



The Old Town Crier

Newsletter of the Old Town Civic Association

Meeting Date: Wednesday June 14, 2017

LOCATION: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street

Time: 7:00 P.M: Socializing with neighbors

Program: 7:30 P.M

The Business Improvement District (BID) Proposal

A presentation by Stephanie Landrum

And

David Remington

of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership

THIS ALSO IS OUR ANNUAL MEETING: WE WILL ELECT OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS OF OLD TOWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION FOR 2017-2018

June promises to be a very busy month in Old Town. You should already have received an e-mail blast about a meeting by BID proponents that took place on June 1. It was held at the Metro Stage Theater at 1201 North Royal Street. The meeting was open to the public.

Just five days after that meeting, the City Council will host another meeting, but, as we go to press, members of the public will not be permitted to speak at it.

The press release from the City announcing this meeting, **which will be held on June 6, 2017, at 7:00 P.M.** at the Durant Center, described the meeting as follows:

On Tuesday, June 6, at 7 p.m., City Council will hold a public work session at the Dr. Oswald Durant Arts Center (1605 Cameron St.) to hear a presentation and

discuss the Old Town BID proposal. While the meeting will not include a public comment period, City Council will hear from panels consisting of both BID proponents and those with concerns or opposed to a BID. The proposed BID ordinance is scheduled to have its first reading during the City Council meeting that begins at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 13. City Council would then hold a public hearing and could take action as part of the meeting that begins at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 24. The meetings on June 13 and June 24 will take place in the Council Chamber in City Hall (301 King St.).

If City Council adopts the BID ordinance, the district would be established as of January 1, 2018, and an initial board of directors would be formed to hold elections for a permanent board that would develop a work plan and budget. No add-on tax could be established by City Council until the May 2018 budget adoption, with the first BID tax payment due in June 2018. The BID ordinance would have an initial sunset of December 31, 2022.

For details about the Old Town BID proposal, including the proposed ordinance for adoption by City Council, visit www.oldtownbid.com.

At this point in time, the creation of the BID could be a done deal late by June, as Council works feverishly to complete its work before beginning a two-month recess, during which time the hapless citizen will try to figure out what the rush was all about and why their voices are not being heard as they should. (More on being heard later in this newsletter.)

We appreciate that in this heated atmosphere Stephanie Landrum and David Remington will join us to discuss the BID. We have complained loudly and vociferously that residents have not been consulted about this very important project. Their willingness to address Old Town Civic about it is very much appreciated. We trust we will have a lively, but respectful discourse.

By way of background, Stephanie is President & CEO of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP), having been appointed to that position in April, 2015. AEDP is responsible for leading the City's efforts to grow the tax base, diversify its economy, and attract and retain businesses and organizations in Alexandria.

AEDP hosts the Alexandria Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and Capitol Post, two organizations that support the formation and growth of entrepreneurs, the latter with a specific focus on veterans. Stephanie provides strategic and financial oversight to these two hosted organizations.

Stephanie holds a Bachelor of Science degree in City and Regional Planning from the University of Virginia and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business.

David Remington is the Director of Business Attraction & Place at the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP). David joined the organization in 2015 and since then has utilized his private sector real estate experience and expertise to work on projects,

policies, and initiatives relating to business friendliness and real estate investment. David holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida.

It is important to remind everyone that the current BID had its beginning when it dawned on the money people that despite assurances by City staff that waterfront development would pay for itself due to increased taxes paid by businesses locating there, that is not going to happen. Many citizens had questioned that premise in the first place, though, to be sure, no one anticipated that Robinson Terminal North would go into a deep freeze

As noted in our May 2016 Crier, the city warned that “Expectations for maintenance and programming, as well as the quality of architectural design and materials for the public buildings and commissioned works of art will be much higher than the norm for City parks, and will likely not be possible under the current City structure.” (Staff report to City Council accompanying the adoption of the Phase 1 Landscape and Flood Mitigation Design, June 2014).

So, a relatively modest goal of providing for beautifying the Alexandria Waterfront first morphed into a BID that encompassed all of King Street, from the waterfront to Metro.

Then, when it became clear, at least to some, that a BID of that size would not yield the funds that BID proponents believed were needed, they proposed a much larger district. Now the BID district includes all of King Street and adjacent east-west streets, most of Washington Street, and the waterfront itself.

So, at this stage, we have a very large geographical area in which the proponents are seeking to create a special tax district to provide services where the City of Alexandria either does not provide those services or does not provide them satisfactorily.

Stephanie and David will tell us what services the BID can or will provide, how it will mesh with the other layers of city government, and what effects it will have on Old Town residents.

Many residents have complained that the BID process has not adequately reflected the interests of Old Town residents. It was partly in response to those concerns that Stephanie and David agreed to brief us on the BID process and what it means to Old Town.

The discussion on BIDs and governance should be lively indeed.

We look forward to YOU being part of the dialogue, and we welcome Stephanie and David to Old Town Civic on June 14:

OTCA members can communicate their sentiments about the BID to individual members of Council at these email addresses:

allison.silberberg@alexandriava.gov

willie.bailey@alexandriava.gov

john.taylor.chapman@alexandriava.gov

timothy.lovain@alexandriava.gov

del.pepper@alexandriava.gov
paul.smedberg@alexandriava.gov
justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov

**NOMINEES FOR OFFICERS FOR THE 2017-2018 OTCA BOARD
NOMINEES FOR DIRECTORS FOR THE TWO YEAR TERMS 2017-2019.**

As noted in the May Crier, the following slate of officers and directors has been nominated:

Officers (These positions are for one-year terms, but incumbents may be re-elected for an additional one-year term):

President:	Elizabeth McCall	6/2017-6/2018
Vice President:	Steve Milone	6/2017-6/2018
Treasurer:	Tom Schultz	6/2017-6/2018
Recording Secretary:	Katy Cannady	6/2017-6/2018
Corresponding Secretary	Lauren Kramer	6/2017-6/2018

Director Nominees (Two year terms):

Director At Large	Robert Ray
Director, East of Washington St., North of King St.	Philip Matyas
Director, Central	Bob Pringle
Director, East of Washington St., South of Franklin St.	Bob Wood
Director, West of Washington St., North of King St.	vacant
Director, West of Washington St., South of King St.	Paula Glazer

Many thanks and our heartfelt gratitude to the Nominating Committee -- Chairman Skid Masterson and members Bert Ely, Boyd Walker and Christine Bernstein – who did a terrific job of putting together a first-rate group of nominees..

**ANOTHER BIG EVENT COMING UP: ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH,
AGAIN**

ALERT!!! Old Town Civic has just learned that the June 6 BAR meeting on Alfred Street Baptist Church has been postponed. The future date is unknown. The information in the paragraphs below are still relevant at this time, but we will update you as necessary.

The proposed—and unprecedentedly massive – expansion of the Alfred Street Baptist Church here in Old Town is going before the Old & Historic BAR for a third concept review on Wednesday, June 7, in City Council chambers.

Please put this on your calendar, and plan to attend!

The City's Board of Architectural Review (BAR) needs to hear from Old Town residents as

the city seems to be preparing to approve the idea of blanketing an entire city block in a historic residential neighborhood with a monolithic structure that exceeds both City Hall and Courthouse Square in size and without any meaningful open space.

We must state at the outset that we admire the Alfred Street Baptist Church and its important work. We appreciate its success in the continued growth of its membership and the wide scope of its ministries.

However, it is abundantly clear to many that this growth has resulted in a need for expansion that just doesn't fit in Old Town. The planned structure, to be built on the city block bordered by Duke Street, South Alfred Street, Wolfe Street, and South Patrick Street, would take up virtually the entire two acre block, and would have a gross building size of 173,759 square feet on top of three levels of parking. As noted, this edifice would then be larger than either City Hall or Courthouse Square-- and those structures are in a commercially zoned corridor of the City. Alfred Street Baptist Church is adjacent to residences on three sides, including the beautiful and historic houses on South Alfred and Duke Streets.

The BAR is guided by the City's Design Standards specifically for the Old and Historic District, and to which the Church agrees it is governed. These standards are applied to ensure that the "**height, mass and scale**" of a proposed new structure is compatible with the buildings that it would replace as well as the buildings in the immediate vicinity. In particular, the BAR is to ensure the compatibility of the new complex "with adjacent **historic** structures" and these historic structures are to "maintain the primary visual importance." "Singular" buildings are discouraged.

The complex the Church wishes to build will be the only building in Old Town to wholly encompass a full two-acre City block. All other blocks within the Old and Historic Districts have what some call "porosity." That is, there are alleys, building setbacks, and plazas (City Hall again) that provide a break in building faces and hence avoid monolithic largeness. This has been the case since the inception of Old Town when the town was first established. Indeed, nothing defines Old Town more than its street grid and its connectivity between similar-sized buildings and breaks in the façade of the streets.

A building of the mass and scale of Alfred Street Baptist cannot possibly be similar in mass and scale to the townhouses the church plans to raze, to the townhouses that surround the church, and in particular to the small historic townhomes across Duke and South Alfred Streets. The proposed new structure would be, without doubt, an eye-catching structure that would bear no relationship to the Old and Historic District properties near it.

The previous two concept reviews held in November 2016 and February 2017 resulted in the BAR essentially providing some advice to the applicant to increase the "porosity" of the plan after neighbors and others pointed out the inappropriateness of the plan. However, the BAR has failed to really address to the satisfaction of the residents how the mass and scale of the project is now, or ever was, appropriate.

At the previous concept reviews BAR members expressed concern that the complex will lack the visual "porosity" that characterizes virtually every other block in Old Town – meaning

that the typical Old Town block is bisected once or twice by alleys and driveways that break up the structures on the block and bring a feeling of open space.

The BAR expressed particular concern with the mass of the building at the southeast corner, at the intersection of Wolfe and South Alfred. This is the most monolithic part of the structure and is nothing like the townhomes that it would replace or the ones across the street. Indeed, on the south side facing Wolfe and its historic houses, the proposed building will have two truck loading bays with large metal doors and a parking garage entrance with even larger metal doors.

Finding the differences between the previous submission and the current one is a bit like looking for the differences in the Washington Post Sunday magazine "extreme" puzzle. How exactly do these two pictures differ?

The Church has tried to compensate for the lack of porosity by indenting portions of the building and inserting glass panels. However, glass panels do not create porosity; indeed, that is "pretend porosity," and is a wholly inadequate resolution. The fact remains that the church building would be just one single large institutional building covering an entire city block. That would no longer be Old Town.

As noted, everyone living on the 200 block South Alfred Street would now look at the back of a large brick office building instead of at townhomes. To add insult to injury, and in spite of the admonitions by the BAR to the applicant, the excessive mass of the southeast corner remains in the third submission.

As noted, the BAR will meet at 7:30 P.M. on June 7 in the City Council Chamber on the second floor of City Hall. There will be a few items on the agenda before the ASBC project, so this item will probably not be heard before 8:30 P.M. or thereabouts. (If you have Comcast, you can watch the hearing on Channel 69, and hurry to City Hall when this item comes up.)

Please make it a priority to attend and encourage the BAR to enforce the Design Standards that protect the existing character of the historic district according to the BAR's mandate!

Looking beyond the BAR, the Church hopes to bring the project before the Planning Commission and City Council in September 2017. Their scope of review should be much more expansive, also including the potential occupancy of the building (over 5,000 individuals could be accommodated in the structure at one time), its possible uses, traffic congestion, and parking concerns. Write or call members of Council and the Planning Commission to voice your objections. If you would like additional information, we have hand-outs of talking points, a power-point presentation, and a lot more detail concerning the planned development. Please feel free to contact Paula Glaser at pjglaser@gmail.com if you have questions or would like more information. Paula is now our OTCA Board member for that area of Old Town, as Steve will soon be OTCA's Vice President.

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES EXEMPTION TO THE 72-HOUR PARKING RULE

At its May 13 public hearing, City Council approved exemptions to the City's long-standing rule limiting motor vehicles from parking in one place on a City street for more than 72 continuous hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Enforcement of this rule has been inconsistent and has generated a lot of complaints over the years, especially in Old Town and other areas of the City with limited on-street parking availability.

Under changes adopted by Council, a vehicle registered with the City will be able to park in one place for up to two weeks, provided that the owner of the vehicle has first obtained permission from the City to do so. A vehicle may be granted up to four such permissions, or exemptions from the 72-hour rule, per year. Vehicles may not be granted contiguous exemptions from the rule so that, for example, it will not be possible to park a vehicle in one place for four straight weeks.

Vehicles granted an exemption from the 72-hour rule must be parked within one-eighth mile, or 660 yards, from the residence of the owner of the vehicle. That distance is slightly more than the combined length of two football fields. Vehicles granted an exception from the 72-hour rule will be ticketed if they are parked beyond one-eighth of a mile from the owner's residence. Exemptions cannot be transferred between vehicles, so if, for example, someone owns two vehicles, each vehicle will only be able to obtain a maximum of four exemptions per year.

All other parking rules and restrictions will still apply to a vehicle parked in one place under an exemption from the 72-hour rule. Importantly, vehicles parked in one place under an exemption will still be subject to towing and costly storage in a city lot due to street maintenance, in case of an emergency, or if a temporary parking ban has been imposed at that parking place because of tree work or someone has been granted a permit to park a moving truck where the exempted vehicle is parked. No doubt this will happen occasionally, and generate lots of complaints.

Before activating this exception to the 72-hour rule, the City must first develop procedures to administer this exception, specifically to enable residents to safely register for an exception without publicly disclosing their absence from the city. The police also have to develop procedures to avoid ticketing cars that have been registered to park in one place for more than 72-hours.

This change in the 72-hour rule will expire, or sunset, on November 1, 2019. That expiration will force Council at that time to evaluate the City's experience with this parking experiment, including its impact on parking availability in Old Town and other areas of the City where there already is high demand for on-street parking places.

Old Town Civic Association
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