

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Tuesday, November 19, 2019
Monthly Meeting
Sister Cities Conference Room
City Hall
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present:

Charles Ablard, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Cheryl Ahearn, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Rich Brune, Citizen, Park Planning District III
Susan Cohen, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
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)
Nate Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair Waterfront Commission
Kleber (Skid) Masterson, 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.
Pat Webb, Park Planning District II

Excused:

John Bordner, Citizen, west of Washington St
Doug Gosnell, Representative, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholders
Danielle Romanetti, Representative, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Mohamed E. "Mo" Seifeldein, Member, Alexandria City Council

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)
Alfred (Al) Coleman, Deputy Director, General Services
Tony Gammon, Deputy Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Thomas Hamed, Manager, Mobility Services Program, Transportation & Environmental Services
(T&ES),
Jim Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Jeremy McPike, Director, General Services
Catherine Miliaris, Principal planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Diane Ruggiero, Director, Office of the Arts and Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
(RPCA)
Terry Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)

Guests

Christine Bernstein, resident

Brian Buzzell, resident

Call to Order

Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Action Item: Approval of October 15, 2019 Minutes

Hall moved and Watters seconded that Commissioners approve the October 15, 2019 minutes. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Presentations & Information

PRESENTATION 1:

2 King Street Property -- Alfred Coleman, General Services

Presentation posted to: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WC2KingST.pdf>

Coleman reported that Council has directed staff to develop a recommendation for how to respond to an unsolicited offer to buy 2 King Street. The City acquired the parcel as part of its 2014 property exchange with the Old Dominion Boat Club.¹ Currently the parcel has eight leased parking spaces used for businesses in Fitzgerald Warehouse. The purchase offer was submitted by the owner of Fitzgerald Warehouse. Staff plans to submit its recommendation to Council in winter 2020.

- **Potential uses** – Staff said the parcel will be improved even if it stays City-owned and is used only as an outdoor seating area. Residential redevelopment is not an option and parking spaces have been ruled out since the lower King Street/Strand Street area is being discussed for pedestrianization. Additional uses suggested by staff so far include a park, an outdoor seating area, a museum display area, and public restrooms.
- **Rezoning** – Any of the potential new uses would require rezoning.

Commission discussion - Issues highlighted:

- **2 King Street should be planned in the context of Strand Street/Lower King Street planning.** For example, could 2 King Street be used to enhance nearby areas? Should streets north of Wales Alley be open to vehicles other than the King Street Trolley and emergency vehicles? Could 2 King Street help mitigate pedestrian crowding in the area by adding an eight-foot sidewalk rather than the City's traditional six-foot sidewalk?
- **Public restrooms** – Consider placing a public restroom on the parcel even if the City sells the site, using the model of the City's agreement with the Blackwall Hitch restaurant in the Marina.
- **Would keeping the site City-owned limit its potential uses?**

¹ 2014 City-ODBC property exchange information posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/special/waterfront/default.aspx?id=74860#March2014CityOffersOptionstoOldDominionBoatClubforResolutionofParkingLotDispute>

- **Commission-sponsored community meeting** - The Commission agreed to sponsor the City's first community meeting, in December 2019, to receive comments on how to use the portion of the 2 King Street property on the west side of the Strand. Date and time will be decided later.

PRESENTATION 2:

Waterfront Park 2020 Temporary Public Art Update - Diane Ruggiero, Office of the Arts (RPCA)
Site/See Exhibition Series Presentation posted to:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCPublicArtWaterfrontPark.pdf>

Ruggiero presented an overview of the City's temporary public art project planned for Waterfront Park next year. The artist chosen to create the project, Olalekan Jeyifous, toured the entire City in spring 2019 as part of his research for creating an artwork reflecting the Alexandria. He met with City staff and others, including Freedom House and VisitAlexandria. His design has been presented to the Park and Recreation Commission, the Commission for the Arts and the Office of Historic Alexandria.

- **Timing** – Opening is planned for late March 2020 to coincide with the opening of the Cherry Blossom Festival.
- **Themes** - Jeyifous' design was inspired by the City's history as a port city, its role in the domestic slave trade, and the history of African American quilting.
- **Design** - The design will incorporate quilting symbols and industrial icons that cover the ground and are also carved on a series of four three-dimensional silhouettes that will be 11 feet tall, 9 feet square, and be surrounded by seating and lights. The figures will face out towards the river and probably be made of steel or aluminum.
- **Safety** - Ruggiero said the silhouettes' construction will meet playground safety standards even though they are not intended for climbing.

Commissioner comments – Commissioners were very enthusiastic about the design concept.

Public comments – None.

PRESENTATION 3: Waterfront Plan Implementation Update - Anthony Gammon, DPI

Presentation posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCCIPPresentationWSAP.pdf>

Background - Gammon reviewed the status of the City's implementation of public and private elements of the Waterfront Small Area Plan (Waterfront Plan) approved by Council in 2012. He noted the City had set a goal to create a continuous Waterfront promenade in 2009, and then expanded the concept as part of the Olin Studio's 2014 landscape design incorporating the planned promenade, public space improvements, flood mitigation and other elements included in the Waterfront Plan. The three implementation priorities identified by Council and the public for the Waterfront's Core Area were flood mitigation, a continuous Waterfront promenade; and improved Waterfront public spaces

Flood Mitigation Plan.

- ***The 2014 cost estimate of \$50 million for this major infrastructure project has risen to \$122 million.*** The City continues to use design-build, the industry's best practice, as the most cost-efficient contracting process. The design has been revised to reflect market forces, geotechnical testing and other new information. Flood mitigation's increased funding needs are being considered together with many budget items as the City Manager's capital improvement proposal is developed.
- ***From flood prevention to resilient design*** – Staff said building a seawall to protect against a 100-year flood no longer makes sense. In recent years the City has been able to observe climate change's weather impacts on other cities as flooding patterns have changed. Industry best practices have changed from flood prevention to resilience - facilitating a quick recovery in flooded rather than deterring flooding to a certain height through fencing...
- ***Timeline*** – Construction could begin as early as 2020.

Commission discussion – Issues highlighted

- ***Budget*** – Commissioners are concerned that rising costs might delay the flood mitigation plan. Thayer noted the Commission and members of the public have consistently identified flood mitigation as a top Waterfront Plan implementation a priority, most recently in the Commission's October 4, 2019 letter to the City Manager on FY21 budget priorities.²
- ***Resilient design*** – Some Commissioners were interested in resilient design's potential for reducing capital and maintenance costs over time since, for example, no pump stations would be required. There was also concern about the potential impact on businesses if flood mitigation switched to a flood and quick recovery strategy.
- ***Designing new buildings for flood resilience*** – There was interest in the possibility that new buildings built in flood mitigation area could be designed to accommodate resilient design.
- ***Long-term impacts of climate change on City planning*** – Flood mitigation components should be modifiable over time as flooding patterns change. Might it become unrealistic to expect pumping stations to be effective against even a 6-foot flood?

PRESENTATION 4: Water Taxi Pilot Program Update, Thomas Hamed, T&ES

Presentation posted at:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WCWaterTaxi.pdf>

Staff reported that the City Manager plans to recommend that Council modify the Potomac Riverboat Company's (PRC) lease governing its Water Taxi operations so that Water Taxi vessels can operate during morning commute hours. The Water Taxi operates between the City Marina and The Wharf in SW DC

- The City's decision to modify the PRC lease reflects information collected during the City's summer 2019 pilot program that added early morning hours to Water Taxi operations during Metrorail's Platform Improvement Project (the Metrorail shutdown). Before the pilot program's lease modification PRC Water Taxi operations were barred before 9:30 a.m. He said most of this

² Commission's Oct. 4, 2019 Letter to City Manager:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WaterfrontCommissionPrioritiesforFY2021.pdf>

summer's Water Taxi commuters came from the 22314-zip code, 85% of users walked or biked to the Marina, and there was little measurable impact on Old Town parking.

- **Next steps:** The City Manager will recommend Council modify the PRC lease to allow PRC to operate the Water Taxi during morning commute hours. Staff will explore options for using a Federal CMAQ grant³ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program) to encourage Virginia-DC commuters on routes such as George Washington Parkway to shift to the Water Taxi.

Commission discussion – Issues highlighted

- **Expanding Marina hours** – Commissioners supported the plan to expand Water Taxi hours and said Council should also consider whether it might be appropriate to expand hours for other leaseholders entering and leaving the Marina.
- **Prince William County Commuter Fast Ferry** – Hall reported that Prince William County is discussing the idea of initiating commuter Fast Ferry service with several stops between southwest DC and Prince William. Prince William's planned Fast Ferry would use 300-person vessels in contrast to the 140-person Water Taxi vessels that Potomac Riverboat Company used for the summer 2019 pilot project. Hall said Prince William County's goal is for Fast Ferry service to begin in 2020 but the service would not include an Alexandria stop unless the City chooses to participate.
- **Potential river congestion near Founders Park** – There was interest in the City studying the potential impact on river traffic, especially near Founders Park, if commercial activity at the Marina is expanded.

Motion: Macek moved and Brune seconded that the Commission send a letter to Council supporting staff's proposal to extend the Potomac Riverboat Company's lease waiver to allow for early morning Water Taxi operations. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

City Updates

PUBLIC SAFETY – Alexandria Police Department (APD)

Captain Jamie Bridgeman's report indicated there were no violent crimes during the previous month and multiple parking tickets and traffic stops.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS – Jack Browand (RPCA)

- **Waterfront Park** – Fencing around the recent lawn improvements is being removed and additional landscaping improvements will be made between the two parks. LED light fixtures have replaced existing fixtures in the park's older portion. RPCA and DPI are studying the best way to improve the area's overall lighting. Regarding the pier planned for Waterfront Park, a formal concept has not yet been submitted for staff review.
- **Windmill Hill Park** – Replanting in the park and along the shoreline will be finished by spring 2020, The City is receiving quotes for a pier at the park's north.

³ Federal CMAQ grant: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/

- **Holiday trees** – Two trees are being installed, one in Market Square and one in Waterfront Park. The tree lighting ceremony is set for Saturday, November 23.
- **Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) vessel** – The VIMS research vessel will be docking at the Marina from Sunday December 8 to Tuesday December 10 and will conduct some tours while here on other business.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES – Catherine Miliaras, P&Z

- **10 Duke Street restaurant** - Council approved its Special Use Permit (SUP).
- **Old Dominion Boat Club (ODBC) Piers** – ODBC is revising the proposed design and asked the Planning Commission to defer their Special Use Permit (SUP) request until their revision is finished.
- **Waterfront Plan overview** – Planning and Zoning Director Karl Moritz will brief the Commission in December on how elements of the Waterfront Plan have been coming together.
- **Robinson Landing** – Construction and pier improvements should be finished by summer 2020.
- **Watermark Condominiums** – Scaffolding should be down by year's end. Construction should be complete by late March 2020.
- **Robinson Terminal North** – The City has not received a concept update from the owner.

Liaison Reports

AD HOC MONITORING GROUP ON WATERFRONT CONSTRUCTION –

John Bordner, Monitoring Group Chair

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/special/waterfront/default.aspx?id=86800>

In Commissioner Bordner's absence, Hall, also a member of the Ad Hoc Group, reported on the last meeting.

- **Strand and Union Street construction traffic problems** – Construction for Robinson Landing and Watermark Condominiums is creating problems for local businesses when Strand Street and parts of Union Street are blocked.
- **Public restrooms** – Although not within the Ad Hoc Group's jurisdiction, a resident asked Hall and Bordner to convey to the Waterfront Commission that the Waterfront needs more permanent public restrooms.

RIVERRENEW SUBCOMMITTEE – Skid Masterson and Christa Watters, Co-Chairs

<https://riverrenew.com>

Masterson reported that RiverRenew's Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) cancelled its October 23 meeting. December 12, 2019 will be its next meeting. The National Park Service's environmental assessment may be ready in January 2020. RiverRenew's goal is to pick a design-build team by August 2020.

Commissioner Announcements/Reports

- Hall (VisitAlexandria) announced several upcoming City events include Thanksgiving weekend's Black Friday and Small Business Saturday, and the December 7 Scottish Christmas Walk and Holiday Boat Parade of Lights.

- Siefert (Alexandria Seaport Foundation) announced ASF will be open for visitors during the Parade of Lights.

Next Meeting

Thayer announced the next regular meeting will be November 19, 2019 at 7:30 a.m.

Adjournment

At 9:20 a.m. Macek moved and Brune seconded that the meeting adjourn. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.