

Summary Minutes
ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, February 18, 2014
City Hall
Sister Cities Conference Room
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present:

Dennis Auld, Citizen Park Planning District II
Gina Baum, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
Howard Bergman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Suzanne Bethel, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
John Bordner, Citizen west of Washington St.
Morgan Delaney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
Stewart Dunn, Alexandria Planning Commission
Arthur Fox, east of Washington St. and south of King St.
Charlotte Hall, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and Chair
Jacob Hoogland, Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Mari Lou Livingood, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Jody Manor, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association (ACVA)-
Stephen Mutty, Citizen Park Planning District I
Paul Smedberg, Member, Alexandria City Council
Townsend A. (Van) Van Fleet, Old Town Civic Association
Christa Watters, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of Pendleton St.
Ryan Wojtanowski, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission

Excused:

David Speck, Citizen Park Planning District III
Stephen Thayer, Citizen east of Washington St. and north of King St.

Absent:

Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Leaseholder

Vacancy:

Representative, Alexandria Commission for the Arts

City Staff:

Rich Baier, Director, Transportation & Environmental Services
Emily Baker, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Commission Staff Liaison, Recreation, Parks, and
Cultural Activities (RPCA)
Tom Canfield, City Architect, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Al Cox, Architect, P&Z
Anthony Gammon, DPI
Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Lt. Don Hayes, Alexandria Police Department (APD)
James Hixon, Dockmaster, RPCA
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Cheryl Lawrence, Regional Program Director, RPCA
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA

Steve Sindiong, T&ES
Nancy Williams, Principal Planner, P&Z/DPI

Guests:

Duncan Blair, Land, Carroll & Blair, PC
Dennis Burns, Burns & Associates; architect, Blackwall Hitch Alexandria
Brian Buzzell, citizen
Yvonne Callahan, President, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Jon Carr, CityInterests, LLC
Scott Davies, Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. Department of Transportation
Jim Durham, citizen
Bert Ely, Friends of the Waterfront, Old Town Civic Association
Tina Fink, Traffic Engineer, Toole Design Group
Pete Gibson, Maestro Management, LLC; Alexandria Boating Festival
Bill Gordon, Maestro Management, LLC; Alexandria Boating Festival
Harry Harrington, Old Dominion Boat Club
Lauren Kaufmann, Staff Engineer, Toole Design Group
Charles Lindsay, citizen
Ruth McKenty, Alexandria Beautification Commission Ruth McKenty
Alan Novak, CityInterests, LLC
Mark Oliphant, Regional Employee Transportation Coordinator, Naval District of Washington
Tim Payne, Nelson/Nygaard, (Northern Virginia Regional Commission study)
Ken Ray, Toole Design
Larry Ray, owner, Blackwall Hitch Alexandria, LLC
Dan Straub, Alexandria Urban Design Advisory Committee, (UDAC)
Peggy Tadej, Northern Virginia Regional Commission

Welcome and Introductions

Hall called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. and announced that Sandy Modell, General Manager of the Alexandria Transit Company (DASH), who had been scheduled to meet with the Commission that day, would instead be at its March 2014 meeting. Commissioners, staff and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2014

Motion: Moved by Dunn, seconded by Auld, to approve the summary minutes of the January 21, 2014 meeting as corrected. The motion passed by voice vote.

Commissioner Responsibilities: Jackie Henderson, City Clerk

City Clerk Jackie Henderson's review of Commissioner Responsibilities was rescheduled to the Commission's March 2014 meeting.

Browand submitted for the Commission's review and approval the staff draft of the Commission's annual report for FY2013, the year ending July 30, 2013, and he briefly reviewed highlights of the year's activities by the full Commission and its Marina Committee as covered by the draft. Commissioners commended Browand for the draft and asked that it be modified to include some additional Commission accomplishments before the report is finalized.

Mutty moved and Wojtanowski seconded, that the Commission approve the draft report subject to the incorporation of Commissioners' comments submitted by Friday, February 21, 2014, and that Commission approval should not be deferred to the Commission's March 2014 meeting.

Schooner Virginia Visit: April 11-14, 2014

Browand reviewed the December 13, 2013 letter received from the Virginia Maritime Heritage Foundation (the Foundation) requesting City approval to dock the schooner Virginia at the City Marina during its April 11-14, 2014 visit. He said the purpose of the schooner's visit is to conduct educational programs for youth and adults and, as such, the Foundation has requested the City waive the Marina docking fee. Browand said the City will provide additional staff, public restrooms, trash pickup and other needed maintenance to support the visit and the Foundation will cover any related costs. Manor said that, in light of the Olin design team's idea to locate a public restroom at a pump house near the end of Thompson's Alley, the City should place temporary restrooms there for events such as the schooner's visit to test out how easily Waterfront visitors find public restrooms at the location. Commissioners agreed they should continue to consider locations for additional public restrooms.

Bergman asked if there would still be Marina space available for future visits by historical, educational and other such vessels if the new Waterfront design were to relocate all commercial vessels to the Marina. Williams said the Olin design had not yet developed details for Marina usage but she thought some details would be included in the design version to be presented at the City's March 6, 2014 public meeting.

Commissioners said that, in response to the Foundation's offer to host a City-sponsored activity on the schooner at no cost during its visit, the Commission should be used to coordinate such plans.

Motion: Baum moved and Auld seconded that the Commission supports the proposed April 2014 visit to the City by the schooner Virginia and the proposal to waive the Marina's docking fee in a manner consistent with RPCA rules and regulations, assuming the Virginia Maritime History Foundation accepts these. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Alexandria Boating Festival - Bill Gordon & Pete Gibson, Maestro Management, LLC

Gordon presented plans for the first Alexandria Boating Festival (Boating Festival) scheduled for Saturday, May 17 and Sunday May 18, 2014. He said he hopes it will become an annual City Waterfront event as reflects the Waterfront Plan's goals for activating the Waterfront. He said his idea was inspired by his work on the board of the Grand Teton National Park Foundation in Wyoming, an organization whose private contributions support activities connecting youth to nature and celebrating environmental protection and he sees the Alexandria Boating Festival as a City activity reflecting similar values. Gordon said Mystic Connecticut's annual Wooden Boat Show, with its boat building-related activities, is another event that inspired the Alexandria Boating Show's concept and the Boating Festival will feature the Alexandria Seaport Foundation's boat-building program among its activities. Gordon said the Boating Festival's net profits will be donated to the Alexandria Seaport Foundation and RPCA.

He said the Boating Festival would activate Oronoco Park without having activities on Oronoco Bay itself and he hopes the Boating Festival will also encourage other Waterfront-related activities reflecting the Waterfront Plan's goals. He said the Boating Festival, in contrast to the

City's Red Cross Waterfront Festival of earlier years, will not include rides or entertainment appropriate to carnival-type events, but will highlight local organizations focused on water-related activities and emphasize recreational activities such as non-motorized boating such as kayaking, canoeing and sailing. He said it will close at 7 p.m. on Saturday and 5 p.m. Sunday and hoped this timing will also encourage Festival visitors to patronize nearby City restaurants and venues. He said some morning music is planned in connection with children's activities and is also being considered for the lunch hour.

Discussion

Gordon said Boating Festival organizers first focused on inviting community organizations to participate. In response to Smedberg's question whether it might be premature for the City to support an event whose participants had not yet been finalized, Gordon said organizers had delayed reaching out to sponsors until the City had approved the event's being held in the park.

Livingood said Gordon's concept for the Boating Festival as a community and philanthropic-focused event was commendable and welcomed the opportunity for the Seaport Foundation to convey the City's maritime history and focus. She said the Boating Festival will be a good way to introduce Waterfront visitors, especially those from the City's West End, to the City's many water-related activities. Wojtanowski said the event can be a way to attract activities such as kayaking and he wished the City could afford to dredge the Bay. He said the City should consider ways to fund adding a small floating pier that could offer kayakers and other boaters' safer access.

Oronoco Bay's water quality and depth

Manor, Auld and others said they hoped the Boating Festival would draw attention to the need to improve Oronoco Bay's water quality so visitors could access the Bay's water. Bergman asked whether the nature of Oronoco Bay Park should encourage a different view of types of activities suitable there since Oronoco Bay is too shallow for some activities.

Mutty said he thought the Boating Festival should be put off a year or two to allow more planning time, questioned Oronoco Bay Park as a suitable site, and suggested the event's organizers instead make a donation directly to the City's water-related non-profits that organizers expect to participate.

In response to Hall's question, Gordon said they had asked that the north block of Union Street and nearby Pendleton Street be closed for the event.

Project Updates

Olin Design Studio – February 6, 2014 Community Meeting

Hamer provided a brief summary of public feedback about the Olin team's design as it was presented at both the February 6, 2014 community meeting and, a week later, at an Old Town Civic Association meeting during a staff presentation.

Popular elements

Hamer said participants in the meetings have been more supportive of Olin's design Option B, which includes a diagonal pathway, and had not been particularly supportive of the design's option to bring the water up to the foot of King Street.

Hamer said the elements that have been very popular have included: the manner in which the continuous Waterfront promenade has been designed, gardens and art at street ends, having the outline of the historic pier on the ground surface, including kayak and non-motorized boat rentals, the interactive splash fountain in Fitzgerald Square, and keeping the Seaport Foundation on the Waterfront. She said P&Z will reconsider options for Thompson's Alley from a functional point of view since there has been no clear preference for the proposed options. She said the final decision will probably be based on functionality.

Issues of additional interest

Hamer said questions have been raised by the public about whether there could be more space for boats and boating activities and what activities and organizations would be in the proposed civic building. She said there has been significant interest, particularly at OTCA, in how environmental issues will be addressed, including grading, wall height, and cleanliness of that water that will be released into the Potomac from the pump wells.

Discussion of proposed skating rink

Hamer said the proposed ice skating rink has attracted both positive and negative reactions. Many support it; some consider it inappropriate for an historic area; others are interested in the rink's design and whether it would be permanent or temporary. She said the rink is in the Waterfront Small Area Plan as programming and the Olin design is proposing ideas for how the design can accommodate planned programs. Hamer said she has asked the Olin team to develop two or three additional options for how the ice skating rink might function and that appearance and cost will both be key factors to consider.

Wojtanowski said the ice rink should be temporary and designers should look to the Georgetown Harbor ice rink as an example of a wonderful family-friendly way a rink has activated a waterfront. The Dandy regularly pauses so guests can watch the tableau created by Georgetown Harbor skaters.

Van Fleet asked if the City has addressed whether its plan would violate the pier head line with D.C. and Hamer said the City has consistently reported this would not be an issue.

Hall invited public comments on Hamer's presentation. There were none.

Robinson Terminals

Hamer reported that the contract purchasers for both Robinson Terminal North and Robinson Terminal South are actively pursuing applications for Development Special Use Permits and P&Z will provide the Commission some preliminary details of these redevelopments' "general concepts" at the Commission's March 2014 meeting.

Blackwall Hitch Alexandria LLC

Blair, counsel for Blackwall Hitch Alexandria LLC (Blackwall Hitch), introduced owner Larry Ray and architect Dennis Burns. He said the Planning Commission and City Council had approved their application for a Special Use Permit (SUP) and Blackwall Hitch's goal is to complete the renovation by October 2014.

Burns summarized the design goals: to give the building a brand new feel; to soften the harshness of the building by measures such as using wood to counteract the glass walls and to

replace the metal roof, and to convey the area's industrial character. He said the building's lower level brick will be replaced by Potomac River stones. Burns said among the changes planned will be adding a transparent six-foot tall acoustic glass wall in the rear alley to soften sounds emanating from the service alley. He said the existing public restrooms on the outside of the building will remain in place.

Discussion:

Opportunity to work with Torpedo Factory on a mural

Manor suggested Blackwall Hitch consider working with the Torpedo Factory to create a tableau or mural for the building's rear area where the public restrooms are. Ray said he thought this an interesting idea.

Marina Gazebo

Commissioners, Blackwall Hitch representatives, and staff briefly discussed the problems posed by the poor condition of the Marina gazebo that is located in front of the Blackwall Hitch site. Hamer said the Olin design team will consider options for the gazebo. Smedberg said City action to address the gazebo's poor condition should be a priority. Ray said he would like to find a way to integrate the gazebo into the restaurant's design and he had begun to discuss with RPCA the idea of developing it as a site for family-friendly events. Dunn said that in light of the historic nature of the gazebo the City should carefully consider how to improve it. Commissioners identified two gazebo-related issues needing to be addressed: programming and maintenance. Browand said RPCA continues to discuss gazebo maintenance with General Services and will explore potential interim enhancements.

Blair said Blackwall Hitch's proposal is on the agenda for the Board of Architectural Review's March 4, 2014 meeting. Hall said Commissioners and the constituencies they represent continue to be available to help Blackwall Hitch plans move forward and noted the Commission's continuing efforts over time to spur City actions to find a new tenant to revitalize the Food Pavilion area.

Windmill Hill Park Bulkhead RFP

Gammon reported that the selection committee had decided that, based on the response to the RFP, the bulkhead project should be re-advertised. Browand said the City is requesting proposals to study and provide multiple (3) options for bulkhead replacement and shore stabilization, including the option in the Windmill Hill Park Plan approved by City Council almost 12 years ago. Baker said the City's goal is to find a consultant to present options reflecting changes in best practices for shoreline stabilization and in the permitting process related to implementation. She said creating a natural shoreline will be among the options considered. She said the City plans to solicit public input as part of the decision-making process regarding options. In response to Commission questions, Browand said re-issuing the RFP will not delay action on the project since CIP funding remains available.

City Marina Dredging RFP

Gammon said a decision is likely within a few weeks on which consultant to hire.

Lower King Street Multi-modal Feasibility Study

Sindiong said the study is responds to the Waterfront Commission's recommendation, made during the City's Union Street Corridor Study, that the City consider pedestrianizing this block.

Ray said the study is in the discovery phase and will consider pedestrianization's potential impacts on activities such as: (1) parking, (ii) deliveries, (iii) the King Street Trolley, (iv) local business and (v) transit. He said ideas to reduce conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles will be covered as well as the potential traffic impact on the 15 intersections around the area.

Ray said civic engagement and outreach will be a key part of the study. Sindiong said a flyer will be sent to businesses in the area. He said upcoming activities will include a March 10 walking audit of the area to hear from business and restaurant owners, a March 20, 2014 public meeting, stakeholder focus groups, and a briefing to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC). Ray said the analysts plan to present their interim results at the Commission's May 2014 meeting.

Discussion

Additional stakeholders to include

Smedberg said the analysts should also meet with the Parking and Traffic Board to receive their inputs. Baum said a letter should be sent to residents in the areas neighboring the block since they will also be impacted. Hall said residents from the 100 blocks of Prince and Cameron Streets had conducted walking audits of the traffic impacts the last time pedestrianizing the King Street block was briefly tested.

Impact on neighboring streets such as South Lee

Baum said analysts should recognize that other changes to existing traffic patterns seem to have aggravated traffic problems. She said closing King Street to traffic would push traffic to South Lee Street, a more historic, narrow, and congested street. She suggested sidewalks might perhaps be enlarged and parking reduced on this block of King Street. Smedberg said City needs to make it a priority to address the parking-traffic flow relationship in general. He said the analysts should ensure that motor coach traffic is factored in.

Impact on traffic related to future redevelopment

Van Fleet said the study should factor in likely traffic impacts of expected changes to the neighborhood such as Carr's boutique hotel at 220 S. Union Street, the elimination of the Chadwick's parking lot, the Robinson Terminal redevelopment. Fink said Kittelson & Associates will develop projections for potential impacts of planned developments in the area out to 2025.

Other pedestrian plazas' successes and failures

Delaney said he was concerned the change would undercut a vital area and said Charlottesville's pedestrian plaza was an example of pedestrian plazas that fail. He said there is no need for a pedestrian area so close to where Fitzgerald Square is planned and the proposed change would undermine the historic nature of the Old and Historic District's urban street pattern. Dunn said affected residents and merchants should be canvassed and the pedestrianization tested over a 6-month to one-year trial period before the City makes any irrevocable decisions without understanding the full impacts of the pedestrianization. Manor said he has seen successful pedestrian plazas such as Miami's Lincoln Road but the design of the pedestrianization should be carefully thought through to enhance its success. He said an example of a needed modification to the proposal would be putting the proposed pedestrian seating in the street's center instead of on

the sidewalk area adjacent to buildings so that seating does not impede access to the block's businesses.

Importance of designing a pedestrian plaza that addresses merchants' concerns

Bethel said retailers and restaurants should be asked to track the impact on their businesses during the pedestrianization trial period. Van Fleet said the City should talk with each merchant impacted by the proposed pedestrianization since merchant opposition killed the last King Street pedestrianization pilot project several years earlier despite an OTCA poll of its members at the time that showed 75 per cent of residents supported it. Callahan said a recent Informal poll of OTCA members shows Old Town residents still support the pedestrianization concept.

OTCA question about possible changes to N. Royal Street stop signs related to City's bicycle boulevard

Callahan reported that Old Town residents are concerned by reports that the City's Complete Streets' bicycle boulevard planned for North Royal Street would remove stop signs along Royal Street to encourage bicyclists to use North Royal rather than Union Street. Baier said planning on this separate project is in the early stages, the City has not yet initiated a study of the proposal, and resident inputs would be included in that study.

Lindsay asked the City to look at problems related to delivery trucks using the alley on the south side of the 100 block of King Street. He said one problem is delivery trucks being ticketed. Baier said they are ticketed only if they park in the alleys. Hall asked that Lindsay be included in one of the pedestrianization study's focus groups since he concerned about how it would impact the private alley between 100 and 110 King Street. Hall also asked staff to ensure the study includes Police Department insights from the last time the City tested pedestrianizing the block.

UPDATE: Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) Commuter Ferry

Tadej introduced Nelson/Nygaard's Steve Payne (consultant on the study prepared for NVRC and briefed at NVRC's October 24, 2013 meeting), Mark Oliphant, with the U.S. Naval District of Washington, and Scott Davies with the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) who were at the Commission meeting to answer questions.

Tadej said NVRC first became interested in investigating a potential regional commuter ferry when traffic impacts related to decisions by the Base Realignment Commission (BRAC) were discussed. Tadej said NVRC had applied for and was accepted into MARAD's federal Marine Highways program in September 2013 when MARAD designated the Occoquan, Potomac, and Anacostia Rivers as the "M-495 Marine Highway Crossing", sponsored by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission.

[http://www.marad.dot.gov/news_room_landing_page/news_releases_summary/news_release/DOT80_13.htm]

NVRC study: "Market Analysis for Commuter Ferry Service on the Occoquan, Potomac and Anacostia Rivers"

Payne provided a brief overview of NVRC study.

[<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/WC18Feb2014NVRCCCommuterFerry.pdf>]

Payne said the study reviewed the market potential for passenger ferry service but did not evaluate potential ferry routes. He said the viable shorter ferry routes identified by the study included (i) Old Town to Southeast/Southwest D.C. (Coast Guard headquarters at St. Elizabeth's campus), (ii) National Airport to Southeast/Southwest D.C., and (iii) between Alexandria and Joint Base Anacostia/Bolling (JBAB).

Discussion

An Old Town ferry station?

Payne said the NVRC study evaluated the viability of having a ferry station at the Alexandria Marina because it's technically feasible but did not assume an Alexandria ferry station would eventually be located there. He said the study considered Jones Point Park a point of opportunity for a station but did not model it for the study.

Smedberg asked if the study's review of potential ferry commuters between Alexandria and JBAB had distinguished between employees who live within the City of Alexandria and those in Fairfax County with Alexandria postal addresses since the BRAC traffic studies had not made the distinction. Payne said the study used JBAB staff addresses as available from personnel files. Smedberg asked if the study had considered factors such as parking and traffic and Payne said it had not since it looked only at a transit access walk-up mode - similar to that used for the King Street Metro station, not park-and-ride. Watters said if it were determined a significant number of JBAB employees with Alexandria addresses live in Fairfax County the Belle Haven marina should be considered a potential station site. Oliphant said there are about 900 City of Alexandria residents who work at Coast Guard headquarters at St. Elizabeth's and said this data is at www.stelizabethsdevelopment.com.

Questions not yet addressed

Smedberg said Alexandria Council members present at the October 2013 NVRC meeting were surprised planning for a regional commuter ferry seemed so advanced since the study had been described as an initial planning study and many questions will need to be addressed before any decisions about a ferry station in Old Town's center can be made. For example: How would the ferry impact Old Town traffic and parking? Would Defense Department and Homeland Security interest in ferry service let the Federal Government bypass local governments' authority during the approval process? How would the fact that the D.C. line goes up to the City's shoreline impact the City's decision-making role?

Baier said he assumes Council would need to approve the ferry proposal before it could be implemented. Tadej said there are a number of steps needed before implementation, including an environmental impact statement. Manners said it was his understanding that federal funding might be available to fund a City study of options related to a ferry station in Old Town and noted it would not be inconsistent with the City's history since the current Old Dominion Boat Club building had been a ferry station earlier at an earlier time.

Commission follow-up

Hall said the morning's discussion was the start of the Commission's look at the regional ferry issue. Smedberg proposed it be discussed earlier at a future meeting to facilitate a fuller public discussion. Hoogland asked briefers to discuss ongoing planning by jurisdictions outside Alexandria for a Potomac commuter ferry service.

Tadej said NVRC has applied for federal funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to build two ferry docks and procure two boats to use in a pilot project between (JBAB) and Alexandria. She said Woodbridge has also received \$15 million to be spent over the next three to five years to fund actions related to a commuter ferry. Smedberg said asked why NVRC would submit a grant request for a commuter ferry pilot project with an Alexandria station when an Alexandria station location had not been secured. Davies said after FTA grants are announced in March 2014, the five years that grantees have to spend the funds would allow ample time for a grantee to continue its public engagement process and develop potential win-win regional approaches.

Navy interest in potential Potomac ferry commuter service

In response to Smedberg's question about a Navy test run of a potential ferry route in fall 2013, Oliphant said the military had run a separate trip between (JBAB) and the Pentagon because many people live at JBAB and work at the Pentagon.

The need for involvement by elected officials

Smedberg said local elected officials' support will be needed before a pilot study can move ahead. Baier said NVRC applied for the federal grant to test a regional ferry from an Old Town site even though T&ES told NVRC that T&ES would not participate in the pilot project and an Alexandria site might not be available for it. Baier said T&ES made it clear to NVRC that Council approval is needed for a plan to land a commuter ferry at a City-controlled facility like the Marina.

Next Commission steps:

Hall recommended the Marina Committee be given the responsibility to follow up on this issue.

Waterfront Plan Implementation Project Status Matrix

The project matrix distributed before the meeting was not discussed.

Report from Commissioners

Commissioners requested an update on the City's review of responses to the Beachcomber RFP and an update on City negotiations with the Old Dominion Boat Club regarding its parking lot after the 90-day negotiation period ends March 17, 2014.

Announcements / Public Comments

Hall said the Commission would tour The Oronoco on February 27, 2014.

Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.