

Minutes
City of Alexandria, Virginia
WATERFRONT COMMISSION - REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, February 20, 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 (EPC)
Maureen Cooney, Historic Alexandria Foundation
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 (OTB) (remote)
Nathan Macek, Representative, Alexandria Planning Commission, Waterfront Commission Vice-Chair
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
Clair Sassin, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
Sydney Smith, Representative, Founders Park Community Association (remote)
Patricia Webb, Citizen, Citizen, Park Planning District II (remote)

Members excused: None

Members unexcused:

Debra Roepke, Alexandria Seaport Foundation

Vacancies:

Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Representative, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)
Citizen, Park Planning District III

Staff: Jamie M. Bridgeman (Captain, APD), Jack Browand (Commission Staff Liaison & Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA)), Matthew Landes (Portfolio Manager/Division Chief, Project Implementation), Catherine Miliaras (Principal Planner, Planning & Zoning (P&Z)), Michael Swidrak (Urban Planner III, P&Z), Iris Portny (Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA).

Guests: Bill DePuy; David Robbins; Siobhan Steen; Manisha Maniyar; Daniel Straub; Kristina Hagman; Bert Ely; Robert Dube; Ann Shack; Cathy Eiden; Gina Baum; Sue (last name unable to read); Sandra (last name unable to read)

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Reid at 7:30 am.

2. **Items for Action:**

Approval of minutes from last session. The minutes of the November 28, 2023, meeting was approved with necessary corrections.

3. **Items for Information:**

Robinson Terminal North Proposal

Catherine Miliaras & Michael Swidrak provided framework for development of the site and the status of the process. The Concept 1 design has been submitted to the City for review. Input from the Waterfront Commission, other commissions, City staff, the Board of Architectural Review, and the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee will be factored into the Concept II submission. The current design incorporates 89 residential units over two blocks west and east of North Union Street, north of Oronoco Street, two retail and restaurant spaces on the ground floor of the west building, and one restaurant space facing the waterfront in the east building. There is also a request that the pier be removed. There is a waterfront settlement agreement for this property negotiated with the United States in the 1980s. There are goals and guidelines incorporated into the plan related to Robinson Terminal North specifically dealing with issues of land use mix that need to be reviewed.

A question was raised stating that the project was closed and that it would require re-enrollment and if this had been done.

A presentation was made by zoning attorney Ken Wire representing the site owner. Weir presented maps, diagrams, and building massing and design characteristics of each section of the property. He noted that a DSUP was obtained in 2016 for a hotel/residential/mixed use project, which was not implemented. AlexRenew is currently working on the site as part of the River Renew project, which should be finished in 2025, at which time control of the property will revert to the current owner. A new DSUP will be needed for this project.

One member noted that the removal of the pier may have downstream effects given that the pier intercepts some debris as it comes down river. Another member asked whether the metal dam that has been constructed in the river on the north end of the property will end up trapping debris coming downstream following storms. Weir stated that an updated flood plain study will address that question. He was asked whether consideration has been given to replacing the pier and stated that the plan is to come to the community with a budget for the public open space portion of the project, possibly in the millions of dollars. The community will decide how to spend this money.

In response to other questions, Wire indicated that the railroad tracks will likely be left in place. Some of the open space (Parcel A) will be open to the public, with parcels B1 and B2 private open space that will be partitioned. Activation of public open space is being considered, such as a possible kayak launch. Rooftop amenities may be included, most likely be on the west building. An art plan for this site is being developed and should be complete in the next six to eight months. The Concept II submission will provide greater detail regarding the proposed project design. If the DSUP is approved later this year, construction could start in the Fall of 2025.

Question: Regarding the BRP remediation process and the 1.5-year time frame. How does that square with the entitlement process, and do we have the information needed for the entitlement process available so that information is not found out after the fact that could impact a development condition?

Answer: The 1.5-year time frame is for everything having been answered. All of the necessary data has been collected.

Several members expressed general satisfaction with the direction in which the project is heading.

Potomac River Generating Station Open Space

Mary Catherine Gibbs presented the project plans and where it now stands and next steps. The North Old Town project includes six blocks of development plus 13.9 acres of open space. The coordinated development district (CDD) approval for the project was obtained in July 2022. A comprehensive open space plan was approved as part of the CDD process. The infrastructure development site plan was approved in June 2023. Each of the six blocks will have its own individual development special use permit. This discussion will center around the waterfront portion, which is approximately ¼ mile long. The budget for this portion of the project is \$21 - \$22 million.

The process started in 2021 with community outreach and input through surveys to determine what type of programs should be in the open space. Based on the information garnered, Concept II was submitted in January. Over 800 responses were received through the community outreach for the project. Specifically, as it relates to waterfront programs there is a unique situation with the National Park Service land and HRP land jointly running along with waterfront. The natural woodland walking trails, program flexible lawns, waterfront seating and dining, and a personal watercraft launch were rated highly on the feedback received.

There is quite a bit of National Park Service land on the peninsula that comes out into the water. The area will have accessible pathways through woodland walks, existing trees will be preserved along with the Mt. Vernon Trail, and potential overlooks and a personal watercraft launch. Depictions of the open space elements, including arts and retail ideas, were presented. These plans will also be presented to the North Old Town Urban Design Advisory Committee and the Parks & Receptions Commission in March and at public hearings in the third quarter of 2024.

In response to questions, Gibbs noted that the open space and landscaping are the last aspects of this project to be completed after development. The landscaping will happen in phases and will be tied to the block development, which is probably a three-to-five-year timeframe following the issuance of permits. A master association will be in control of the land as HRP will not be conveying the space to the City. The association will determine the programming for the activation of the open space. The expectation is that debris accumulation along the long walkway to the launch pier will be limited; it has not yet been determined who will be responsible for clean-up. The time period during which the portion of the Mt. Vernon trail that is part of this project will be closed during construction is currently unknown. Public restrooms will be provided.

A member commented that the placement of all features for children on the linear park with none on the waterfront side should probably be reconsidered. Another member suggested using the term non-motorized personal watercraft when referring to a launch site, to clarify that the launch is not intended for jet skis.

City Updates

- a. Community Projects & Activities – Jack Browand, Deputy Director, RPCA
The City Manager’s budget will be proposed and provided to City Council on February 27 and the first public hearing is on March 11.
The only activity you will see along the waterfront is routine maintenance.
- b. Private Development Updates – Catherine Miliaras, Principal Planner, P&Z
Based on the presentations today, there is nothing else to report.
- c. Project Implementation Matthew Landes, Portfolio Manager/Division Chief, Project Implementation
Any interest for a walk in the Spring, please let him know. He will be at the March 19 Commission meeting and the March 21 Parks & Receptions meeting with an update on the waterfront flood mitigation project.
There will be a March 26 public Open House, location to be determined. In April there is a plan to attend the BAR for a high-level concept review.
- d. Public Safety – Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD
Not much crime on the waterfront, most calls are for parking and traffic-related matters.

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

Need to circle back to the review on Robinson Terminal North and an update on Torpedo Factory. The next meeting will be held on March 19, 2024.

7. **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 am