

ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 20, 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. (participating by phone, consistent with Commission's electronic participation policy)

Sarah Bagley, Member, Alexandria City Council

Eldon Boes, Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission (EPC)

Robert Cvejanovich, Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)

Stuart Fox, Park and Recreation Commission,

Kristina Hagman, Founders Park Community Association

Charlotte Hall, VisitAlexandria

Trae Lamond, Representative, Old Town Business and Professional Association (OTBPA)

Nathan (Nate) Macek, Alexandria Planning Commission, and Vice-Chair, Waterfront Commission

Brian McPherson, Park Planning District III

Lebaron Reid, Commissioner At-Large

Louise Roseman, Park Planning District I

Barbara Saperstone, east of Washington St. and south of King St

Kathy Seifert, Alexandria Seaport Foundation

Stephen Thayer, east of Washington St. and north of King St. and Chair, Waterfront Commission

Patricia Webb, Park Planning District II

Esther White, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

Excuse

Doug Gosnell, Alexandria Marina Pleasure Boat Owners

Robert Weinhagen, Historic Alexandria Foundation

Vacancies:

Representative, Alexandria Commission for the Arts

Representative, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

City Staff

Erin Bevis-Carver, Division Chief, Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES)

Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD

Jack Browand, Commission Staff Liaison, and Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)

Alfred Coleman, Deputy Director, Department of General Services (GS)

Mike Durham, Assistant Dockmaster, RPCA

Matthew Landes, Division Chief, Waterfront Program Manager, Department of Project Implementation (PPI)

Jeremy McPike, Director, Department of General Services (GS)

Catherine Miliaris, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning (P&Z)
Iris Portny, Commission Recording Secretary, RPCA
Diane Ruggerio, Deputy Director, RPCA, Director, Office of the Arts
Terry A. Suehr, Director, Department of Project Implementation (DPI)
Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES)

Guests

Mike Billing, Michels.us
Mark Hutter, Michels.Us
Andrew MacNeill, Michael Baker International
Claire Sassin, Tall Ship Providence Foundation
Ann Shack, Tobacco Quay

Call to Order

Chair Thayer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. and Commissioners introduced themselves. Thayer reported he had approved Commissioner Artemel's participation by phone for reasons consistent with those authorized by the Commission's Electronic Participation Policy.

Discussion Items for Action and Information

ITEM 1: Approval of June 21, 2022 Minutes

MOTION: Hall moved and Macek seconded that the June 21, 2022 minutes be approved. Passed by unanimous voice vote with technical corrections.

ITEM 2: 2 King Street Parking/Open Space Property Update - Jeremy McPike, Director, Department of General Services (GS), and Alfred Coleman, Deputy Director, GS

Fact Sheet: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/2KingStSummary.pdf>

- McPike reviewed the status and history of 2 King Street, the City-owned property on Strand Street between King Street and Wales Alley that abuts the Mai Thai Restaurant building. The City acquired the property in 2014 as part of the City's Property Acquisition and Exchange Agreement with the Old Dominion Boat Club.
 - In June 2022 Council approved staff recommendation to declare the 2 King Street property surplus and authorized staff to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale/redevelopment of the property,
 - Council vote declaring 2 King Street surplus was not a vote approving its sale.
 - Council called for additional community outreach. City Manager will report feedback received to Council before Council takes action on the proposed RFP and next steps.
 - **Community suggestions for potential uses for the parcel:**
 - **To date** - public restrooms, recreation space, meeting rooms, visitor information center, arts and cultural uses and police/public safety offices.
 - **Planned** - Additional community outreach will be conducted to help inform the draft RFP that staff is developing.

- **Next step– GS to draft a proposed RFP for 2 King Street in consultation with a joint subcommittee of Waterfront and Park and Recreation Commissions.**
 - McPike proposed two Waterfront Commissioners be appointed to work with GS staff and two Park and Recreation Commissioners
 - Timeline
 - **October** – Staff and Commission representatives meet as a Subcommittee to assess technical aspects of potential uses for the site and receive additional community inputs.
 - **November** – GS drafts RFP or Request for Expression of Interest that reflects Commission subcommittee inputs.
 - **December 2022/January 2023** – Staff readies draft RFP/ Expressions of Interest for Council’s review and approval.
 - **Spring 2023** – Responses are received and reviewed by staff.

Ideas proposed in response would be presented for additional community feedback before City decides how to proceed.

Commission Comments

- **Fox**, who represents the adjacent property owner, recused himself.
- **Hall**: potential parcel uses proposed by Old Town Business members: bicycle rack (especially needed on weekends), a performance stage for buskers, a site for City’s mobile art lab, a visitors center.
- **Hall**: Staff should consider issuing a Request for Expression of Interest rather than a Request for Proposals to gather additional information on uses being considered by respondents.
- **Macek**: Park and Recreation Committee suggestions at their briefing? A: Expected Strand Street to be pedestrianized. Potential site uses: open space, community space such as restrooms, meeting space, concerns about flooding’s potential impact on uses at the site.
- **Macek**: RFP language should be loosely written to allow for proposed uses not yet envisioned. Parcel’s developable Floor Area Ratio on the site?
 - A: **Theory vs practice** - Parcel is 1825 square feet. Three stories are theoretically possible given site’s zoning, narrowness, and elevation. In practice, some proposed uses might not be technically feasible on the site.
- **Thayer**: **Flood mitigation and 2 King Street RFP timelines?** A: (DPI) Decision on 2 King Street will probably be made before flood mitigation infrastructure has been built in this area.
- **Siefert**: **Public restrooms**– Since the nearby Tall Ship Providence restrooms won’t be open to the general public, restrooms would be useful at 2 King Street. A: (Browand) Nearby public restrooms exist but could be better publicized.
- **Bagley**: **Public restrooms** – City should explore whether restrooms could be shown on Google Maps as parking garages will be.
- **Hagman**: **Flood mitigation** - Founders Park Community Association Board:
 - Don’t sell 2 King Street before elements of flood mitigation project are settled. A: (McPike) In real estate transactions, a site’s future uses can be made contingent upon related issues having first been decided.

- Could the City-owned 2 King Street site be substituted for Founders Park as a potential site for elements of the flood mitigation project? A: Not possible technically.
- If site is sold and privately developed, would flood mitigation requirements need to be incorporated into any future design for the site? A: Yes. Any new building on the site would also need to meet requirements for building in a 100-year floodplain.
- **Saperstone** : Usage decisions for 2 King Street should consider nearby activities, e.g., outdoor restaurant seating, etc.
- **White: *Archaeology*** – Alexandria Archaeology Commission’s interest is that the site’s eventual uses consider the site’s historical and archaeological properties.

Public Comments

- **Gina Baum** –Would the site be eligible for residential use? A: Yes under City’s new accessory dwelling zoning change.

Next Steps

- **October** – GS/WFC/ P&RC Commission subcommittee will meet to consider substance of 2 King Street RFP or Request for Expression of Interest.
- **November** - GS reports back to Commissions on the recommendations of the GS/WFC/P&RC group.
- **December/January** – RFP draft could be ready to present to Council in December.

Commission Action: Chair Thayer appointed himself and Hall as Waterfront Commission representatives to work with Park and Recreation Commission representatives and GS staff to consider options for the draft RFP’s substance. Both Thayer and Hall have extensive familiarity with the issues affecting the 2 King Street site.

ITEM 3: UNIT BLOCK PEDESTRIAN PLAZA UPDATE (King Street Unit Block and Northern Portion of Strand Street) - Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, Transportation & Environmental Services

- ***Pilot extension*** – The pedestrianization pilot, originally scheduled for Memorial Day through Labor Day, has been extended through November 20, 2022. The City is currently considering whether to make the pedestrianization permanent.
- ***Community outreach*** – Feedback on the pedestrianization pilot has been collected via the City website, with almost 2000 responses to date, and through other City social media platforms and City e-news. Most respondents would like the pedestrianization extended permanently.
- ***Pedestrianization benefits*** – More outdoor dining, extending the adjacent park area, increased pedestrian safety, increased activation including musicians and public art.
- ***Flooding considerations*** –Unlike King Street’s 100 block, planning for the Unit Block need to consider flooding’s impact.
- ***Activation*** - Old Town Business has recruited vendors to activate the space

Commission Comments:

- ***Prince/Strand bottleneck:*** Something needs to be done to mitigate the problem that Prince Street traffic has no space to turn around when cars encounter the Strand Street traffic barrier. (Thayer)

- A: Ziemann said several options are being considered, including extending Strand Street’s pedestrianized area.
- **Permanent closure** –King Street unit block should be kept closed to vehicles and planning should move ahead on improvements to make the block’s pedestrianization work more smoothly. (Macek)
- **Outdoor restaurant seating** - Neighboring restaurants love it and plan to expand seating in the outdoor parking spaces by spring 2023. (Hall)
- **Noise problems** – Outdoor music amplification that exceeds City noise limits is a continuing problem for outdoor diners and residents. (Hall)
- **The Strand** – Address the visual eyesore of Strand Street’s north portion. (Hall)
- **Activation options** - Need ideas for improving the area’s activation when King Street unit block’s permanent pedestrianization is approved. For example, add food trucks that complement the area’s existing restaurants. (Macek)
- **Expedite pedestrian zone security enhancements** – especially for the 100 block of King Street. (Macek)
 - A: DPI, T&ES, APD and Fire Department are developing a permanent design to incorporate enhanced security. Interim security improvements will be installed shortly. There is a working group with businesses and staff.

Public Comments.

- **Baum** – The Olin Plan’s design options for the 100 block of King Street and other Waterfront areas need to be incorporated into planning. A: Parts of the Olin plan’s proposed design elements are being considered for incorporation within Flood Mitigation Project’s elements. Also, planning moves ahead to improve the design, including platforms and bollards, for King Street’s 100 block.
- Thayer noted many issues raised during the Commission discussion have been addressed by earlier studies on the area.

FOLLOW-UP: Waterfront Plan-related refresher briefing

- Browand said staff is considering a presentation that reviews key recommendations of the Waterfront Small Area Plan and (Waterfront Plan), approved by Council in 2012, and the Olin Baseline Schematic Landscape and Flood Mitigation Design. approved in 2014.
- Commission briefing planned for November.

City Updates

PUBLIC SAFETY – Jamie M. Bridgeman, Captain, APD

- **Overview** – No violent crime, Waterfront issues primarily Quality of Life issues, e.g., noise ordinance violations, parking problems, traffic congestion, etc.
- **Traffic flow** - Suggested problems could be helped by one-way traffic on Union Street. Agreed the Strand/Prince bottleneck needs to be addressed.
- **Parking enforcement** – Still short-staffed and looking for new hires. APD supplements parking enforcements when possible.

- **Management responsibilities for King Street pedestrian zones** - When both the unit block and 100 block of King Street are permanently pedestrianized, entity/entities will need to assume responsibility for flagging problems that need attention by City agencies but are not within APD's area of responsibility.

Commission Comments

- S. Union/Duke Safety issue: Scooters and cars often don't stop at intersection.
- Access for people with disabilities and parking enforcement are important

COMMUNITY PROJECT UPDATES – Jack Browand, Deputy Director, RPCA

- **Tall Ship Pride of Baltimore** – Visiting City Marina October 21-23, 2022. Free tours 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. plus targeted tours for some RPCA program participants.
- **Preparing King Street trees for holiday lights** – October through mid-November.
- **Waterfront Park** Replacing grass panels at foot of King Street should take 4-6 weeks starting the end of September.
- **Waterfront Park - Site/See public art** exhibit – Ruggiero reported on artist Nina Cook John's design concept for the park's 2023 public art exhibit. Cook's layered design is inspired by the City's history and archaeology, including the historic ships unearthed during recent excavations and the City's historic working waterfront, including Fishtown. Her design concept includes a ship's hull embedded in the ground with its ribs rising up and represents layers of City history and Waterfront archaeology, including Fishtown,
- The Commission for the Arts was scheduled to make its final decision on the Cook John proposal at their meeting that evening. As usual each year, The artwork's installation is planned for mid-March,
- The current Waterfront Park exhibit, "I Love You", will be taken down the week of November 7 to make way for holiday preparations.

Commission comments:

- **Conducting Site/See community feedback** – (Macek) In preparation for the CY2024 review process of potential exhibits - City should conduct a community survey re Site/See works to date, using systemic community outreach tools such as that done by T&ES for the City's King Street pedestrianization pilots, e.g. social media and a web-based survey publicized by the City's e-news.
- **Businesses near Waterfront Park love how Site/See has activated the area.** Upper King Street merchants would be willing to support similar City efforts for "Totem Park" and King Street Gardens Park. (Hall)

WATERFRONT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION – Matthew Landes, Division Chief, DPI, Project chief for Waterfront Plan Implementation

- **New website** "Waterfront Implementation Project" consolidates current and historical information on the City's flood mitigation project, "Waterfront Flooding in Alexandria". <https://www.alexandriava.gov/waterfront/program/waterfront-implementation-project#NewProjectAlternatives>
- **Grants** – Reported that City's application for a \$50 million FEMA grant was not approved. Staff has requested information on whether the proposal could be revised and re-submitted for phase 2

of FEMA’s grant review process. Future federal and state grant opportunities related to the flood mitigation project are also being considered.

- **RFP for Progressive Design-Build Project.**
 - **Procurement phase** - Flood mitigation project has shifted from the planning to procurement phase. Planning to hire a designer and builder for the project as part of the design-build process.
 - **Timeline targets** - Landes reviewed the RFP and contract process with the goals of awarding the contract by summer 2023, having the design completed by 2024 (at the earliest) and construction starting in 2025.
 - A request for Qualifications will be advertised prior to the Commission’s next meeting.
 - Project funding is currently approximately \$103 million.

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

- **101 Duke St/ Solo Garage** – No update. Developer is required to give at least 30 days’ notice before closing the garage.
- **Special Use Permits** – No pending SUP applications for the Waterfront area
- **Hilco redevelopment (GenOn site)** – Following Council’s July 2022 approval of their Consolidated Development District (CDD) staff is working with applicant on their infrastructure site plan and environmental sustainability strategy. Hearings on the infrastructure site plan are likely in late spring/early summer 2023.
- **10 Duke Street** (formerly 2 Duke Street) – No update.

Commission Reports/Subcommittee Reports / Announcements

- **Thayer** – In response to the City Manager’s August 31, 2022 letter to Commission chairs re FY2023 budget and CIP recommendations, the Chair will create a draft Commission response to the Manager that updates the Commission’s FY2022 budget letter. Commissioners will consider the draft at the October meeting.
- **Boes** – City has three open high level open positions related to climate change – sustainability coordinator; climate action officer and a public affairs and engagement officer
- **Macek** –Planning Commission and Environmental Planning Commission will hold a joint meeting with Congressman Beyer (October 17, Patrick Henry Rec Center, 7 p.m.) to discuss relevant legislation passed by Congress and issues of common concern to planning and environmental planning.
- **Hall** –A photo shoot planned on the following Thursday, 7 am – noon, focused on King Street 100 block and being shot from King Street 200 block.

Next Meeting: -October 18, 2022

Adjournment: At 9:45 a.m. Macek moved and Hall seconded that the meeting adjourn. Approved by voice vote.