

HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

for

FISCAL YEAR 2022: JULY 2021 – JUNE 2022

I. SUMMARY

In FY 2022, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) held some virtual monthly meetings because of the coronavirus pandemic but transitioned to in person meetings as the pandemic threat waned. The number and range of issues anticipated to require commission attention in late summer justified skipping the regularly scheduled August meeting. To accommodate better the commissioners' schedules and other obligations, meetings convened at 7:00 pm, and aggressive efforts were made to conclude business within two hours. To aid in efficient and effective attention to the issues addressed by the Commission, several committees described below continued their efforts and additional committees were established.

Available time during the meetings was focused primarily on discussion of issues among the HARC members rather than general interest presentations. Briefings were scheduled for significant issues facing HARC, but the number and duration of such briefings was intentionally limited. Emphasis was placed on discussion of issues relevant to the HARC mission and goals. Deliberations consistently addressed (1) whether HARC positions should be communicated to other organizations relevant to historic preservation and other areas of concern and (2) whether actions should be taken.

The Commission has maintained a close and beneficial relationship with key personnel in the Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning. Especially helpful assistance has been provided by Susan Hellman who is the Principal Preservation Planner and Bill Conkey who is the Historic Preservation Architect for Alexandria. One or both of them regularly attended HARC meetings or provided written reports on topics suggested by HARC.

II. OPERATING PROCESSES

Meetings began at 7:00 pm on the third Tuesday of every month. Election of officers for FY 2022 was held during the June 2021 HARC meeting. Elected officers for FY 2022 were Chair Danny Smith, Vice Chair Linda Lovell, and Secretary Steve Stuart. The meeting agendas were prepared by the chairs and vice chair in consultation with the director of the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) and were designed to promote efficient and effective deliberation. Meetings were managed to conclude deliberations by 9:00 pm if possible.

III. COMMITTEES

The following committees, established from FY 2017 through FY 2020 were active in FY 2022:

- A. Office of Historic Alexandria and Planning Support Committee
Stephen Stuart, Chair
Laura Lieberman

- B. Advocacy Committee
Martha Harris and Marth Raymond, Co-Chairs
Gail Rothrock, Michael Hobbs, Sam Hoffman

- C. HARC Composition
Richard Klingenmaier, Chair
Michael Hobbs, Linda Lovell, Danny Smith

- D. HARC Bylaws
Sam Hoffman, Chair
Linda Lovell, Danny Smith, Michael Hobbs, Steve Stuart

- E. Nominating Committee
Laura Lieberman, Chair

HARC members also participated on non-HARC committees related to historic preservation including the Open Space Committee (Martha Harris), and the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (Maddy McCoy and Mark Farkas), and the Torpedo Factory Stakeholder Group (Martha Raymond and alternate Linda Lovell).

IV. HARC ACTIVITIES

In the past year, HARC continued to limit the number and duration of briefings and presentations to conserve valuable meeting time for commission deliberations. This emphasis allowed more time for identifying current and anticipated issues relevant to historic preservation and other HARC priorities, discussing those issues as needed, and developing appropriate actions. Following are descriptions of the more significant issues addressed by HARC during FY 2022.

- A. Heritage Apartments at Old Town – The owner of this property proposed to demolish the approximately 250 affordable housing units and build several large buildings containing about 750 new units. About 500 of the units will be market rate, and about 250 will be affordable housing units to replace the units to be demolished. The commission found, among other issues, that the proposed new construction is inconsistent with the height, scale, and character of the surrounding neighborhood. Letters and statements were presented expressing HARC objections to the Board of Architectural Review, the

Planning Commission, and the City Council. Ultimately, the Planning Commission approved the project but then the BAR denied a Certificate of Appropriateness. The applicant successfully appealed the BAR decision to the City Council, so the project can proceed.

- B. Torpedo Factory Arts Center – Recognizing the important role of the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria’s history, the commission submitted a letter to the mayor, council, and city manager strongly encouraging consideration of the historic significance of the structure and requesting representation on the stakeholder group to be empaneled. The City Manager established a Torpedo Factory Art Center Stakeholder Group which included a position for HARC and Martha Raymond agreed to serve in that capacity with Linda Lovell as the alternate. In addition, HARC supported moving forward with the effort to nominate the Torpedo Factory for the National Register of Historic Places by seeking BAR cooperation in encouraging the City Manager to submit the PIF that has already been prepared to the Preliminary Information File. Discussion with city staff revealed that the City Manager wanted that proposal to be among the issues addressed by the Stakeholder Group. The letter was modified and presented to the BAR Chair as an information letter. Discussion among the BAR Chair Spencer, HARC Chair Smith, and BAR staff Bill Conkey produced a commitment by the BAR Chair to brief his board members on the issue.

- C. Joint Working Session with Department of Planning and Zoning – During public hearings related to the Heritage Old Town Apartments, the mayor suggested that general discussions between city staff and HARC should be undertaken to define better the appropriate role of historic preservation in the city’s public policies, planning, and projects – especially in its relationship to the goal of preserving and enlarging Alexandria’s stock of affordable housing. This initiative has been postponed until FY 2023.

- D. Justice Black House (619 South Lee Street) – The commission continued to track developments related to proposed modifications to this property. HARC was advised in June of 2018 that the owner of this property proposed to make alterations that, in the opinion of HARC, would be inconsistent with the historic easement placed on the property by Justice Black when he was the owner. Extensive efforts were undertaken by HARC to encourage adherence to the easement which is held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). Review of decisions by the BAR and the City Council issue were adjudicated in the courts as a result of an appeal by the Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF), and HARC monitored that activity for appropriate engagement opportunities. Ultimately, the Virginia Supreme Court determined that HAF lacks standing in the case. In the absence of further legal action, the current owner of the property will be allowed to commence the desired alterations to the property. In the Fall of 2021, Senator Adam Ebbin sent a letter to the General Assembly Joint Commission on

Administrative Rules requesting an investigation of the VDHR's practices on their Historic Easement Program.

- E. Deaccessioning of Living Legends of Alexandria (LLA) Official Photos – The official photos were formally gifted to the city by LLA. Recently, some honorees and families have requested that the official photos be given to them. The photos are part of the permanent collection of the Lyceum Museum, so execution of the city's deaccessioning process would be required. According to that process, the commission is directed to make a recommendation to the mayor and city council and deliberations were undertaken during FY 2021 to effect that recommendation. Further discussions among the parties resulted in an agreement that did not require development and submission of a recommendation by HARC.
- F. Alexandria Community Remembrance Project – This project is a city-wide initiative dedicated to helping Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes and to working toward creating a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion. A position on the steering committee is allocated to HARC. Commissioner Maddy McCoy was appointed to serve in that capacity during FY 2021 and Mark Farkas volunteered to take the position when Commissioner McCoy's service on HARC ended.
- G. HARC Composition – There are some positions on HARC for organizations that are no longer active or have not nominated representatives for many years. A committee chaired by Richard Klingenmaier and members Linda Lovell, Michael Hobbs and Danny Smith was empaneled by HARC to review the composition of HARC as currently defined by city ordinance and to recommend changes in HARC composition for consideration by the full commission followed by recommendation of changes to the city council. The committee met frequently throughout the year and developed a comprehensive proposal including discussion of the rationale for proposed changes. The report was presented to HARC for review in preparation for consideration of the specific elements of the report. One change has been made by the city council to change the position for the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage to add "or an equivalent organization." Other recommendations of the committee are being refined by the full membership of HARC and will be presented to the city council at a later date.
- H. HARC Bylaws – Upon notification that city boards and commissions are required to conduct activities under written bylaws, HARC empaneled a committee to develop draft bylaws for submission to and consideration by the full commission. Sam Hoffman volunteered to serve as chair and other members included Michael Hobbs, Linda Lovell and Danny Smith. After several months of diligent work by the committee a draft was presented to the commission. Suggested revisions were adopted and the final version of the bylaws was approved by HARC at the November 2021 regular meeting.
- I. Permanent Closure of the 100 Block of King Street – After a trial period temporarily closing the block to vehicle traffic, the City Council proposed permanent closure. Impact

to the cobblestone pavement of the 100 block of Prince Street due to the overflow traffic from King Street was discussed and the chair was directed to call the issue to the attention of the Planning Commission and to the City Council. The potential more rapid deterioration of the 100 block of Prince was acknowledged but attention to the problem was deferred by the mayor and city council.

- J. Open Space Policy – The city is in the process of revamping its open space policy and has identified HARC as a key participant on the steering committee for that process. Commissioner Martha Harris was selected to serve on the committee to represent HARC and keep HARC apprised of committee activities. Due in part to the coronavirus pandemic, there has been very little activity on this issue.
- K. Freedom House Museum – Now that the building has been acquired by the city, HARC continues to support OHA work to upgrade the Freedom House Museum operated by OHA at 1315 Duke Street. HARC has expressed full support for preservation of the property and is tracking initiatives at the local and state levels to provide funds for rehabilitation of the building.
- L. Elks Lodge 48 – When apprised of the deteriorating condition of this historic Black fraternal organization’s building at 227 North Henry Street, a tour of the facility was requested. Fund-raising for such facilities is not within the purview of HARC, so Commissioner Carol Black has independently provided major assistance to lodge members resulting in significant progress in rehabilitating the building. However, continuing damage to the building appears to be a result of improper paving of the adjacent alley by the city. A letter was sent to the mayor and city council seeking city assistance in eliminating runoff from the alley collecting by the building and seeping into it. Commissioner Black coordinated a successful 2022 Spring2ACTion campaign on behalf of the lodge that raise over \$2000.
- M. Combined Sewer Outfalls – HARC has established contact points within Alexandria RENEW to promote full awareness of ongoing and proposed activities and expedient communication regarding actual and potential historic preservation risks. HARC has monitored the issue carefully because of the potential damage that this major construction activity in and near the Old and Historic Alexandria District could cause to historic structures. The final route selected for the main north-south tunnel is slightly offshore under the river, but other portions of the project are within the boundaries of the OHAD.
- N. Waterfront History Plan Implementation and African American Heritage Trail – HARC is monitoring the design and implementation of the first history trails which form a key component of the Waterfront History Plan and are also anchored to the Interim Park area at the foot of King Street. These first trails will focus on African American History, but the templates and technologies developed will be used for a wide range of similar trails with other themes.

- O. Jones Point Lighthouse – The deteriorating condition of the lighthouse was identified as a significant issue requiring action by HARC. The Chair was directed to send a letter to the mayor and city council. The mayor committed to contact the National Park Service regarding the lighthouse and the Superintendent of the George Washington Parkway alerting him to the issue. The superintendent subsequently responded to HARC by letter dated December 22, 2021 agreeing to have park service personnel examine the lighthouse and perform any temporary repairs deemed necessary and consistent with budgetary constraints.
- P. Curb Cut at 322-324 South Lee Street – The new owner of the property submitted a request to the Board of Zoning Appeals seeking a variance to install a curb cut so the side yard of the property can be used for parking. HARC submitted a letter to the BZA opposing the curb cut and will also present a statement in opposition when the case is heard by the BZA.
- Q. Hotel AKA Plans – The former Holiday Inn Express on First Street in north end of Old Town has been purchased by a national hotel chain. They propose to paint the exterior brick black. Further discussion with the BAR resulted in modification of the original plan so the exterior was stained a dark gray color. The chair visited the site to see a mock-up of the color and spoke in opposition to the change at the BAR hearing on the owner’s request. The BAR gave conditional approval for the staining pending working with staff to select an appropriate stain.
- R. New Building Height Limits – The Planning and Zoning Department has proposed bonus height increases for adding affordable housing units to buildings. In the summer of 2022, a letter to the Planning Commission was prepared on behalf of HARC and the chair also presented a summary statement. The Planning Commission expressed concern about the lack of certainty regarding the potential increase in affordable housing units and the possible unintended consequences leading to their decision to defer action and to ask for additional analysis by the Department of Planning and Zoning. Further action on this topic is anticipated by the Planning and Zoning Department and the Planning Commission.

V. GOALS FOR FY2023

- A. Support and advocate for the budget, preservation, and operational needs of the Office of Historic Alexandria.
- B. Continue monitoring applications docketed for presentation to the BAR and providing input as appropriate.

- C. Continue monitoring appeals of BAR decisions to the City Council and provide input to those deliberations as appropriate.
- D. The report of the HARC Composition Committee will be presented to the full commission for deliberation with the intention of preparing a recommendation to the city council for modification of the composition of HARC.
- E. The proposal for bonus height to encourage incorporation of affordable housing units will be monitored and HARC will engage as appropriate.
- F. The commission will pursue efforts with city staff to define better the appropriate role of historic preservation in the city’s public policies, planning, and projects – especially in its relationship to the goal of preserving and enlarging Alexandria’s stock of affordable housing.
- G. As the Combined Sewer Outfall Project evolves, HARC will continue to monitor the plans and implementation to identify threats to historic preservation and will seek changes that eliminate the threats or mitigating actions to reduce the impacts.
- H. Enforcement of easements protecting historic properties has precipitated some issues. HARC will continue to monitor developments and will seek to identify effective processes for enforcement of historic easements.
- I. HARC will continue to monitor various threats to the integrity of historic areas including 5G networks and open space issues.
- J. HARC will continue to advocate for and assist in creating a preservation masterplan, and a building/materials/streetscape inventory in collaboration with OHA staff and the Preservation Office of the Department of Planning and Zoning.
- K. Many structures outside the historic districts qualify for listing as 100-year-old buildings. HARC will work with representatives from Planning and Zoning to advocate for additions to this list.

VI. FY 2021 COMMISSION OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND AFFILIATIONS

A. Officers

Chair: Danny Smith
 Vice Chair: Linda Lovell
 Secretary: Stephen Stuart

- B. Members and Affiliations – During the fiscal year, the terms of some commissioners expired and the commissioners were reappointed or replaced. As a result, there are multiple commissioners listed below for some of the organizations and bodies represented on HARC.

Carol Black – Old Presbyterian Meeting House
Christopher Brownlowe – Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association
Donna DeBlasio – Planning District I
Rosemarie Esber – Planning District I (prior)
Shawn Eyer – George Washington Masonic Memorial
Mark Farkas – Planning District II
Sean Ferguson – Public Records Advisory Commission
Martha Harris – Volunteer (Historic Alexandria Docents)
Michael Hobbs – Civic Association At-Large (Old Town Civic Association)
Sam Hoffman – Planning District I
Richard Klingenmaier – Alexandria Association
Laura Lieberman – Lee-Fendall House
Linda Lovell – Mortar and Pestle Society (Alexandria Historic Landmark Society)
Paul Mazzuca – Planning District III (prior)
Deborah Osborne – Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission
Martha Raymond – Planning District II
Gail Rothrock – Historic Alexandria Foundation
Monica St. Dennis – Public Records Advisory Commission (prior)
Lisa Schumaier – Torpedo Factory Artists Association
Danny Smith – Business Representative
Tom Soule – Planning District III
Stephen Stuart – Planning District III
Andrea Tracy – Carlyle House (prior)
Ivy Whitlatch – Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Catherine Weinraub – Alexandria Historical Society

C. Vacancies:

Visit Alexandria (Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association Board of Governors)
Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage
Business Representative (Chamber of Commerce)
Carlyle House
Christ Church