

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 19, 2022

Monthly Meeting

Sister Cities Conference Room

City Hall

7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Present:

Agnes Artemel, East of Washington St. and North of Pendleton St.
Sarah Bagley, Member, Alexandria City Council
Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)
Kristina Hagman, Founders Park Community Association (FPCA)
Charlotte Hall, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)
Judy Heiser, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Trae Lamond, Representative, Visit Alexandria
Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront Commission
Brian McPherson, Park Planning District III
Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large
Louise Roseman, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Scott Shaw, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Stephen Thayer, Citizen, east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Chair, Waterfront Commission
Esther White, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

Electronic Participation (by phone)

Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners
Barbara Saperstone, Citizen, east of Washington St. and south of King St
Patricia Webb, Park Planning District II

Excused:

Robert Weinhagen, Historic Alexandria Foundation

Absent:

Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation

Vacancy:

Representative, Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission

City Staff

Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD
Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, RPCA
Matthew Landes, Division Chief, Waterfront Program Manager, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Judy Lo, Acting Principal Planner, Park Planning & Capital Development, RPCA
Catherine Miliaris, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary (RPCA)
Terri Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Daniel Unkle, Capital Improvements Section, RPCA

Guests

Simon Beer, OJB Landscape Architecture	Christine Bernstein, resident
Matthew Carroll, Stantec	Michelle Chang, HRP,
Bert Ely, resident	Stuart Fox, Route 66 Ventures
Mary Catherine Gibbs, Wire Gill	Cecilia Lewis, resident
Jeff Lipsky, FPCA	Jody Manor, resident
Clair Sassin, Tall Ship Providence Foundation	Melissa Schrock, HRP
Kevin M. Washington,	Daniel Straub, resident Christopher Consultants

Call to Order – Stephen Thayer, Chair

Chair Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. He noted this was the first in-person Commission meeting held since the City’s COVID-19 rules had gone into effect two years earlier. The Chair reported that, as authorized by the Commission’s Electronic Participation Policy, he had approved participation by phone, for three Commissioners: Patricia Webb, Doug Gosnell, and Barbara Saperstone.

Discussion Items for Action and Information

ITEM 1: APPROVAL of MARCH 15, 2022 MINUTES

Motion: Macek moved and Hall seconded that the March 15, 2022 minutes be approved as amended. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM 2: NOMINATIONS for the OFFICE of CHAIR and VICE CHAIR (July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023)

MOTION: Hall moved and Roseman seconded that Thayer be nominated to serve as Commission Chair and Macek as Vice-Chair for the year beginning July 1, 2022.

Hall spoke on behalf of the nominations: Thayer’s and Macek’s experience with details of the Commission’s oversight of Waterfront-related activities over the years is especially helpful at a time when several long-term Commissioners have finished their service and a number of new members are familiarizing themselves with the issues.

The Hall/Roseman motion passed by unanimous voice vote. A vote on the nominations will be held at the May 2022 meeting.

ITEM 3: WC FLOOD MITIGATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS to COMMISSION

References:

- [Draft Commission recommendations](#)
- [2021-2022 FM Committee meeting information](#)
- [2012 Waterfront Small Area Plan, 2014 Baseline Schematic Waterfront Landscape and Flood Mitigation design by the Olin Studio \(the Olin Plan\), and 2015 Baseline Phasing and Funding Plan adopted by Council](#)

Chair Thayer introduced discussion of the Flood Mitigation Committee’s (FM Committee) proposed

Field Code Changed

recommendations on priorities for revising elements of the City’s Phase 1 Implementation of the Flood Mitigation and Waterfront Small Area Plan.

Background:

- In 2015 Council approved which elements should be implemented in Phase 1 of the Flood Mitigation and Waterfront Plan. \$102 million was approved in the Capital Improvement Program budget (CIP) for their design and construction.
- In 2020, when the Department of Project Implementation (DPI) updated cost estimates for implementing Phase 1 it became clear that \$102 million would no longer cover all of the original Phase 1 elements planned. In response, DPI began to consider new alternatives that would fit within the available budget, incorporate changes in flood mitigation best practices, and meet a changed regulatory environment.
- In spring 2021 Thayer created the FM Committee to advise the full Commission on the potential Phase 1 alternatives DPI was developing and also to provide DPI ongoing stakeholder feedback on potential alternatives being considered.

Commissioners on the FM Committee: The Waterfront Commission’s (WC) Planning Commission representative (Nathan Macek), the WC’s Founders Park Community Association representative (Kristina Hagman), the WC’s VisitAlexandria representative (Trae Lamond), and the WC’s Alexandria Archaeological Commission representative (Esther White). Macek chairs the FM Committee.

Next step – DPI is preparing to move ahead with the procurement process for the design-build contract for Phase 1. If the plan cannot be implemented as originally approved .the design-build contractor will develop the design and cost alternatives further.

Commission Discussion

Macek’s review of the FM Committee’s report was detailed and extensive. Highlights included:

- **Factors affecting updates to the Phase 1 DPI flood mitigation design include**
 - **Budget constraints** - the need to fit Phase 1 elements to the current budget;
 - **Updated technical factors** - the need for design options to reflect changes in flood mitigation best practices, updated stormwater and climate change models, and a changed regulatory environment.
 - **Potential non-CIP funding** – Additional funding sources might include state and federal grants for which the City has applied, including
 - a state grant of \$3.2 million, approved in December 2021, and
 - a \$50 million federal grant whose recipients are expected to be announced by about July 2022.
 - **DPI’s commitment to incorporating stakeholder priorities into the decision-making process** for updating alternatives to the original Phase 1 elements.
- **Flood mitigation and Waterfront design** –DPI’s proposed improvements are consistent with the aims of
 - managing floods at the Waterfront; and
 - including design features proposed in the 2012 Waterfront Small Area Plan, 2014 Baseline Schematic Waterfront Landscape and Flood Mitigation design by the Olin Studio (Olin Plan), and the 2015 Phase 1 implementation phasing and funding approved by Council.
- **The stormwater management and streetscape designs are expected to be further refined during design-build phase**

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- **Community input** – Continued importance as new design options and information become available.
- **Further flood mitigation refinements** - Some elements needing further refinement include flood protection, pump stations, underground stormwater detention chambers in Waterfront Park and Founders Park, and streetscape and stormwater infrastructure improvements.
- **Remaining open to new approaches** - As more information becomes available, the City should remain open to additional approaches that might be developed by the design-build team.
- **“Flood and recover” resilience** - More information should be provided on whether a “flood and recover” resilience strategy that would not impact buildings could be appropriate along some shoreline areas.

- **Finding additional funds for amenities** –
 - **Point Lumley shoreline** - Use flood mitigation alternatives that could free up additional funds for Waterfront amenities; Example: Design-build contractor should develop more information on hybrid options for the Point Lumley shoreline using a naturalized and fixed bulkhead between Duke Street and Prince;
 - **Waterfront Park flood protection** – Study landscape-based and fixed bulkhead flood protection options further.
- **Amenities - How to prioritize Waterfront investment – especially if additional funding becomes available?**
 - **Continuous Waterfront promenade** - A continuous Waterfront promenade was a top community priority during the original 2015 community outreach identifying Phase 1 priorities – and should be preserved.
 - **Parks** –
 - During Phase 1, Waterfront parks should, at a minimum, be restored to their current condition when flood mitigation construction is done; and
 - Expanded park features should be added as the next top priority after Phase 1 is completed.
 - **Use design to maximize usage of open space** – e.g., that expands the types of activities and numbers of people a public space supports.
 - **Affordability**
 - **Factor in inflation’s potential impact** - Avoid unnecessary construction delays to minimize inflation’s potential impact on the cost of Phase 1 elements.
 - **Proactively develop cost-saving alternatives in Phase 1** - to free up additional funds for parks and amenities.

Commission Questions:

- **Timing – design and construction?**
 - Design process should take a year to a year and a half, including the design-build team’s validation of current costs for alternatives being considered.
 - Construction should begin in 2025, after the City’s birthday celebration and take 12-18 months, depending on how elements are phased in.
- **Timing of potential additional funding?**
 - City should know by July 2022 whether its application for a \$50 million federal grant has been approved.
- **How will stormwater management impact water quality?**

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- The City's Green Building Policy and Environmental Action Plan set minimum water quality standards for redevelopment that affects stormwater runoff released into the Potomac.
- If underground storage tanks aren't used other strategies such as green infrastructure could be used to treat stormwater so that it meets water quality standards for stormwater runoff.
- Note: Funding ongoing storage tank maintenance, debris removal and cleaning will be very important.

Public Comments:

- **Clair Sassin** - How long will construction take? A: (DPI) 12-18 months, depending on phasing.
- **Bert Ely** – Are there federal environmental requirements for water released from tanks? A: Water quality is overseen by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. If the City's federal grant proposal is approved additional regulations will apply.
- **Jeff Lipsky** – (Founders Park Community Association) - Commended the FM Committee's and DPI's community outreach and work for the Phase 1 project. Noted it's important to remember that these are not the final design choices. Said Founders Park flooding is related both to rainwater and overtopping from the river.
- **Christine Bernstein** - Have underground detention chambers been used effectively elsewhere? A: Yes. For example, Fairfax County schools use a similar system. Additional information comparing similar detention chamber uses will be developed further.

Motion – Hall moved and Hagman seconded that the Commission accept the Flood Committee report's recommendations and communicate them to the appropriate City authorities. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

ITEM 4: **POTOMAC RIVER GENERATING STATION REDEVELOPMENT (formerly GenOn)** – Catherine Miliaris (P&Z); Judy Lo (RPCA), Melissa Schrock, Exec. VP, Hilco Redevelopment Partners (HRP), Mary Catherine Gibbs, (WireGill/ HRP land use attorney), Michelle Chang, VP of Mixed-Use Development HRP, Simon Beer, OJB Landscape Architecture

Miliaris reviewed Hilco's planning process and community engagement events. Community outreach events over the past year are posted to HILCO's website.

- Hilco/HRP is preparing its Coordinated Development District (CDD) proposal for rezoning the site area for redevelopment. The CDD proposal must be consistent with OTN Small Area Plan (SAP).
- City staff and Hilco meet regularly with the National Park Service (NPS).
- Hilco is working with Old Town North (OTN) organizations and meets regularly with neighbors and other stakeholders.
- Hilco's tenth and last community meeting (virtual) will be May 12. Additional site tours are planned. Approximately 800 people have participated in Hilco's site tours.
- Public hearings on the CDD proposal are planned for June 23 and July 5 with, respectively, the PC and City Council.

Site's general design vision -

- To re-integrate the site back into the City, to reconnect the City with the Waterfront at this location, to connect people to the river, visually and physically, and to connect the site's

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public open space to the open space areas that surround the site, for example the NPS's existing parkland to the east and the Norfolk Southern land to the west of the site.

- **Site constraints** - Chang noted the Old Town North (OTN) Small Area Plan had considered concepts for re-visioning the site, but some of the site constraints affecting the site's available buildable area were not known at the time.
- **Land use and arts activation** – The general distribution being proposed is 40-80 per cent residential, and 60-20 per cent commercial (office, retail, arts & culture).
- **Landscape features** – Beer reviewed some of the landscape features being planned, for example, bicycle circulation and connectivity, improved connections to the Mount Vernon Trail, an integrated the open space network that includes the waterfront area, a more porous activated experience that connects to Old Town, and preserved views and vistas of the adjacent NPS land along the river.
- **Kayaks** - A kayak launch and drop-off point is being considered, as are ecological education opportunities

Commission Comments

- **Mount Vernon Trail** –
 - **Construction impact** – Will construction impact the Mount Vernon Trail? A: Construction of the site's buildings will not impact access to the trail. During work on the pump house area access will be rerouted
 - **Potential widening?**–Will the Mount Vernon Trail be widened? A: NPS is looking at that.
- **Affordable housing plan?**- A: Hilco is working with the City on an affordable housing strategy for the CDD.
- **Project's climate change impact?** – Boes reported that the Environmental Policy Commission will be watching the Hilco project closely to ensure that its impact won't increase the City's carbon emissions at a time when the City's goal is to reduce emissions to zero by 2040.

Public Comments

- **Jody Manor** – Will there be a barrier between bike path and the site? A: HRP's goal is to have the connection between the bike path and the HRP site's open space be as seamless as possible.

ITEM 5: [TALL SHIP PROVIDENCE](#) – Clair Sassin, Tall Ship Providence Foundation

Temporary Providence relocation - Sassin reported that the Tall Ship Providence is relocating to The Wharf in DC for the majority of the 2022 season during construction of the Senator John Warner Maritime Heritage Center (Heritage Center). The Providence will return to Old Town for selected events such as the Portside Festival, the City's Birthday Celebration, and for its Holiday Story Time readings aboard the ship.

- **Timing:** Construction is expected to start in Fall 2022 and take about six months. A spring 2023 opening is planned.
- **Funding** - \$1.5 million has been raised so far towards the Foundation's goal of \$5 million for construction. Another \$1 million has been raised from HII for fourth grade education programs. A one-time state contribution of \$4 million is in the current state budget being considered by the General Assembly. The Foundation's goal is to bring every fourth grader in the Commonwealth to tour the Providence and other Old Town sites. The pier will be open to the public. A ticket will be required to access the ship and education center.

Committee Updates & Announcements - None

City Updates

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

- **Overview** - Reported that Waterfront incidents consisted primarily of traffic, parking, and weekend drunk and disorderly violations.
- **Parking** – There is zero tolerance for parking violations. APD will be watching the impact of closing the unit block of King Street. APD plans to station officers in the area on weekends. Parking in the alley behind Landini’s has been eliminated to make access by emergency vehicles easier.
- **Noise ordinance** – APD enforces the ordinance but has not yet received training.

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Commission comment

Saperstone requested a briefing on parking changes planned for the southern Waterfront area.

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

- No additional project information beyond that provided by HILCO’s briefing on power plant site (former GenOn site)

COMMUNITY PROJECT UPDATES – Jack Browand (RPCA)

Waterfront Capital Improvements Projects – Daniel Unkle (RPCA Capital Improvements)

- Unkle reviewed Windmill Hill Park’s riparian area maintenance, Roberdeau Park’s path realignment, and planned Point Lumley Park’s path improvements, including ‘before-and-after photographs of the Windmill Hill Park and Roberdeau Park work.

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Public Comments

The Chair invited comments. There were none.

Commission’s Annual Waterfront Walk

- Commissioners set Saturday, May 7, 9 to 11 a.m. For the Commission’s annual Waterfront Walk. Participants will meet at Oronoco Bay Park (Pendleton and N. Union St.) and walk south to Windmill Hill Park.

May17, 2022 Meeting – Proposed Discussion Topics/ Items Of Information

- Parking changes at the south end of Old Town
- Torpedo Factory Art Center update
- Robinson Landing management update. City has assumed management responsibility from EYA.
- Commercial Boat Operations in the City – Current operations and opportunities

Adjournment

Motion: At 9:40 a.m. Lamond moved and Roseman seconded that the meeting adjourn. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.