

Minutes
City of Alexandria, Virginia
WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting – Virtual
Tuesday, November 16, 2021
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present:

Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners
Kristina Hagman, Representative, Founders Park Community Association
Charlotte Hall, VisitAlexandria
Judy Heiser, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Trae Lamond, Representative, Old Town Business and Professional Association
(OTBPA)
Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront
Commission
Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large
Louise Roseman, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Barbara Saperstone, Citizen, east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Scott Shaw, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Stephen Thayer, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Chair,
Waterfront Commission
Christa Watters, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.
Patricia Webb, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Esther White, Alexandria Archaeological Commission?

Excused

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

Absent

Robert Weinhagen, Historic Alexandria Foundation

Vacancy

Citizen, Park Planning District III

City Staff

Jamie Bridgeman Alexandria Police Department (APD)
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Acting Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural
Activities (RPCA)
Mike Durham, Assistant Dockmaster, RPCA
Julian Gonsalves, Assistant City Manager for Public/Private Partnerships
Matthew Landes, Division Chief, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Catherine Miliaris, Principal Planner, P&Z

Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA

Guests

Christine Bernstein
Stuart Fox
John Irvine
Stephanie Landrum
Jeff Lipsky
David Martin
Christina Mindrup
Charlene Nield
Clair Sassin
Carole Sieling
Ivy Whitlach

Bert Ely
Christine Hines
Ryan Katz
Cecile Lewis
Joseph Mancias, Jr.
Philip Maxon
John Munson
Jon Rosenbaum
George Sawyer
Marcos Teixeira

Call to Order – Stephen Thayer, Chair

Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. He announced that Beth Gross had resigned as the Founders Park Community Association’s representative on the Commission and introduced Kristina Hagman, the new Founders Park Community Association representative and Esther White, the new Alexandria Archaeological Commission representative.

Discussion Items for Action and Information

ITEM 1: APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 19, 2021, MINUTES

Motion: : Macek moved and Roseman seconded that the October 19, 2021, minutes be approved as corrected. Motion approved by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM 2: COMMISSION REPORTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

FLOOD MITIGATION COMMITTEE REPORT– Nathan (Nate) Macek, Committee Chair

Note: All Committee meeting information is posted on the Commission web page at: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=25562>

Macek reviewed the Committee’s purpose and membership:

- The Committee was created (1) to advise the full Commission on options staff is considering for revising the flood mitigation plan, (2) to develop a proposed Commission recommendation to the City, and (3) to provide staff continuing feedback on scenarios being developed.
- The Commission will receive a full staff briefing in the near future.
- DPI staff has been presenting detailed options for Committee and community feedback so priorities can be integrated into their decision-making process.
- Committee membership: Macek, Commission’s Planning Commission representative, Trae Lamond, Commission’s Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA) representative, Gina Baum, Commission’s Park and Recreation representative, Esther White, Commission’s Alexandria Archaeology Commission representative, and Kristina Hagman, Commission’s Founders Park Community Association representative. White and Hagman have taken over the seats filled by their predecessors on the Flood Mitigation Committee.

Macek reviewed the previous evening's Committee discussion.

- **Starting scenarios** - Staff originally presented for Committee feedback a variety of possible flood mitigation scenarios with different mixes of flood mitigation and park improvements for the area between Duke Street and Founders Park.
- **Current scenarios** - Two major fiscally constrained scenarios, both of which would generally fit the \$102 million in the City's CIP budget. (1) First emphasizes flood mitigation improvements between Duke Street north into parts of Founders Park with minimal park improvements. (2) Second focuses on improvements between Duke Street and the Torpedo Factory and includes some park improvements, including the promenade and some other parks plan features.
- **Committee consensus emerging on some points, e.g.,** a preference for option 2. Issues being discussed include:
 - Ideas for maximizing the cost-limited scenario's flood protection while also including park elements and addressing community concerns, e.g., Founders Park members' concerns about the potential impact of a proposal to put underground storage tanks in Founders Park for temporary rainwater storage.
 - Ideas for cutting costs further for some elements in the Olin plan while still preserving a nice design, e.g., using asphalt instead of brick pavers for the streets would save millions of dollars. Another idea is to mix in a softer, meandering shoreline for flood protection between Duke Street and the Old Dominion Boat Club at Prince Street rather than build a continuous hard seawall at the shoreline from Duke Street to King Street.

Committee's next steps (not necessarily in this order)

- Committee will meet in mid-December 2021, assuming additional technical data being collected is ready to be presented.
- Full Commission will receive a detailed staff briefing on the options.
- Committee will develop a proposed Commission recommendation to the City at the Committee's January 2022 meeting.
- Commission will finalize a recommendation to the City, ideally by late January 2022, so it can inform staff's flood mitigation budget planning and, if appropriate, CIP funding recommendation.

Staff updates:

- **Matt Landes (DPI)**
 - **Grants** - City has applied for two grants for the flood mitigation project: a state grant of about \$3 million and a federal grant for about \$50 million. A decision on the federal grant might not be known until about July 2022. A state grant decision could come sooner.
 - **Incorporating public priorities in flood mitigation decisions**- Current information on how the community prioritizes flood mitigation and Waterfront amenities will be used when deciding how to use limited funding for the flood mitigation project as well as for future decisions on implementing the Waterfront Small Area Plan.
- **Browand (RPCA)**
 - **Residents have asked if funding is assured for restoring areas such as Founders Park to their previous condition after flood mitigation work is done. A: Yes.** This is not funded from the flood mitigation budget. City property is ALWAYS restored to its previous condition after construction activity is completed, e.g., for park improvements,

street, sidewalk and right-of-way work, flood mitigation work, etc. City properties are not left in a state of disrepair after work is done.

Commissioner comments:

- **Construction start date.** A: If a preferred alternative is chosen by the first quarter of CY2022, construction could probably start in late 2024 or early 2025. If the City receives its federal grant, the estimated start date would be delayed by the required environmental assessment.
- **Waterfront Plan's civic building?** Are there plans for a recreation center in the area near Chadwick's and Duke Street?
 - **A: Expanded Point Lumley Park** - No. The Olin Studio's 2014 Waterfront landscape design showed a space where a small community building *could* be put but this option has not been funded. An expanded Point Lumley Park is being created in this area, with 226 Strand added in coming weeks and Chadwick's parking lot area after flood mitigation construction. Also, the City has a dedicated private donation for park improvements at Point Lumley.
 - **A: History museum study** - The Office of Historic Alexandria is considering proposing CIP funds for a feasibility study for either a history museum and/or a space to display historic ship elements that were unearthed during recent Waterfront excavations.
- **Climate change impact** - Has the City updated its water level rise projections for coming years?
A: Yes. The flood mitigation team is using models that project out to 2100, the useful life span for the flood mitigation project's elements. This affects both the planned seawall and the stormwater management planning.

ITEM 2: TORPEDO FACTORY ART CENTER (TFAC) IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY – Diane Ruggiero (Deputy Director, Office of the Arts, RPCA) and Julian Gonsalves (Deputy City Manager, Public-Private Partnerships)

Full briefing posted at:

https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/TFAC_WC_16Nov2021.pdf

Ruggiero summarized the latest update of the TFAC Implementation Strategy that was previously presented at the Commission's October meeting:

- No final decision has been made.
- She invited feedback on assumptions being used for space planning and financial modeling for the three scenarios developed for the building's redesign.
- She apologized for the numbers not yet being available. Cost and financial feasibility estimates were still being refined. She said Council had shrunk the study's original 18-month timeline to 4 months to be finished by the end of CY2021.
- MGAC consultants are developing the cost estimates and JLL Marketing is developing the financial feasibility assessment.
- An illustrative breakout was provided for how current and proposed future uses of space within the TFAC building might be divided between art uses - artist studios, the gallery and Art League – and other uses, e.g., the Archaeology Museum and event space.
- The Implementation Strategy is based on information from the 2019 TFAC Action Plan.

Next steps planned:

- Public outreach meetings after Thanksgiving.
- Staff presentation to Council Tuesday, December 14.

Commission comments –*Timeline and Process*

- ***Commission review*** - Unless a special meeting is added in December, staff's planned timeline does not include an opportunity to present the report's finalized information to the Waterfront Commission before staff submits its recommendation to Council.
- ***Commission recommendation*** - Commission does not have the detailed information it needs to develop an informed and considered recommendation to Council before Council's December 14 meeting. The Commission has been requesting more details about TFAC planning for over a year.
- ***Rushed community outreach***
 - Community outreach should have been scheduled throughout the four months as staff was developing the implementation strategy.
 - Holding a series of public meetings on proposed TFAC scenarios the week before staff submits their recommendation to Council (1) does not give the community and Commission enough time to consider the final information carefully; (2) does not give staff enough time to consider community comments meaningfully - and incorporate them into the final TFAC recommendation. (3) is likely to create public distrust of the process used to develop the TFAC recommendation.
- ***Failure to provide the morning's briefing update to the Commission in advance of the meeting***
 - At their October meeting the Commission Chair asked the Office of the Arts to send the November briefing ahead of the meeting, so Commissioners had time to read and assess it carefully. This was not done.
- ***Outreach to TFAC artists*** – Commissioner opinions were mixed on whether staff has involved the TFAC artist community in the planning process sufficiently.

Commission Comments –*Briefing*

- How to balance the objectives of supporting the artists and monetizing TFAC?
- ***The TFAC ground lease scenario should not assume all artist studios would be market-rate.***
This is unlikely to be supported by the community. A: The ground lease scenario with all market-rate studios is just a starting point for the financial analysis.
- ***The strategy needs an overview concept for the building's space usage*** – For example, will the first floor be used for an immersive arts experience? A café? Will the second floor be studios? Will the third floor have the archaeology museum?
- ***TFAC artist opinions on changes being considered are mixed*** - Commissioner Hagman noted she had worked in the TFAC Printmakers collaborative but left because the building felt "moribund".
- ***Potential restaurant-related issues to consider***
 - ***Potential impact on artists*** – TFAC layout needs to consider whether and how a restaurant could both generate revenue and enhance TFAC as an artists' center.

- *A rooftop or upper floor restaurant would encourage visitor flow upward* – A space plan that encourages visitors to move from the ground floor up throughout the building would benefit upper-level artist studios as well as enhance restaurant revenue.
- *Revisit projected revenue from restaurant rent* - Shaw suggested the consultants forecast for a TFAC restaurant’s rental rate is low for a waterfront restaurant.
- *Need more analysis to determine whether a rooftop restaurant could be technically feasible* – Shaw suggested doing a more detailed financial analysis of whether a TFAC rooftop restaurant could generate sufficient revenue to justify investing in strengthening the current TFAC structure. He offered a quick back-of-the-envelope estimate that a \$10 million food service operation could perhaps generate \$15 million of revenue.
- *Concerns re: proposed incremental renovation* – This would create a process where renovation would be ongoing, making the building less attractive to visitors and tenants. An alternate idea: Close TFAC building to do the full renovation all at once.
- *Environmental aspects* – Boes said the Environmental Policy Commission would like to know how the renovation design will address reducing greenhouse emissions, an important aspect of retrofitting old buildings.

Commissioners agreed that more detailed information is needed before the Commission can make an informed recommendation to Council on the TFAC Implementation Strategy.

Public Comments

Christine Bernstein –TFAC is a unique cultural space, Decisions should not be made with unnecessary urgency. She also suggested the Commission ask for an accounting of why the implementation strategy has needed five consultants.

Commission action

Motion: Macek moved that a Commission letter to Council should be drafted to document the Commission’s concerns about the Torpedo Factory Arts Center (TFAC) Implementation Strategy Update.

The letter would state: (1) the details Council will consider about the TFAC strategy are unclear; (2) timing provided for community review and comment is inadequate; and (3) the Commission respectfully requests additional details and a fair timeframe for review and comment on the proposed plans be provided in advance of any Council action.

The letter would also:

- describe the information the Commission is looking for and cite the Commission’s December 22, 2020, letter to Council and the Mayor on the TFAC plan,
- note that any proposal on the TFAC should: (1) revisit the City’s approach to management of the Center and other Waterfront amenities; (2) reimagine what TFAC could be by considering a complete mix of uses the Center could serve; (3) provide a series of alternatives for Community consideration; (4) investigate costs and economic impacts of the Center; (5) ensure the artists have a voice in the affairs of the Center; and (6) request clarity on how the City’s proposal addresses these Commission recommendations.

The letter would further:

- note Commission concerns about the timely receipt of information needed for its decision and why we feel unable to make a recommendation to Council on the TFAC Implementation Strategy by mid-December due to insufficient information.
- note Community concerns about bringing the proposal forward at this time, especially given concerns by the Waterfront Commissions and other stakeholders about an incomplete proposal and short timeframe for stakeholder review and feedback before Council takes is scheduled to take action.
- note any Council action without meaningful public input could break trust with the community.

The letter would:

- request Council and the City Manager to direct staff to provide a clear proposal for future Torpedo Factory Art Center use and management for review and comment by the Waterfront Commission and the broader community.
- ask that adequate time to be provided for stakeholder review and comment and meaningful incorporation of comments and recommendations before Council considers any final action; and
- ask that Council action on the TFAC Implementation Strategy be deferred until early 2022 to provide adequate time for Community input.

Motion: Baum seconded Macek's motion. The motion passed by unanimous show of hands.

Motion: Baum moved, and Watters seconded that the Commission authorize Macek to draft the letter reflecting Commissioners' concerns for the Chair's review and approval and submission to Council.

City Updates

PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE– Jamie M. Bridgman, Captain, APD

- APD will hire back four officers to work on Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving, 8 p.m. -2 a.m.
- Invited feedback on whether APD should station an officer on the 100 block of King Street. A: Commissioners agreed.

Commissioner comments:

- ***Crowds and amplified music at King/Union*** - Concerns were raised that the City is not enforcing its ban against amplified music in the street, creating a major nuisance for businesses and residents in the nearby area, Bridgeman noted this is a civil, not criminal, matter. APD encourages voluntary compliance. ***Follow-up:*** T&ES will be invited to explain the City code's current restrictions on crowds and noise and discuss changes being contemplated.

COMMUNITY PROJECT UPDATES - Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, RPCA

- ***Holiday events*** - A variety are scheduled, including the annual City tree lighting ceremony in Market Square on Saturday November 20.
- ***Debris removal*** - from the last storm continues.

- **Robinson Landing** - City is working with Robinson Landing and Harborside to fix the southern end of the promenade, including realigning the trail through Roberdeau Park to include adjusting the planting beds and addressing drainage issues at the bottom of the stairs.
- **Windmill Hill Park** – Shoreline planting inspection scheduled for the following week. Since plantings at the shoreline are now established vegetation can be cut back, invasive plants removed and additional maintenance done by spring.
- **New ODBC pier.** Old pier has been removed. Pier replacement to be announced.
- **Land-based borings** – Landes reported water-based borings around the bulkhead will be conducted within the Marina between now and early January. Land-based activities and Marina use should not be affected.
- **Parklets along the Strand** – Planning is moving ahead for parklets in Chadwick’s parking lot.
- **Tall Ship Providence pier** – Clair Sassin reported that construction on the pier planned for Waterfront Park will start in December 2021. It will be built in Baltimore and floated by barge to the City, hopefully in spring 2022.

Commissioner Comments

- **Signage** - Saperstone suggested staff walk the Waterfront between Jones Point and Canal Center to see where signage needs to be improved.
- **Parking** - Baum reported the 10-minute parking signs near Volas, Starbucks, and Virtue are still missing.

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

- Miliaras reported there are no new applications for private development.
- T&ES will be installing permanent signage for the 100 block of King Street since Council approved its permanent closure.
- GenOn site – Hilco Redevelopment Partners will host a virtual community meeting on November 29. The focus is on the site’s street layout and waterfront open space concepts.

Commissioner Comment:

- Watters, who attended the last community meeting, reported Hilco plans to build on no more than 8 of the 18.8 acres. The site will include a large amount of parkland and a Resource Protection Area. She encouraged the Commission to keep track of site developments in coming years since this will become the new northern edge of the City’s waterfront.

Topics And Information - Next Meeting

- Due to the holiday schedule, the Commission planned not to meet in December unless an issue comes up that requires a Commission attention. Without a December meeting, January 18 would be the next Commission meeting.
- Potential topics for January meeting: (1) Noise ordinance and its enforcement; (2) Additional information regarding TFAC Implementation Plan; and (3) Flood Mitigation
- The Commission is authorized to meet virtually through January 2022. Holding in-person meetings at the Lee Center was suggested for when they resume.

Adjournment

Motion: At 9:45 a.m. Baum moved and Lamond seconded that the meeting adjourn. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.