

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Alexandria Beautification Commission (ABC)
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, Virginia 22313

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 12, 2022
7:30 PM

Present: Michael Budinski, Steve Cohen (Chair), Julie Chapman (Secretary), Kathryn Chiasson (Vice Chair), Casey Clark, Richard Dorrier, Kathryn Hartka, Chirag Mapara, Monica Murphy, Laura Norfolk, Denise Tennant.

Excused Absences: Thomas McChesney, Eleanor Quigley

Unexcused Absences: None

City Staff: Oscar Mendoza

The meeting was called to order at 7:29 PM.

1. Approval of the April 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

- a. Laura motioned to approve the minutes, Kathryn seconded, unanimous approval.

2. Membership Updates

- a. A new member joined the ABC, Alexander Mcelya, and he begins in June.
- b. Two ABC positions remain open; no further Membership updates.

3. Commission Business

- a. Guest Speaker: Kirk McPike, Councilman
 - i. Overview:
 - a. Background: Kirk was elected last November, and he previously served on the City's budget and economic committees.
 - b. He plans to review areas of the City that have been overlooked and determine how to make more investments.
 - c. The City recently approved a \$1.85 mil climate contingency budget item, and the City is now defining how best to allocate funds.
 - d. Kirk wants new buildings to focus on innovation/art.
 - e. Focus for upcoming year
 - i. Kirk emphasized need for the ABC and community at large to provide feedback via email: kirk.mcpike@alexandriava.gov
 - ii. The City Council approved restaurant Parklets; needs to be at grade with the sidewalk so businesses will create platforms of the same height as the sidewalk. Businesses will pay a license

fee, and the fees begins this October. There's a map on the City's website of proposed Parklets.

- iii. The City is working on a plan for how to manage the Parklet areas overall.
- iv. A special focus for the City is the "arts district" in the Northeast section of Old Town with a special efforts for outdoor art and other installations accessible to everyone.
- v. Laura Norkfolk serves on the Board of Old Town North Community Partnership, and she requested a meeting with Kirk to discuss the development of the old utility plant and how artwork will be displayed in the area. She expressed an interest that the artwork is displayed outdoors in a way that everyone can easily experience and enjoy.
- vi. The proposed development requires multiple planning meetings with the City, and the public is invited to attend. Kathryn suggested that the ABC consider sharing the responsibility amongst members to attend developer meetings. Oscar will provide a list of developer public hearings.

b. Subcommittee Updates

i. Awards and Outreach

a. Awards

i. Discussion

- a. This year we're undertaking quarterly Awards (not 6 Awards as in the previous year) with Architecture Awards in the winter and Residential Awards in the spring. Community Awards will be in the fall.
- b. Steve emphasized double checking that all residential nominations fall within the City limits.
- c. Phase one of collecting nominations has closed; phase two is the voting process. A google form will be sent to members for voting. The voting period remains opens, 5/15 - 6/5.
- d. In the next few days, more information will be sent out about the voting process. At the ABC June meeting, nominations will be approved.
- e. Kathryn suggested typing in the various properties using "RouteXL," a website that helps to maximize travel plans.
- f. Overall evaluation criteria: plant materials, design, architecture, neighborhood context, sustainability, upkeep, etc.

- g. Monica and others will send information materials to Steve that may help with the Awards evaluation.
 - h. Steve suggested that we take more photos of the properties in the same format for consistency.
 - i. Traditionally, there's been a total of 9 winners, but this is still being discussed.
 - ii. Sustainable Landscaping
 - a. Monica presented that the Committee will meet with Ellen Eggerton 5/13 to discuss how to collaborate with/compliment Eco-City's efforts. Items to be discussed:
 - i. Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities(RPCA)-Park Services is responsible for right-of-way and median mowing but the Beautification commission is interested in a Citywide conversion to native plants under Eco City framework.
 - ii. Open an interdepartmental conversation and budgetary strategy discussion. What are the current mowing costs?
 - iii. Elevate "native plant" programs to higher level (strategic level).
 - iv. How could a citywide program for native plants in public property could be incorporated into the Eco City framework and support Environmental Action Plan(EAP) 2040?
 - v. Native plants are part of the EAP 2040 strategic plan in chapter 4 in several actions. RPCA is the lead on these actions with Planning and Zoning(P&Z) and Transportation & Environmental Services(T&ES) as supporting departments. How to integrate the EAP actions into RPCA priorities.
 - vi. Who controls plant selection? Are medians part of Development or City responsibility?
 - vii. Stormwater and Heat Island benefits.
 - viii. Where to start pilot and equity issues?
 - b. Current priorities for the committee include:
 - i. Exploring how to make inroads in increasing native plant material and determine a broad strategy with the City.
 - ii. Denise suggested reviewing how the City is addressing the invasive plant material that previously existed at the Landmark property under development.
- iii. Vacant Lots
 - a. Discussion
 - i. Denise presented that Julie/Denise attended the Humes Spring Association meeting. Residents are very excited about the

opportunity to utilize and activate the Flagpole Park space. Ideas such as moveable furniture, lighting, seating, trees near park entrances, etc. were discussed.

- ii. Currently, there's a flood mitigation project underway within the park boundaries, and Ann Vicinanza, City Park Planning, is researching the problem.
- iii. Monica suggested moving onto another site. Kathryn suggested following up with Kirk McPike for his opinion.

4. New Commission Business

- a. Katy presented on the Social Media Strategy Plan. Katy created a plan organized by season which will be used to educate people about topics such as native plants. The plan consists primarily of three types of content: 1) ABC original content, 2) reposts of "influencers" in the City; and 3) external content.
- b. Steve proposed delaying the vote on the Awards process until next month or later in the summer to provide for additional conversation.
- c. Julie will take the lead on updating the existing web page to make it more consumable for viewers (she's targeting this action for later in the summer).

5. Agenda Items for the Thursday, June 9, 2022 Meeting

- a. Steve invited the Mayor to speak at the June meeting.
- b. Steve asks that we take a moment to reflect on the ABC speaker series, thus far, and discuss at the June meeting.

6. Public Comment/Discussion: None

7. The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 8:58 PM.