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City of Alexandria, Virginia
WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting – Virtual
TUESDAY JANUARY 18, 2022
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present:

Sarah Bagley, Member, Alexandria City Council
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners
Kristina Hagman, Founders Park Community Association
Charlotte Hall, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
Judy Heiser, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Trae Lamond, Representative, VisitAlexandria
Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront Commission
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
Robert Weinhagen, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Esther White, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

Absent

Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large

Vacancies

Citizen, Park Planning District III
Representative, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

City Staff

Jamie Bridgeman, Captain, APD
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Acting Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Mike Durham, Assistant Dockmaster, RPCA
Catherine Miliaris, Principal Planner, P&Z
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
William Skrabak, Deputy Director For Infrastructure And Environmental Quality; Transportation and Environmental Services (TES)
Terry A. Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)

Guests

Charles Allegrone
Christine Bernstein
Yvonne Callahan
Jeff Lipsky
Joseph Mancias
Christina Mindrup
John Munson
Ann Shack
Colin Sorensen (ASF)

Gina Baum
Brian Buzzell
Stephanie Landrum
E. Mancias
Harald Mangold (ASF)
Helen Morris (ASF)
Jon Rosenbaum
Carole Sieling
Chris Wilson

Call to Order – Stephen Thayer, Chair

Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. and welcomed Council Member Sarah Bagley, the new Council representative on the Commission.

Discussion Items for Action and Information

ITEM 1 APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 16, 2021 MINUTES

Note: This item was taken up out of order, after the Flood Mitigation Update

Motion: Macek moved and Roseman seconded that the November 16, 2021 minutes be approved as amended. Motion passed by a unanimous show of hands.

ITEM 2: COMMITTEE REPORTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

WATERFRONT FLOOD MITIGATION COMMITTEE – Nathan Macek, Committee Chair

As an introduction to the DPI briefing that followed, Macek reviewed the process that the FM Committee and DPI staff have been following since the FM Committee’s first meeting in April 2021. A more detailed full Commission briefing presenting options currently under consideration is planned for January or February 2022.

The FM Committee collaboration with staff is iterative.

- At each FM Committee meeting the DPI team presents information about options currently being considered and why.
- Committee members respond with concerns, questions and priorities that they and the community are likely to have about the options presented.
- Staff incorporates that feedback into their next revision of options and presents these modified options at the next FM Committee meeting for further discussion.

Next steps:

- **Full Commission briefing (Special meeting)** – The DPI team will present an abbreviated version of the detailed information about options for Phase 1 Waterfront Plan implementation that the Committee has been reviewing.

- **Next FM Committee meeting** – Committee will consider additional staff information if available; Committee will formulate a proposed Commission recommendation to Council that reflects concerns, that includes questions and priorities identified at the Commission briefing.
- **Commission will approve a recommendation to Council regarding how to proceed with the revised Phase 1 options.**

ITEM 3: FLOOD MITIGATION UPDATE – Matthew Landes, DPI

Briefing details are posted online.

Staff's goal is to use community engagement to identify community priorities for which elements of the Waterfront Plan should be implemented first as staff decides how to scale down Phase 1 elements to fit available funding.

- Geotechnical and geo-archeological subsurface soil testing are complete. Data is being analyzed and expected to be ready in March 2022.
- This data will indicate which flood mitigation options are technically feasible and will be used to help refine costs, risk assessments, and site constraints affecting the flood mitigation options being considered for the project, as well as how to prioritize the project's elements.
- **Approved and potential funding sources for Phase 1** implementation were reviewed. (See PPTs for details):
- **Approved:**
 - \$102M in 10-year CIP (City Funding for design and construction. No additional funding is anticipated).
 - Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund (DCR Grant) - \$3.24 million awarded December 27, 2021
 - Rosenbaum Family bequest – designated for western portion of Point Lumley Park improvements.
- **Applied for:** BRIC Grant (FEMA) (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) ; City requested \$50 Million, Awards announcements expected in July 2022 •
- **Potential funding source –**
 - USACE (US Army Corps of Engineers) Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study – Researching whether this is relevant.

Next steps:

An expanded detailed briefing for the Waterfront Commission is planned for January or February 2022.

Commission overview:

- Watters and Macek emphasized that the \$102 million in the CIP for Waterfront Plan Phase 1 implementation was intended to fund both elements of the Olin Plan's Waterfront Landscape Design and the flood mitigation plan. Watters emphasized the Commission's key role to be played in ensuring that the City does not delay implementing the Waterfront Plan elements.
- Macek identified some of the key issues identified thus far:

- Can the Olin Plan’s landscape design vision be modified to be more cost-effective ways? For example, can the waterfront /bulkhead promenade be changed to a promenade similar to Windmill Hill Park’s natural flood barrier with a walkway that meanders away from the water’s edge at some points.
- Thayer noted that the FM Committee discussions are focused on ensuring that the right questions are being asked about options as staff develops them.
- Hagman said identifying residents’ tolerance for flooding is an issue of great interest to the Founders Park Community residents when questioning whether the Founders Park flood mitigation system proposed by staff can be modified.
 - Landes noted that the design storm being used for analysis recognizes that changing climate and conditions mean that some flooding will have to be tolerated.
- Hagman emphasized that if additional funding is received staff will examine which Waterfront Plan elements can be implemented that do not fit within the \$102 million in the CIP.

ITEM 4: ALEXANDRIA SEAPORT FOUNDATION (ASF): SEAPORT CENTER II PRESENTATION -- Kathy Seifert, Executive Director, Alexandria Seaport Foundation (ASF)

Seifert reported that ASF plans to request City approval to build a second facility adjacent to the existing ASF facility. The ASF Seaport Center is located on a barge moored in the Marina.

- The new building will let ASF expand its services for at-risk youth and adults. The program currently operates at capacity and has a waiting list.
- ASF lost its long-time office building on Duke Street when the Robinson Terminal South site was redeveloped into Robinson Landing. Since that time ASF has been operating out of donated office spaces scattered throughout the City. A second ASF building will let all ASF activities be located together.

Seifert introduced ASF Board Members Harald Mangold and Colin Sorenson, who presented plans for the new building, and Helen Morris, ASF Board Chair.

Next steps:

- In March 2022 ASF will ask Council to amend the ASF license agreement with the City to authorize the second building.
- ASF will then apply for the appropriate local, state and federal permits required for the project and initiate a capital fundraising campaign to support the project.
- Construction of the new facility will be done off-site nearby and be floated to its permanent location in the Marina when finished.

Commission comments

- *Cost?* About two million dollars, including one million dollars for construction.
- *Timing?* Planning and construction is expected to take about two years.
- *Permitting* – Have any permits been applied for yet? A: ASF has engaged a marine engineering firm to assist them with all technical details.

- **Permitting** – Browand said that when the City amends the ASF license it will be contingent on ASF receiving all appropriate permits and approvals.

Commissioners agreed to support the concept of ASF building a second Seaport Center on the Waterfront, recognizing that the design will be subject to City and other permitting reviews.

Motion: Watters moved and Webb seconded that the Waterfront Commission support the proposed amendment to the City’s contract with the Alexandria Seaport Foundation (ASF) to allow ASF to proceed with planning for a second building. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Conflict of interest statements – To avoid any perception of conflict of interest, Macek, Watters, Webb and Hagman noted for the record they had made small personal donations to the Alexandria Seaport Foundation over time but did not consider that a personal conflict of interest that would prevent them from voting on the motion. Watters has also been an ASF volunteer tutor.

Seifert and the ASF Board members thanked the Commission for its support.

ITEM 5: NOISE ORDINANCE UPDATE – William Skrabak, Deputy Director for Infrastructure and Environmental Quality; Transportation and Environmental Services (TES)

Skrabak reviewed highlights of the City’s updated noise control ordinance that was approved by Council in December 2021 and went into effect on January 1, 2022.

- The general goal is to make City noise limits more legally enforceable and expand protections to residential areas.
- Noise limits that previously applied only to commercial properties now apply Citywide. Before 11 p.m., the noise limit for commercial properties is 65 decibels as heard at 10 feet. After 11 p.m. the limit drops to 60 decibels.
- Criminal penalties for violations have been eliminated and civil penalties increased. The City continues to encourage voluntary compliance and issues a ticket only as a last resort.
- None of the changes directly affect buskers along the Waterfront.

Commissioner comments

- **Improved enforcement needed – Note:** Macek opposed additional funding to increase enforcement. A: Staff said increased funding for enforcement would be more effective than adding additional restrictions. The City Manager’s office is considering options for how to improve enforcement, including the possibility of increasing FY23 funding. T&ES is currently working to fill its primary inspector position.
- **Enforcement frequency** - Is data available on how often the noise ordinance is enforced? A: Records are kept of complaints received and the outcome.
- **Detecting violations** – How are noise violations are detected? A: Noise level is measured with a decibel meter and/or a “plainly audible” standard, listening from 10 feet. The T&ES/Office of Environmental Quality responds to complaints during business hours. APD responds during off-hours. T&ES is the only department that has a sound gauge to measure loudness.
- **Interest in restricting leaf blowers (for noise and environmental reasons).** A: City lacks authority to restrict leaf blowers unless a state law granting authority is passed. The City has requested such authority in its 2022 legislative package. Approval of state legislation granting this authority is considered unlikely this year.
- **Noise impact on residents:**

- **City quiet hours?** The idea of the City establishing “quiet hours” was suggested, particularly since residents conduct so much more activity at home due to virtual meetings, including on Sunday mornings.
- **Buskers** - Thayer reported that buskers on the unit block and 100 block of King Street create significant noise problems for nearby residents.
- **Noise restrictions’ potential impact on businesses** –
 - Macek said the noise ordinance should not be applied in the same way for loud nuisance noise, e.g., construction or landscape equipment, and for loud pleasurable noise, e.g. concerts. The Planning Commission has encouraged Council in the past to consider whether noise restrictions can sometimes be too restrictive for businesses and has encouraged the City to be more flexible in applying them to businesses. Macke opposes increased funding for noise ordinance enforcement.
 - Shaw urged tighter enforcement of noise restrictions. He noted that street noise in the 100 block of King Street has been so loud at times that Mia’s restaurant patio has stayed empty even on sunny day.

City Updates

PUBLIC SAFETY - Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain (APD)

- Bridgeman reported that most calls between December 1 and January 18 were generally related to disorderly conduct, noise complaints and parking violations. An increased police presence in the Waterfront area is being planned for the spring/summer/fall months.

Commissioner comments – none.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS – Jack Browand (RPCA)

- **226 Strand** – Ownership of the site, at the southwest corner of the expanded Point Lumley Park across from the hotel, is being conveyed to the City
- **Robinson Landing (RL) pier - transfer and railings** Since RL asked to transfer responsibility for managing the pier to the City earlier than was specified by its DSUP, the City is discussing new terms for managing the pier. The City will manage the pier and floating docks. RL will be responsible for installing railing on the pier. The City will install the promenade railing.
 - **Timing:** Because a variety of factors need to be addressed first, the exact timing for installing the railings is not yet known. The installation will be in two steps and should take several months.
- **Roberdeau Park improvements** – City is working with Robinson Landing to address the problem of ponding at the bottom of the stairs. The trail will be realigned to create a more direct route for people coming off the pier.
- **Windmill Hill Park** – Landscape maintenance is planned to restore the landscaping to the park’s original plan.

Commission comments - None

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT – Catherine Miliaris, P&Z

- P&Z has no pending Waterfront applications
- **GenOn site/Hilco Redevelopment Partners (HRP) outreach** – On January 20 HRP will brief the Park and Recreation Committee (P&RC) on Hilco’s open space concept for the site. On January

27 HRP will host a virtual community meeting at 6:30 pm, focusing on land use, urban design and height considerations. Advance registration is required. Hilco also plans to brief the Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee

- City staff and Hilco meet regularly with National Park Service to ensure that Hilco plans are consistent with NPS requirements and plans.

Public Comments

- **Christine Bernstein - Reagan National Airport flight path** - Requested an update on whether the flight path has been changed since flights seem to be diverted over Old Town proper more frequently. A: Thayer, the City's representative on the Reagan National Community Working Group, said the flightpath has not been changed though diversions are made for safety reasons as needed.

Commissioner Announcements/Reports

- **Gosnell** – Thanked the City for the enhanced gates at the Marina. Browand said the gate height has been increased but the Marina remains open to the public during operating hours and accessibility to the Marina remains unchanged.
- **Gosnell** asked if APD can add foot patrols along the Waterfront on busy nights as was done the Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving.
- Commissioner terms ending: - Browand reported that two Commissioners' terms have ended or about to end, since they have served for 10 years: Gina Baum's term ended in December; and Christa Watters' term ended with this meeting. The Commissioners and Browand thanked Baum and Watters for their service. Thayer noted that Watters had chaired several special committees set up by the Commission to study several issues in detail.

Next Meeting -

- Next monthly meeting is scheduled for February 15.
- **Proposed Topics:**
 - Update on planning for the street design of the 100 block of King Street, now that it is permanently closed to traffic.
 - Update on River Renew tunnel project
 - Update on Torpedo Factory Art Center planning. (Macek proposed that TFAC planning be added as a standing monthly agenda item, starting with a February update.)
 - The Commission plans to set a date for a special meeting of the full Commission to receive a staff briefing on Waterfront Flood Mitigation planning being reviewed by the Commission's Flood Mitigation Committee.
 - Hilco briefing on GenOn site redevelopment was proposed for spring 2022, noting that construction is expected to start within two years.

Adjournment

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