the reduction of Planning District representatives from two to one. The Planning Districts will be underrepresented.
- The reasoning behind reducing the Planning District’s representation is that since HARC members are required to be city residents, the planning districts are already represented by all commissioners
- Reducing the number of commissioners from 26 to 19 is an attempt to be more agile.

- HARC members express they are not confident the new composition will guarantee a more diverse or efficient commission.
- Should take a step back and create a mission statement/objectives. Clarify goals for the new composition.
- Chances of influencing City Council increase by creating a more functional commission.
- Should actively recruit new commissioners and consider a more enthusiastic approach towards public engagement to reach communities who are unaware of HARC.
- By cutting back on Planning District representatives, the chance for diversity actually decreases. There are residents who are not members of other organizations and would have no other means to join a commission other than at-large representation.
- The new proposed HARC composition accounts for a 26% - 27% overall reduction and a 50% reduction in the At-Large seats.
- After HARC agrees on a new composition, it will need to be approved by the City Attorney and will require a change to city ordinance. The changes would not go into effect for at least a year.
- HARC members should review the proposed composition and be prepared to continue the discussion at the September meeting.

#### **Bylaws – Sam Hoffman, Chair**

- City has asked all commissions to prepare bylaws.
- At the first meeting members examined other city commissions.
- Next step is to create a rough draft which will be distributed to HARC before September's meeting.

#### **Board of Architectural Review Update – Bill Conkey**

##### **Town Motel**

The historic house has been moved.

##### **10 Duke Street**

Project is on hold. Was intended to be a restaurant development, but ran into issues due to the pandemic.

##### **BAR Design Guidelines Meeting**

Updating language to the design guidelines; no changes.

##### **Murray Dick Fawcett House (also known as the Reeder House)**

Working on an emergency roof replacement.

##### **101 Duke Street – Parking Garage Project**

Finished concept reviews. Will now go before City Council and Planning Commission in September.

##### **805 N. Columbus Street**

Finished concept reviews. Will now go before City Council and Planning Commission  
Will be a residential multi-family development.

## **OHA Report – Eleanor Breen**

- ARP Funded Projects for OHA
  - Alexandria African American History Tourism – Include enhancements to Duke Street Corridor history with wayfinding and signage. Will explore Civil Rights Trail/Network.
  - Alexandria Community Remembrance Project
  - Increase Seasonal Staffing Hours at Freedom House
- Reeder House roof replacement beginning this week
- New fence installed at Freedom House

## **Upcoming Events**

- **Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Dedication**  
*Saturday, July 24, 8-9 a.m.*  
*1001 S. Washington Street (at the corner of Church Street)*  
Join Historic Alexandria in honoring Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial's inclusion in the African American Civil Rights Network (AACRN). The free dedication includes a wreath laying by the 31<sup>st</sup> Masonic District, a reading by representatives of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), and remarks by Reverend Taft Quincey Heatley.
- **Public Meeting on Marking and Recognition of Burial Grounds in Fort Ward Park**  
*Saturday, July 31, 10-11:30 p.m.*  
*Fort Ward Park, Meet in the parking lot behind the museum at 4301 W. Braddock Rd.*  
Join this public meeting to discuss marking, protection and recognition of key cemetery areas and burial sites related to the African American Fort community. City staff from the Office of Historic Alexandria will lead a discussion on issues and ideas for demarcating and memorializing these sacred areas. Attendees will meet City staff in the parking lot behind Fort Ward Museum and walk to the four major burial sites. In the event of rain, the meeting will be held in the reception hall at Oakland Baptist Church, 3408 King Street, Alexandria.
- **Benjamin Thomas Remembrance Event**  
*Sunday, August 8, 7-8 p.m.*  
*Corner of Fairfax and King Streets*  
Please join ACRP members at Fairfax and King Streets on August 8 at 7 p.m. for a service honoring the memory of Benjamin Thomas. The historic marker that details the lynching of Thomas on August 8, 1899 will be unveiled at the ceremony. In addition, his name and the date will be projected onto City Hall in purple, the color of mourning, Friday through Monday.

## **Commissioner Updates**

### **Monica St. Dennis – Public Records Advisory Commission**

Several vacancies on commission.



**Deborah Osborne – AHRPC**

Still conducting easement inspections – 26 properties remaining.

**Martha Harris – Volunteer at Historic Property**

Open Space Committee –

- The committee is not meeting this summer, but members have been asked to review a draft which includes typologies of open space.
- Staff have announced that Parks and Recreation is working with Planning and Zoning to amend the zoning ordinance to give Parks and Recreation more flexibility in use of open space. Committee members have not yet seen the draft or been briefed.
- Staff also announced there is a review of public access easements, with a view to better understanding existing easements.
- In addition, the committee has been informed that the Open Space Plan will be considered a formal Master Plan Amendment process.

**Linda Lovell – Mortar & Pestle Society**

- Annual meeting will be held on July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8 p.m. at The Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Hybrid meeting – in person and virtual. Presentation before the meeting by Steve Hammond on the Syphax family.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Apasrin Suvanasai, OHA staff to the commission