

The Old Town Crier

The Monthly Newsletter of the Old Town Civic Association

Announcing the January Program of the Old Town Civic Association

DATE: Wednesday, January 10, 2007

TIME: 7:00 p.m., Socializing with Neighbors; 7:30 p.m., Program

LOCATION: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street

PROGRAM AGENDA: (1) COMMUNITY POLICE REPORT
(2) OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION
(3) WATERFRONT SHUTTLE
(4) PORT CITY PLAYHOUSE

THE OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT EXPANSION

Lee Webb from the Planning Department will discuss the possible expansion of the Old and Historic District. Currently there is a small gap between the Old and Historic and the Parker Grey Historic Districts that needs to be resolved. In addition, there is an ongoing discussion that the Old and Historic District may be expanded westerly to include Union Station.

WATERFRONT SHUTTLE

Roger Blakley and Amy Vosper of the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Department will present the City's preliminary plans to activate the Waterfront Shuttle that will carry waterborne passengers between National Harbor and Old Town starting in the spring of 2008... National Harbor has awarded Alexandria's Potomac Riverboat Company the contract to provide this transportation. The City now has the responsibility to provide the necessary infrastructure to insure a smooth transition occurs to include an inter-module transportation plan.

PORT CITY PLAYHOUSE

Cal Whitehurst will discuss The Port City Playhouse, which is a community theater group that performs at the Lee Center. They do a four show season and try to offer plays that are thought provoking, entertaining, and not a part of the usual community theater repertoire.

Their second show of the 06-07 season. "Anton in Show Business" will open on Friday, January 19th, and run for three weekends through Saturday February 3rd. It's a funny, satiric comedy with an all-female cast that pokes fun at the pretensions and politics of local theater.

INCORPORATION OF OLD TOWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

At the June 2005 Annual OTCA Meeting, the membership endorsed the Board's proposal that Old Town Civic be incorporated to provide the additional protection that structure would afford

to the association, its officers and directors against legal “mischief”. That process has now been completed with the Commonwealth’s acceptance of the Articles of Incorporation of Old Town Civic Association, Inc., and adoption by the incorporators (Vice President Linda Couture, Past President Michael Hobbs, and President, Townsend Van Fleet) of by-laws to govern the operation of the new corporation in the interim.

For the most part, the interim by-laws are as presented and discussed at the June 2005 meeting. The Board authorized some technical changes from that draft to meet legal requirements, and there have been two more significant changes in substance: (1) we added a provision authorizing indemnification and insurance, which had been omitted from the earlier draft, but which goes to the central purpose of our pursuing incorporation; and (2) we added a provision changing the timetable for the nomination and election process. Hardly anyone was satisfied with the sequence provided in the “Constitution” of Old Town Civic, which specified that nominations from the floor and the election of officers of directors would all take place at the Annual Meeting in June. The new By-Laws provide that the names of the Nominating Committee’s nominees will be published in advance of the May meeting; that nominations from the floor will be accepted at the May meeting (not June); that the slate of all nominees (whether nominated by the committee or from the floor) will then be published in advance of the June meeting; and that the election from among those nominees will then take place at the June meeting; no additional floor nominations would be accepted in June.

While the adoption of the interim By-Laws completes the necessary steps for incorporation, the Board believes also that a more thorough review and reformation of the By-Laws would be desirable to better adapt our procedures to operation under the Virginia Nonstock Corporation Act, and to perfect our structure for operation in today’s circumstances. (Nobody even dreamed of e-mail publication of notices or other information when the OTCA “Constitution” was adopted in 1951, for example.)

The comprehensive review will very likely include further provisions affecting the conduct of our board and membership business, going beyond the “non-substantive” changes that were discussed last year. Our target is for the Board to take a first cut at the revision this month with initial membership review and discussion at the members meeting in February. The February 14 meeting will be a formal meeting of OTCA to conduct this business.

A very large KUDO goes out to Mike Hobbs for taking the lead in developing all of the required documents during this lengthy incorporation process. In addition, Mike Zarlenga also gets our thanks for his assistance.

ARE YOU READY?

John Clisbe, the Emergency Planner for the City’s Health Department gave a terrific presentation at our December meeting. In the interest of those members who were unable to make the meeting, we will reiterate some of his most cogent remarks. Emergencies can happen that put our health at risk. Some are big emergencies, like hurricanes, terrorist actions or wide-spread flu epidemics. Other emergencies can be smaller like a gas leak in your neighborhood. It is

extremely important for everyone in the City to be personally prepared and able to be self-sufficient for three days or more.

In a large emergency community resources, communications, and transportation can be severely impacted. While your public officials are dealing with the most serious crises each of us needs to know what we should do, how we will keep in touch with our friends and family, and how to stay safe. The following is a basic checklist outlining what we must do for ourselves prior to a major disaster:

- Identify one meeting place near home and one meeting place several miles away.
- Agree on who everyone will call to keep messages.
- Identify an out-of-state person you can call.
- Know your neighbors:
 - Who needs help during an emergency?
 - Who can help you during an emergency?
 - What elderly, disabled, and children are home alone?
- Identify the safest place in your home.
- Know how to turn off utilities.
- Know two evacuation routes from your home.
- Make arrangements for pet care.
- Have emergency supplies on hand and organized.
- Test your smoke alarm.

All of these aforementioned tips along with many other recommendations can be found in the City's little yellow handbook entitled "Are You Ready?" These tips, in addition to having a good **neighborhood plan** in effect, will not only ensure your survivability but also the survivability of our immediate community. Those of you who would like to be a member of OTCA's Emergency Planning Committee please contact me at vvanfleet@oldtowncivic.org.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In order to provide outreach and recruitment of new members into OTCA, Board Members Linda Couture and Susan Brita have developed a newcomer's packet that will be personally presented to every new citizen moving into the Old Town area. A cover letter outlining the historic significance of Alexandria, careful preservation of its historic buildings, and ways the OTCA oversees its charter, along with a number of useful enclosures, will hopefully assist in our recruitment of new members.

OTCA's WATERFRONT COMMITTEE

Recently OTCA began recruiting within its membership for individuals concerned about the City's waterfront planning sessions that will begin in February. It is important that we are ready for the City's planning efforts. We must decide what we want to see on the waterfront and what we don't want to see. Left to their own devices the over-development prone City Council might attempt to take us down the wrong path. That is why it is critically important that we do our homework before the process begins. This new committee is being chaired by your Vice President Linda Couture.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

During the last month your Board of Directors has been busy in a number of areas. We forwarded a letter to the Mayor and Council regarding our appeal of the BAR's decision to allow non historic preservation renovations to Saint Paul's Church. The appeal will be heard by Council on the 20th of January.

OTCA member Bert Ely has continued to work feverishly on the relocation of the George Mason Post Office at Prince and South Washington Streets. OTCA will send a letter to Congressman Moran to assist the City in this matter. We do not want this downtown post office relocated to the West End. We developed a "newcomers package" for distribution to all new Old Town residents.

Your President attended another Hunting Terrace Stakeholders meeting regarding Mr. Ceechi's offer to build three 150-foot buildings in exchange for 116 affordable condos erected in three 50-foot buildings on the same site. Other alternatives were discussed to include tying the redevelopment of Hunting Towers into the equation.

With our continued pressure on the City to redevelop Windmill Hill Park, the City intends to start their analysis of the yacht basin's bulkhead in January.

We prepared the initial By-Laws so that the Association can start operating as a corporation on the 1st of January 2007.

OLD TOWN THEATER

"The Old Town Theater along with Masters Engineers attended a meeting with Code Enforcement, City of Alexandria Thursday the 14th of December in an attempt to re-open the theater. Masters Engineers produced for the City a comprehensive report to include plans and drawings for them to evaluate. The City's reports are due no later than the 28th of December. The findings of Masters Engineers are very positive, therefore, we are predicting a late January opening." Roger Fons, Owner.

NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 14, 2007

Townsend A. "Van" Van Fleet
President

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