

Minutes of Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group

Thursday, October 14, 2010

The Stakeholder Advisory Group (“Group”) convened at the Fort Ward Museum at its announced meeting time of 7:00 p.m. Members, City Management and Staff, and identified guests present included:

Tom Fulton
Linda Ries
William Schreiner
Adrienne Washington
Frances Terrell
Richard Brune
Ripley Forbes
Robert Moir

Susan Cumbey (Office of Historic Alexandria – Fort Ward)
Lance Mallamo (Office of Historic Alexandria)
Jim Spengler (Parks and Recreation)

The Chairman observed that a quorum was present, and the agenda was distributed and approved. The Group unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the September 28, 2010 meeting.

Old Business

The Chairman reported that the Group’s letter to the City Council, regarding funding for archaeology, had been submitted.

The Group had a wide-ranging discussion on the draft of its Report. The Group made proposed edits to the draft Executive Summary and Concluding Recommendations sections, and the Chairman asked that further edits be sent to him by e-mail.

The Group discussed whether, and to what extent, public comment should be received on the draft Report before it is submitted to the City Manager. J. Spengler reported that the report, once sent to the City Manager, would likely be sent to the lead agencies (Historic Alexandria and Parks and Recreation) for comment and a response, both which would ultimately be presented to the City Council as an update on Fort Ward Park.

After this discussion, the Chairman proposed a timetable for completion of the Group’s work and incorporation of public comment. The Group discussed both issues. On motion of W. Schreiner, and with no dissent, the Group agreed:

*** To consider a draft at its October 26 meeting that would then be circulated to the public for comment;**

- * To publish the draft to the public: 1) on the City’s web site; 2) via a news release, to increase media (and hopefully public) awareness of the draft; and 3) by making hard copies available to the public at Fort Ward Museum;**
- * To accept written public comments on the draft before November 23, 2010;**
- * To designate ten minutes at its November 11 and November 23, 2010 meetings to receive public comment;**
- * To review and consider those public comments received, make any resulting changes to the draft report, and consider a revised draft at its meeting on December 9, 2010;**
- * To review the draft further between December 9, 2010 and January 13, 2010; and**
- * Approve a final version of the Report on January 13, 2011, and present the same to the designated City recipients.**

The Group approved the Motion unanimously, with the caveat that the schedule is subject to adjustment.

The Group then turned to particular substantive areas of the Report. W. Schreiner queried the recommendation that would ban drinking of alcoholic beverages in the Park, noting that such a ban could impact Friends of Fort Ward social events held at the Museum, and could impact other civic groups that have picnics in the Park. R. Brune and R. Forbes discussed the recommendation, and pointed out that the Park is the only park in the City to allow any alcoholic beverage consumption. The Group discussed the recommendation and most were in favor of a ban on alcohol in the Park, and several noted that the Group’s authority did not extend inside the walls of the Museum, meaning that the alcoholic beverage prohibition would not bar Friends of Fort Ward events inside the Museum that served alcoholic beverages.

The Group then discussed mowing of the Park, and its recommendations. L. Mallamo and S. Cumbey commented that the distinction in mowing between historic and non-historic areas – and the definition of each – was problematic. W. Schreiner said the draft report addressed that, but he agreed to refine the text further for more clarity.

A discussion was held on the impact of the “no-mow” policy. J. Spengler reported that the “no-mow” areas in the Park were staff-level decisions, and that he and the Park staff had decided that in 2011, the “no-mow” area would be scaled back to only the main drainage area along the east side of the Park. R. Brune asked if this decision had been recorded in writing or if there were other documents related to it, and J. Spengler responded that there were not – the decision had been made based on the observations of Park staff and in consultation with them. The Chairman expressed displeasure with the lack of public awareness of, and involvement in, the decision to renew the “no-mow” plan for 2011 and alter the area that would not be mowed. J. Spengler reiterated that mowing in the Park is a staff-level decision, and reminded the Group that he had made two presentations to it about the advent of the no-mow policy, and that he had always advised the Group that the policy was subject to amendment or reconsideration at the end of the 2010 year.

Linda Ries reported that the inventory of the arboretum had been completed.

The next regular meetings of the Group will be on October 26, 2010 and November 11, 2010, each beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Schreiner, Secretary