

# HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

for

FISCAL YEAR 2020: JUNE 2019 – JULY 2020

## I. SUMMARY

In FY 2020, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) met monthly until directed to suspend meetings in March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. Continuing regular monthly meetings rather than having a summer 2019 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 arise. To accommodate better the commissioners' schedules, meetings convened earlier in the evening and 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.

While some briefings are scheduled for significant issues facing HARC, the number of such briefings is held to a minimum and the presenters are allocated only limited time for their presentations. Emphasis is placed on discussion of issues relevant to the HARC mission and goals. Also, deliberations consistently address whether HARC positions should be communicated to other organizations relevant to historic preservation and other areas of concern or other actions should be taken.

The Commission is deeply indebted to the long-time Director of the City of Alexandria's Historic Preservation Office, Al Cox, for sharing his vast knowledge of both architecture and historic preservation in Alexandria. Mr. Cox regularly attended HARC meetings for many years and provided briefings requested in advance by the chairs as well as extemporaneous presentations on evolving issues. The commission is grateful for Mr. Cox's enormous contributions to our deliberations and looks forward to similar informative and fruitful cooperation with his successors, Susan Hellman who is now the Principal Preservation Planner and Bill Conkey who is now the Historic Preservation Architect for Alexandria.

## II. OPERATING PROCESSES

Meetings convene at 7:00 pm on the third Tuesday of every month. As was the case for FY 2019, HARC was led by co-chairs and the secretary position was held by an individual. The elected FY 2020 co-chairs, Linda Lovell and Danny Smith, alternate presiding at meetings and conduct 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 prepared by the co-chairs in consultation with the director of the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) were designed to promote efficient and effective deliberation, and meetings are managed to conclude deliberations by 9:00 pm if possible.

### III. COMMITTEES

The following committees support the work of HARC:

- A. Office of Historic Alexandria and Planning Support Committee  
Stephen Stuart, Chair
- B. Advocacy Committee  
Martha Harris, Chair
- C. Educational Outreach Committee  
John Dumsick, Chair
- D. HARC Composition  
Richard Klingenstein, Chair
- E. Nominating Committee  
Laura Lieberman, Chair

HARC members serve as representatives on a variety of City commissions and City projects including the African-American Heritage Trail Committee (Maddy McCoy and Indy McCall), the Ramsey Homes Symposium Planning Committee (Linda Lovell), the Alexandria RENEW Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Combined Sewer Outfall project (Ivy Whitlatch), and the Open Space Committee (Martha Harris).

### IV. HARC ACTIVITIES

In the past year, HARC held briefings and presentations on a variety of topics to further inform HARC members about current and anticipated issues relevant to historic preservation and other HARC priorities. The following are descriptions of significant issues addressed by HARC during FY 2020.

- A. The commission was alerted that the Liberty Station on North Washington Street has undergone substantial alterations, many of which are contrary to representations made by the owner to the Historic Preservation Office. The issue is expected to come before the BAR, and HARC may elect to offer written and/or verbal input on the issue.

- B. Justice Black House (619 South Lee Street) – The commission continues 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 are 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 including written and face-to-face communication with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (holder of the easement), written and oral statements to the Board of Architectural Review, individual meetings with the Mayor and individual City Council members, and written and oral statements to the Mayor and City Council. The issue is now being adjudicated in the courts as a result of an appeal by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and is being monitored by HARC for appropriate engagement opportunities. Commissioners have continued to attend meetings of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources which guides the work of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.
- C. Small Cell Networks (5G) – Although this issue surfaced in FY 2019, there are virtually no physical manifestations of its implementation. City staff alerted HARC to the looming threat to the historic integrity of historic portions of Alexandria represented by development of the advanced 5G networks mandated by federal law. HARC will continue to monitor the issue including inspection of the initial installations when they occur.
- D. Electric Scooters – The city experiment with electric scooter rentals presents streetscape issues that are of interest to the commission. HARC identified one of its members to focus specifically on that issue and to report significant developments. It is expected that the initial trial period will be extended to gather further information.
- E. 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 elected 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.
- F. Christ Church Plans for Washington Street Annex – In 2018, HARC was advised that Ross Dress for Less (current tenant of the Christ Church property adjacent to their church facilities) had decided that they will not renew their lease. Christ Church leadership decided to offer a long-term lease for that ground and allow it to be developed for purposes acceptable to the church and any interested developer. Multiple efforts by church leaders to identify a suitable development partner have not yet been successful. HARC is especially interested in monitoring these activities and encouraging full awareness of applicable historic preservation guidance from the Board of Architectural Review and commitments to the National Park Service regarding properties along George Washington Parkway (aka Washington Street in the Alexandria city limits).

- G. Violation of Historic Preservation Requirements – The BAR determined that a resident at 420 South Lee Street has not complied with the provisions of a permit granted in 2012 to remove a portion of the brick foundation of an iron fence at the front of the house and adjacent to the public sidewalk. The issue is now being adjudicated in court, and HARC members are monitoring the continued violation and developments.
- H. Freedom House Museum – HARC continued to support acquisition by the city of 1315 Duke Street which is the location of the Freedom House Museum and the headquarters building of the Northern Virginia Urban League. OHA operates the museum. Successful negotiations resulted in acquisition of the property by the city and it is now operated by OHA – a more permanent arrangement that will protect and preserve the museum. 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.
- I. 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 several commissioners undertook a campaign to assist the lodge but as private citizens, not in their capacities as commissioners. The forecast for those efforts is promising.
- J. Bank of Alexandria – This historic building housed the first bank south of Philadelphia. Completed in 1803, the building continued to serve as the home of the Bank of Alexandria until 1833. George Washington was an early shareholder and customer prior to the bank moving to this location. HARC was advised that the owner of the bank, NOVA Parks (previously known as the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority) was considering sale of the building which was part of the Carlyle House property originally purchased by NOVA Parks. The commission was concerned that while preservation requirements applicable to building in the Old and Historic Alexandria District (OHAD) offer protection of the exterior, the requirements do not apply to the interior. HARC personnel provided written and oral information and concerns to City officials and to the NOVA Parks Board of Directors supporting preservation of the remaining original interior elements. The new owner has indicated that he will respect and protect the remaining historic features.
- K. 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 that this major construction activity in and near the Old and Historic Alexandria District could cause damage 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.

- L. Equal Justice Initiative – Alexandria has been identified by the Equal Justice Initiative as the site of two lynchings of African Americans. The issue is being handled, in large part, by the Office of Historic Alexandria and HARC has offered to help as requested in those efforts. Several Commissioners serve as members or chairs of committees addressing aspects of the city's EJI activities.
- M. 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.
- N. 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.

## V. GOALS FOR FY2021

- A. HARC will monitor applications docketed for presentation to the BAR and provide input as appropriate.
- B. HARC will continue to monitor appeals of BAR decisions to the City Council and provide input to as appropriate.
- C. Plans for expansion of the Alfred Street Baptist Church and site redevelopment at Christ Church will be monitored as progress is made by the churches. Input and presentations to HARC by the churches will be encouraged as plans are better defined.
- D. As the Combined Sewer Outfall Project evolves, HARC will monitor the plans and implementation to identify threats to preservation and will seek changes that eliminate the threats or mitigating actions to reduce the impacts.
- E. HARC will continue to monitor developments and discussions of historic property easements. Members will seek to identify an effective process for the enforcement of historic easements.

- F. HARC will continue to monitor various threats to the integrity of historic areas including 5G networks, electric scooter rentals, and the combined sewer outfalls construction project.
- G. 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

## VI. FY 2020 COMMISSION OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND AFFILIATIONS

- A. Officers – Instead of electing a chair and a vice-chair, the commission has decided 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 – The following members served on HARC during FY20, including members who stepped down from service and were reappointed. As a result, there are multiple commissioners listed below for some of the organizations represented on HARC.

Staff Liaison – Gretchen Bulova, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria

Carol Black – Old Presbyterian Meeting House  
 Christopher Brownlowe – Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association  
 Alan Chodas – Planning District I (prior)  
 John Dumsick – Carlyle House  
 Shawn Eyer – George Washington Masonic Memorial  
 Jolande Goldberg – Torpedo Factory Artists Association  
 Martha Harris – Volunteer (Historic Alexandria Docents)  
 Bill Hendrickson – Planning District II (prior)  
 Michael Hobbs – Civic Association At-Large (Old Town Civic Association)  
 Sam Hoffman – Planning District I (current)  
 Richard Klingenmaier – Alexandria Association  
 Laura Lieberman – Lee-Fendall House  
 Linda Lovell – Mortar and Pestle Society (Alexandria Historic Landmark Society)  
 Paul Mazzuca – Planning District III  
 Elizabeth McCall – Alexandria Archaeological Commission (prior)  
 Maddy McCoy – Planning District II (current)  
 Keith Moore – Christ Church (prior)  
 Severiano Ortiz – Alexandria Historical Society  
 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 (current)  
Ivy Whitlatch – Alexandria Archaeological Commission (current)

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)  
Planning District I (1 member)

FY20 Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by HARC Co-Chairs Danny Smith and Linda Lovell  
September 30, 2020