

City of Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Beautification Commission

P.O. Box 178

Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 12, 2019

7:30 PM

Charles Houston Recreation Center, 901 Wythe Street

Attendees: Kathryn Chiasson (Chair), Joseph Crowell, Richard Dorrier, Kevin Dunne, Emily Freeland, Christina Mazurkevich, Geoff Montross, Monica Murphy, Eleanor Quigley, Mellenie Runion, Denise Tennant (Vice Chair)

Excused Absences: Cathleen Curtin

Unexcused Absences: Mary Enschede, Don Kent

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza, Helen Lee (T&ES), Davis McCoy (T&ES)

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM.

- 1. Approval of July 11, 2019, Meeting Minutes** – A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Ms. Mazurkevich and seconded by Mr. Montross. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes.
- 2. Membership Updates** – Ms. Mazurkevich was reappointed to another term. The Commission remains below capacity and members are encouraged to reach out to those who may be interested in joining.
- 3. Commission Business**

A. Presentation on City Waste Disposal

At an Outreach Subcommittee meeting, the issue of trash and recycling was raised in response to storms earlier in the summer for which a large city cleanup response was needed. Mr. Dunne reached out to the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services to request a presentation on the City's waste disposal system. Ms. Lee, program manager for environmental concerns, and Mr. McCoy, superintendent for trash management, presented to the Commission and responded to questions.

In the aftermath of the storms, Mr. McCoy explained the interdepartmental effort to park cleanup: Mr. Mendoza's department identifies the need for waste material and Mr. McCoy's team provides a receptacle and packing.

Ms. Lee explained that the City provides waste disposal for residences of fewer than 4 families, which accounts for about one-third of all families in the City, as well as schools, government buildings, some non-profit organizations, and small businesses who participate. For residents who are physically unable to dispose of their trash according to City guidelines, Ms. Lee explained that the City offers a walkout service to those residents. Mr. McCoy shared a copy of the notice provided to homeowners who have trouble following City guidelines with respect to curbside trash and recycling placement. In response to a question about collection districts, Ms. Lee and Mr. McCoy explained that the City operates on four districts so that waste is collected Monday through Thursday during normal weeks. For residents served by the City, trash is collected by City staff and recycling is collected by a contractor. For contracted waste disposal, all haulers are required to obtain a solid waste hauler permit with the City.

Mr. Montross asked whether commercial properties in the City are required to recycle. Ms. Lee confirmed that all commercial properties are required to recycle and submit a Recycling Implementation Plan annually to demonstrate how recycling will work. According to Ms. Lee, commercial properties generate 70% of the recyclable waste in the City, and to support such recycling, the City has added a new city employee dedicated to working with businesses. Ms. Runion confirmed with Ms. Lee that "trash in front, recycling in back" was not an allowed recycling policy for businesses. Ms. Lee reiterated that T&ES is happy to help businesses set up a successful recycling program.

Several members asked about the addition of recycling containers to public spaces. Ms. Lee explained that contamination prevented any successful recycling from public spaces, with pet waste being a primary contaminant. If residents ever see recycling being added to trash disposal, it may be done in order to prevent contamination of other recyclables.

Ms. Lee was excited to share the City's latest effort to increase the recyclability of glass. She noted that glass frequently broke during transport, preventing its separation from other recyclables by human sorters. Additionally, the market for recycled glass has plummeted, particularly as there is no bottling facility in the region. To stem the wane of glass recyclability, the City partnered with Fairfax county to create a regional glass recycling plant in nearby Lorton. At that facility, glass dropped off at any of the purple glass recycling stations across the City and region are converted to crushed aggregate which can be used on public works projects. Ms. Chiasson suggested additional drop off locations that wouldn't require a car or driving. Ms. Lee noted the ongoing work with the region to increase the number of drop-off sites. In particular the department is reaching out to grocery stores for a potential partnership. Mr. Crowell asked if glass recycling had been eliminated from single-stream recycling, and Ms. Lee clarified that no, glass could still be recycled in single-stream. She noted that environmental professionals were hesitant to dissuade the public from glass recycling in case the market for recycled glass

ever returned. Mr. Montross wondered if the post-processing aggregate was available to the public, though Ms. Lee said no, the use by public works was still consuming all of the material. Ms. Runion asked which plastics were being recycled, which Ms. Lee said were #1, 2, and 5.

Mr. Dunne asked what citizens could do to most impact collected. Mr. McCoy responded “separation.” He noted that lithium ion batteries are the greatest cause of truck fires in the country. Ms. Chiasson asked what residents should do if they have complaints. Ms. Lee responded by suggesting Call.Click.Connect. Mr. Dorrier asked how residents should report litter, to which Mr. McCoy also suggested Call.Click.Connect. Ms. Lee ended with a brief review of recyclable materials and the City’s education materials to teach waste separation to students.

B. Meeting Location

Ms. Chiasson announced that the Durant Center would no longer host Commission meetings. She asked if any member had an issue with continuing to meet at the Charles Houston Recreation Center, and no member presented any issues.

C. Legislative Proposals

Ms. Chiasson reminded the Commission that the City develops a legislative agenda for the Virginia legislature and requested ideas from any members. Mr. Crowell recommended a statewide expansion of no-mow zones along state highways. Ms. Quigley recommended the prohibition of sale on any invasive plant species within the state.

D. Budget Priorities

As with the City legislative agenda, the City requests budget priorities from commissions as it develops the FY 21 budget. Mr. Crowell suggested increased funding for arborists and their services, noting that the backlog on the City’s arborist team was years behind, resulting in only emergency management rather than cultivation. Ms. Runion suggested a further increase in tree planting, and Ms. Quigley requested additional replenishment of tree watering bags on City property. Ms. Tennant suggested additional funds for the Parknerships program. Mr. Montross suggested additional weed abatement on City sidewalks.

E. Commission and Subcommittee Updates

- a. Commission** – Nothing further.
- b. Awards**

Because of a City Council special session, the ceremony is now October 16, still at the Lyceum. Ms. Murphy is currently working on the script and PowerPoint. She will coordinate with individuals on their day-of roles. If anyone needs a nametag they are to let Mr. Mendoza know. All members are asked to bring a white or yellow mum to the ceremony for decoration. The subcommittee will send a digital copy of the invitation via email so that members may forward it to anyone interested.

c. Outreach

The Outreach Subcommittee is working on a position paper to act as a one-pager handout when members meet with City Council or staff. They hope to bring some materials to the full Commission next month.

d. Sustainable Landscaping

Mr. Mendoza plans to meet with Mr. Dorrier and Ms. Murphy at the Market Square planters next week to review their status and plan for their replenishment. The planted median will have the dead trees replaced this fall. The next median will be in Warwick Village. The Washington Street medians are under review as part of the next budget cycle for improvement.

e. Vacant Lots

Ms. Runion and Ms. Tennant heard from Park Planning today that the bids on the Kettle Park installation are in. The lowest cost bid is still above budget by roughly ten thousand dollars. The community and Subcommittee will work with other City departments to attempt to lower the costs as possible. The community will be involved in finding a way forward. Once the contract is awarded, however, it would be approximately four weeks to initiation.

4. New Commission Business – None.

5. Staff Report – Mr. Mendoza provided a written staff report. He noted that the City was moving through the next phase of the budget cycle and would have a review of the budget for the Commission soon.

6. Agenda Items for October 10th, 2019, Meeting

7. Public Comment/Discussion – None.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 PM.