

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting - Virtual
Tuesday, December 15, 2020
7:30 a.m.**

Commission Members

Present:

Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
John Bordner, Citizen, west of Washington St
Susan Cohen, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Doug Gosnell, Representative, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners
Beth Gross, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Charlotte Hall, Representative, VisitAlexandria
Trae Lamond, Representative, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
Mark Ludlow, Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC)
Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront Commission
Danielle Romanetti, Representative, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Louise Roseman, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Barbara Saperstone, Citizen, east of Washington St. and south of King St
Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Stephen Thayer, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Chair
Christa Watters, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.
Patricia Webb, Park Planning District II

Excused

Mohamed E. "Mo" Seifeldein, Member, Alexandria City Council

Vacancies

Representative, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Citizen, Park Planning District III

City Staff

Jamie Bridgeman, Captain, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Division Chief, Park Planning, Design & Capital
Development, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Michael Durham, Assistant Dockmaster, RPCA
Matt Landes, Acting Division Chief for Waterfront Plan Implementation, Department of Planning
and Implementation (DPI)
Catherine Miliaris, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director, RPCA, and Director, Office of the Arts
Terry Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)

Guests

Christine Bernstein
Brian Buzzell
Bert Ely
Chris Erney
Jody Manor

Susan Moore
Michael Simmons
Patricia Washington
Robert Weinhagen

Call to Order - Stephen Thayer, Chair

Chair Thayer called the virtual meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. – [Virtual Recording](#)

Discussion Items for Action and Information

Item 1: Approval of November 17, 2020 Minutes

Baum moved and Hall seconded that the November 17, 2020 minutes be approved as amended. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Corrections were requested by Roseman (p.7), Thayer (p.7) and Cohen (p.5)

Item 2: Change Meeting Start Time Proposal – Stephen Thayer, Chair

Commissioners considered a proposal by Danielle Romanetti that the Commission’s meeting start-time be changed to 8 a.m. The proposal was initially discussed at the October 20, 2020 meeting. Thayer said concerns had been raised about whether a later start time might make it more difficult for some City staff to be present throughout the meeting due to other work responsibilities and also whether it might become more difficult to maintain a quorum throughout a meeting if Commissioners need to leave for their workday commitments.

Motion: Romanetti moved and Lamond seconded that the meeting start time be changed to 8 a.m. The motion failed on a vote of six yes, six no, and three abstentions.

Item 3: Health Department Update - deferred.

Item 4: [Torpedo Factory Art Center Action Plan Memo](#) - Nate Macek & Christa Watters, Commissioners

Macek and Watters presented for Commissioners’ review a draft Commission letter to Council that incorporated Commissioners’ comments at the November 2020 meeting when staff presented their draft Action Plan Memo. Macek said it is expected the letter to Council will be shared with City staff and others. The goal is to submit Commission recommendations to Council before Council considers the draft Action Plan in January 2021.

The draft letter highlighted Action Plan recommendations with which Commissioners agreed and offered additional recommendations to enhance the Art Center’s vibrancy and sustainability. For example, options should be included in the Action Plan for ensuring the Center’s economic and financial sustainability and, when resources permit, the City should consider the option of managing

the Art Center, as well as other Waterfront public spaces, under a dedicated agency or public/private partnership. Also, the Torpedo Factory's tenant artists should be included as collaborative partners in the managing of the Art Center.

The letter also noted Commissioners' concern that the draft Action Plan recommendations were unable to benefit from inputs from key City constituencies during their development because comments were only invited after the draft Action Plan had already been made public.

Commission discussion

- Pandemic-related financial constraints limit some desirable near-term options for the Art Center.
- The nearby business community would welcome potential competition from entities inside the Torpedo Factory, such as moving the third-floor art supply store to a more prominent position on the first floor.
- The Torpedo Factory should be a draw for all types of art-related businesses. For example, a yarn dyer inside the Torpedo Factory would attract visitors who likely to be interested in the nearby yarn shop.
- The economic impact of visitors to the Torpedo Factory is greatly valued.
- The Old Town Business and Professional Association and VisitAlexandria are important Torpedo Factory stakeholders.

Motion: Hall moved, and Gosnell seconded that the Commission approve the draft letter as amended and that the Chair send the letter to Council and to all Commissioners.

Public Comments:

- Jody Manor suggested the Commission invite architect Michael Winstanley to discuss his proposal for a renovating the Torpedo Factory.
- Michael Erny, a Torpedo Factory artist, said he had had concerns about the original draft report but was encouraged by the ideas offered during the Commission discussion. He said the Winstanley proposed design included some elements that helped to alleviate some of the fears of Torpedo Factory artists but recognized that it would be expensive.
- Thayer said Macek and Watters had a copy of the Winstanley proposal when they developed their draft letter. Macek said the Winstanley proposal, by Route 66 Ventures, is on the City website with all the information posted on the current and previous Torpedo Factory studies.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Item 5: [Waterfront Flood Mitigation Plan Budget Update](#) - Matthew Landes, Division Chief, DPI

Landes provided an overview of current flood mitigation planning and noted he is looking forward to beginning meetings with the Commission's Flood Mitigation Subcommittee as soon as more information becomes available. Flood mitigation planning has two major goals: to address nuisance flooding and ensure the public's access to the waterfront.

Best practices in flood mitigation techniques have changed in the 10 years since the Waterfront Plan was designed and approved. Also, costs have risen while City resources have been restricted by COVID's budget impacts. DPI staff is collaborating with the City's flood strike team, recently established by the City Manager, as it evaluates current plans for Waterfront flooding in light of the current cost model. Staff is looking at how to phase the project over time and how to use less costly techniques where appropriate; for example, using green solutions for storm water management.

Next Steps: In the coming months staff will provide Commissioners more detailed analyses and cost benefit figures that can be used to prioritize flood mitigation goals in light of rising costs and COVID-related funding constraints. It is hoped a meeting with the Flood Mitigation Subcommittee can take place as early as February 2021.

Commission Discussion:

- Support for staff's interest in incorporating resiliency techniques into the flood mitigation design, as was done for the Interim Waterfront Park.

Public Comments - There were none.

City Updates

PUBLIC SAFETY – Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD

- Parking and traffic make up most calls to APD in the Waterfront area and have slowed due to winter.

Public comments – None.

COMMUNITY PROJECT UPDATES – Jack Browand, Division Chief, RPCA

- ***Parks*** – Work is transitioning to winter preparations.
- ***100 King Street*** - City staff continues to work with the business community on issues related to the pedestrian plaza.
- ***Robinson Landing waterfront safety measures*** - Staff is considering options such as railings, life rings, and ladders to help people exit the river if they fall in.

Commission comments:

- **Scooters** - A T&ES briefing was requested to answer questions about lessons learned from the pilot program, including problems with illegal parking. Sunday's good weather brought out so many scooters they filled the corrals, and many were left blocking corner curb cuts, a problem that will worsen with spring's warm weather.
- **Schedule for expanding the open space between Robinson Landing and the Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC)?** Staff said the City will soon be taking possession of the property at Strand/Duke from Robinson Landing and plans to install grass in the spring. There will also be an expanded Point Lumley Park north of Robinson Landing by spring.
- **Schedule for removing Windmill Hill Park goose netting.** Staff said it should probably be removed in fall 2021, after plantings are fully established. 17,000 new plants were put in along the shoreline in late June/July 2020 and need at least a year to establish themselves.
- **Robinson Landing waterfront safety measures** – The need to install barriers along the waterfront walkway and pier to deter falls into the water and install ladders to help people exit the water after a fall was emphasized by Commissioners.
- **Robinson Landing** – The lights in the construction area near Wolfe Street should be turned on.
- **Point Lumley parking** – When will the parking area be removed and changed to green space? Staff said there currently is no funding available to convert the parking area to green space, but options are being considered.

Public Comments:

- **Scooters** - Christine Bernstein was concerned about pedestrian access on sidewalks being impeded by parked scooters. She suggested this might also raise ADA issues for the City if not addressed.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES – Catherine Miliaras, Principal Planner, P&Z

- **Robinson Landing** - Site work is almost finished. Ada's restaurant should open in late January 2021. Barca will likely open in March 2021 with warm weather.
- **101 Duke Street** (Solo parking garage) Staff comments on the developer's Concept 1 proposal for the townhouses have been given to the developer. The developer may brief the Commission in the January/February timeframe.
- **Robinson Terminal North** – The warehouse has been taken down and AlexRenew will update the Commission in January 2021.
- **Mirant Power Plant** - The site owner/developer plans to start community outreach and engagement on their planning in February 2021. A concept plan will be developed after the site has been rezoned. Council will be considering proposals for each building proposed for the site.

Commission Comments:

Thayer noted that the Commission's jurisdiction over the Mirant site's development planning will focus on how the plans for parks, open space and areas of interaction with the water fit with the Waterfront Plan guidelines.

Commission Reports / Announcements

- Bordner reported that draft meeting minutes for the ***Ad Hoc Waterfront Construction Monitoring Group*** are posted on its website. The January 2021 meeting is to be determined. Nominations are closed for the RiverRenew Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG) and member announcements are expected soon.

Public Comments (Additional) – None.

January 2021 Discussion Topics / Items of Information

- Parking – Lamond raised a question regarding whether some parking could be preserved near the Strand to support businesses located nearby, especially in light of the Solo garage being removed:
- BikeShare racks on Duke Street – Information on usage

Next Meeting: January 19, 2021 - Virtual

Adjournment

At 9:30a.m. Baum moved and Lamond seconded that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.