

Minutes
City of Alexandria, Virginia
WATERFRONT COMMISSION - REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, June 25, 2024
City Hall - Sister Cities Conference Room
301 King Street
7:30 a.m.

Commission Members

Members present at the meeting were:

Jan Abraham, East of Washington St. and South of King St.
Agnes Artemel, Citizen, East of Washington St. and North of Pendleton St.
Sarah Bagley, Member, Alexandria City Council
Eldon Boes, Representative, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission
Marcee Craighill, Representative, Alexandria Commission for the Arts
Stuart Fox, Alexandria Park & Recreation Commission
Lawrence Gillespie, Citizen, East of Washington St. and north of King St.
Charlotte Hall, Representative, Old Town Business
Nathan Macek, Representative, Alexandria Planning Commission, Waterfront Commission Vice-Chair (remote)
Claire Mouldoux, Representative, VisitAlexandria
Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large and Commission Chair
David Robbins, Representative, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners
Louise Roseman, Citizen, Park Planning District I
Sydney Smith, Representative, Founders Park Community Association
Patricia Webb, Citizen, Citizen, Park Planning District II
Esther White, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

Members excused:

Debra Roepka, Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Clair Sassin, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
William Vesilind, Representative, Old Town Civic Association

Members unexcused:

Maureen Cooney, Historic Alexandria Foundation

Vacancies:

Citizen, Park Planning District III

Staff: Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD; Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison & Deputy Director, RPCA; Catherine Miliaras, Principal Planner, P&Z; Terry Suehr, Director, DPI; Michael Swidrak, Urban Planner III, P&Z.

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Reid at 7:35 a.m.

2. **Items for Action:**

a. **Approval of minutes of past sessions**

The February 2024, April 2024 and May 2024 minutes were approved unanimously.

b. **Election of Officers**

The Commissioners unanimously elected Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large and current Chair, and Claire Mouldoux, Representative, VisitAlexandria, to be Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, for the upcoming year.

3. **Items for Information:**

a. **Tall Ship Providence Special Use Permit (SUP) Amendment**

Robert Brant, an attorney at Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh PC, made a presentation regarding the proposed Tall Ship Providence SUP amendment. The Tall Ship Providence Foundation has been continually thinking of ways attract the public by further activating the site and the ship, in order to expand the Foundation's mission of educating the public on the role the Continental Navy played in the American Revolution, using the Tall Ship Providence as the anchor. To that end, the Foundation opened a pier bar in May to bring people to the area where the ship is located; live music is also envisioned on the pier. Because the current SUP allows for alcohol sales only during private events and does not address the live entertainment, having a bar open to the public with musical entertainment requires an amendment to the SUP, which was filed and will be presented to the Planning Commission and the City Council in the fall.

To further the Foundation's educational purpose, 53 elementary schools in northern Virginia and the District of Columbia are currently scheduled for the fall program, bringing an average of approximately 100 students a day to attend a 2.5-hour session.

In response to a Commissioner's question, Brant indicated that tents erected on the pier will not significantly obstruct the view from Waterfront Park of the Tall Ship Providence. The Commissioner suggested that consideration should be given to having a more permanent structure that fits in with the aesthetics of the waterfront.

A Commissioner asked why the public bar can continue to operate before the City approves the SUP amendment permitting this activity. Brant noted that alcohol sales are governed by DC law because the bar is located on the DC side of the pier line and that the Foundation has the required alcohol license. The issue is the condition in the City's SUP that allows alcohol sales only for private events. City staff noted it is a common practice to allow an unauthorized activity to continue until the proposed SUP amendment is heard.

A Commissioner asked about the total capacity of the bar, including standing room, and whether patrons will have access to restroom facilities. The pier bar has seating for 78 with a certificate of occupancy for 135 people. The pier restrooms are available for use by the bar patrons. Although not advertised, the restrooms are also available to the general public. A Commissioner noted that there has been a problem with the public using the restrooms in Old Town restaurants and bars, highlighting the need for more public restrooms on the waterfront.

The bar is planned as a summer pop-up from Memorial Day to Labor Day. It's open seven days a week from 4 – 9 pm on weekday evenings and 1 pm to 9 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The proposed SUP amendment also would allow for the bar to be open on weekends in September and October. The ship tours are from 10 am to 4 pm and the ship sails three to four days per week depending on the weather and bookings but usually two sails on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday plus charters.

A Commissioner commented that the Tall Ship Providence is a nice addition to the waterfront area, increasing the activity there making it a bit more wharflike.

Several questions were posed regarding who would deal with potential noise issues or other alleged legal violations. Brant stated that the noise should be negligible because the venue is located 100 feet from shore. There is some joint jurisdictional authority, since the bar is located on the DC side of the pier line but is subject to Alexandria's SUP. There would need to be coordination between the two jurisdictions on who takes the lead in addressing any noise complaints or alleged violations of law. The issue of jurisdictional responsibilities will be forwarded to the director of planning and zoning so that it can be addressed as part of the staff report in September.

b. **Robinson Terminal North Development Project**

Ken Wire, a partner at Wire Gill, LLP, made a presentation on Robinson Terminal North Concept II. The site on the east side of Union Street is being currently leased by Alexandria Renew for its River Renew project. When AlexRenew vacates the property, which is planned for March 2025, the pier will be removed, and the eastern side of the site will be regraded.

The three-acre site consists of one acre of open space on parcel A, which would be conveyed to the City upon completion of the development, one acre with buildings east of Union Street, and one acre with a residential/restaurant building west of Union Street. Maps were presented to show the elements of the property site, including restaurants, residential units, trails, grading, and open spaces. Depictions of the design concepts for the building facades were also provided, which will continue to be refined as the project planning progresses.

Attendees were reminded of the height restrictions that were set by the 1983 National Park Service settlement agreement. The east residential building is now split in half whereas in the earlier concept design it was one long building. The strategy now is to have fewer units but higher-end units, which would maximize revenue.

In addition to presentations to the Waterfront Commission, meetings have also been planned with the City's Urban Design Advisory Committee serving Old Town North, the Board of Architectural Review, and a virtual community meeting to include an environmental consultant to address questions regarding environmental mediation. It is planned that the formal application for the project will be submitted in July or August timeframe.

In response to questions, Wire stated no public access to the rooftops is planned. The loading dock design will enable trucks to enter the west building without obstructing traffic on Pendleton Street. The trash dumpster will be located inside the building. The landscape guidelines allow for a more urban treatment of the trees lining the street. Access to the water is not currently planned. The connections between the pedestrian trail and the Mt. Vernon bike trail have not yet been resolved. The flood plain study will ensure that the regrading of the east portion of the development will not create a bathtub effect at the north end of Founders Park.

The public will have access to the restrooms in the development's restaurants and if the City agrees restrooms could be placed at the foot of Oronoco Street. Multiple Commission members stressed the need for public restrooms on the site. City staff noted several precedent examples where private ownership and maintenance of public restrooms have been successful and operate without complication. City staff will pursue public restroom access within proposed structures.

There will be 20 public parking spaces in the east building garage. There will be spaces in front of the buildings on both sides of Union Street for pick-ups and drop-offs. Individuals going to the circular restaurant next to the east building who are dropped off will need to go around the residential building and will not be able to enter through that building's entrance.

With the deconstruction of the pier, the pilings would be cut off such that they did not disturb any of the contamination that is front of the site now. These pilings will become a part of the view shed.

A Commissioner asked why the developer plans to deed Parcel A back to the City. Wire stated that it is not feasible to have private units owning the space, it should be public land. The waterfront settlement

agreement requires that it be preserved for public use. Multiple Commission members stated the desire for the public open spaces be retained and maintained by the condominium association due to the City's budgetary constraints. Commission members and City staff noted several precedent examples where private ownership of parks with public access easements is successful and managed without complication.

A Commissioner noted that Alexandria has signed the climate accord and has approved the environmental action plan, which calls for a 50% reduction in emissions across the City by 2030 so new buildings have to essentially be net zero. Wire responded that these policies have been taken into consideration and the development will comply with City policy.

Additional Commissioner and other attendee comments included consideration to adding more shady areas to the open spaces, providing larger trash receptacles, and the need to address the oil sheen at the end of Oronoco Street.

4. **City Updates**

a. **Community Projects & Activities** – Jack Browand, Deputy Director, RPCA

All are invited to join us for the 275th birthday celebration of the City on July 13. There are three activity areas in an effort to mitigate the crowds that are expected.

b. **Private Development Updates** – Catherine Miliaras, Principal Planner, P&Z

The virtual community meeting on the Robinson Terminal North development will be on June 26.

At the May Commission meeting there was a comment about construction worker parking at 101 Duke Street. The issue should now be resolved.

c. **Public Safety** – Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD

There was a concern regarding unlicensed food and ice cream trucks along the waterfront. Food trucks are only allowed in three areas of the City and are not allowed in Old Town. Bridgeman noted that the vendors are not well versed in the City code.

It was mentioned that restaurant managers and others around Founders Park are taking pictures of the ice cream trucks, calls are being placed to 311, and police are responding. There continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed, however, because the trucks just move from one block to another.

A Commissioner suggested that thought should be given to providing space for the licensed food truck vendors along the waterfront to serve families and others who may not want to eat in a restaurant.

There is an issue with the street performers plugging into City power and there have been discussions regarding adding covers and locks to the outlets. There is also consideration being given to turning off the power so that the outlets cannot be used, thus eliminating the violation of the noise ordinance as well as other City code violations.

5. **Commission Reports / Subcommittee Reports / Announcements**

A Commission member noted that the recent waterfront walk attended by Commission members and other members of the community was enjoyable and interesting, and suggested that a walk of the north waterfront be planned for the fall as there are a few development projects planned or already started and it would be

valuable to the commissioners to see what those projects have planned in terms of the relationship to the waterfront and the views and vistas that are provided.

It was also mentioned that the Art League should be a part of the walk.

A world class, around the world sailboat race will start tonight, June 25 departing from the Wharf in DC at 9 pm. with the Wilson Bridge opening around 10 pm.

Please inform Lebaron Reid if you are interested in joining the subcommittee for Robinson Terminal North.

6. **Proposed Discussion Topics / Items of Information – Future Meetings**

- a. Could a discussion with Phil Jubert regarding the tree canopy along the waterfront be added to the agenda for the next meeting?
- b. Next Meeting: September 17, 2024

7. **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:20 am.