

The Old Town Crier

The Monthly Newsletter of the Old Town Civic Association, Inc.

Announcing the February Program of the Old Town Civic Association

DATE: Wednesday, February 14, 2007 (Happy Valentines Day)
TIME: 7:00 p.m., Socializing with Neighbors; 7:30 p.m., Program
LOCATION: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street

PROGRAM AGENDA:

- (1) PLANNING THE WATERFRONT: COUNCILMAN LUDWIG GAINES**
- (2) POLICE REPORT: LT. JAMIE BARTLETT**
- (3) OTCA BY LAWS: MIKE HOBBS**
- (4) WATERFRONT SURVEY: LINDA COUTURE**

FUN SIDE OF THE POTOMAC FORUM

On the 26th of February, the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association sponsored a Waterfront Planning forum at the Sheraton Hotel. Councilman Ludwig Gaines gave a superb presentation in which he highlighted the five critical elements necessary for a successful waterfront plan. He has agreed to make this same presentation at the Old Town Civic Association membership meeting on the 14th of February.

TRASH TALK CONTINUED

I have been very annoyed by the condition of our historic Old Town with litter strewn all over the place particularly at the intersection of Washington and King Street where the bus stops seem to draw everything and anything. Spoke to Alton Weaver, Solid Waste Division Chief who is equally frustrated and doing the best he and his staff can do considering understaffing. Also, I'd been in contact with the former mayor's office about this persistent litter problem.

It seems that people in various neighborhoods don't seem diligent about getting litter around their properties picked up on a regular basis. However, the unsolicited newspapers that are thrown here and there seem to be a constant problem. What can be done about that and the newsstand areas at various corners? With so many visitors coming to our city, we must present a more pristine appearance with pride about who we are and what we represent.

Take a look at the much visited harbor in front of the Torpedo factory. It is deplorable as a result of the tide that continually washes in debris. Most of the time it looks

disgusting! Something serious has to be done about that also. Frankly, I'm tired of taking my walks from Porto Vecchio into town and always having to pick up someone else's discards. It is more frustrating than you can imagine.

I think, given the condition of our city, though in the last 6 months things seemed to have improved, we need to have an Alexandria Pride campaign or something of the sort. Perhaps we can rev-up other citizens in the area to take part in helping the City keep things cleaned up. It wouldn't be a great task if there were broad interest and participation. Thanks to your organization for bringing up an issue that is of great concern to me.

Fran Weisberg
Porto Vecchio Condominium

APPEAL TO CITY COUNCIL ON ST. PAUL'S CONSTRUCTION

On Saturday, January 20, the City Council heard an appeal to the Board of Architectural Review's approval of plans to build an addition to St. Paul's Church. A number of members of the Old Town Civic Association were among the appellants.

At issue was the construction of an addition to the north facade of the church. The church believed the addition necessary to make use of an open court yard surrounded by the Church, Norton Hall and another structure at the front of the Church. Those who opposed the construction did so on a number of grounds, among them the contention that irrevocable damage would be done to the Church's north wall, that the structure would be visible from the public right of way and that the wall would then be at risk for later demolition absent BAR approval.

Part of the opposition to the construction was based upon the unique provenance of the Church. It was designed by Benjamin Latrobe, architect of the US Capitol and is the first church built in America in the Gothic Revival style. The appeal was supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Virginia Association for the Preservation of Antiquities, Latrobe Chapter of the Society of Architects, a private preservation architect and citizens who testified on behalf of the appeal. The church's position was represented by attorney Duncan Blair and the church's architect.

Despite the church's pedigree and the considerable weight of the National Trust's opinion, the City Council voted unanimously to uphold the BAR's decision to permit construction and regrettably, a local treasure will lose some of its luster. The National Trust's letter is posted on our web site for those of you who are interested in more detail.

The civic association has formed a task force to address the problem of the continued loss of Old Town's historic fabric. We invite those who are interested in promoting historic preservation to contact makeadifference@comcast.net with any questions or comments and to join in the effort

HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE

Alexandria will hold a Historic Preservation Conference on May 4th and 5th. The agenda and venues will be announced as the conference draws nearer. More details will be provided as they become available. Stay tuned!!!!

JONES POINT PARK UPDATE

Yvonne Weight, OTCA's representative to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Task Force reported that Aimee Vosper of the City's Dept of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities has indicated that a decision was originally to be made last month (January). However, it now appears the decision will not be made until the end of this month (February) or even March. David Vela, the GW Parkway Superintendent (took Audrey Calhoun's place) said they received 350 comments and so were considering all those in the decision. I'm hoping many of those comments were from opponents of the two regulation size soccer fields north of the bridge! Remember that the National Park Service decision in the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was for one small soccer field south of the bridge – discounting the City's preferred alternative of two regulation size soccer fields north of the bridge.

WATERFRONT SURVEY

As you are well aware, Old Town Civic's Waterfront Survey has been sent out via "snail mail" and "e-mail" with a return date of 9 February. Our Chairperson for the Waterfront Committee, Linda Couture, along with the help of several other members has put together a very comprehensive survey that should give us a good feel or what as a group we desire to see on the waterfront and what we don't want to see. Once, we have analyzed the results of the survey, we will then be able to use that data when we participate in the Waterfront Planning sessions with the City. To date, the City has not decided on which consultants they will use to shepherd the waterfront planning through the City's review process.

POST OFFICE REPLACEMENT

The George Mason Post Office on the corner of Prince and South Washington will close in several months. The final two replacement sites that are still under consideration are located at 277 South Washington Street (Atrium Building) and 200 North Washington Street. It appears that all other sites including several in the west-end were eliminated by the Postal Service as being far outside of the area preferred by the community. A big KUDO to Bert Ely for leading the charge on this issue. In addition, Mayor Euille also gets our thanks for keeping the heat on the USPS.

REVISION AND REFORM OF THE BYLAWS

As reported last month, Old Town Civic Association has now been organized as a Virginia non-stock corporation and is operating under interim bylaws adopted by its incorporators. The interim bylaws are substantially in the form presented and discussed

at the June 2005 Annual Meeting; the most significant change was to modify the timetable for nominations and elections to provide that all nominations would be published in the notice of the Annual Meeting, and that no additional nominations would be made at that meeting.

In addition to these changes—the minimum necessary for incorporation—the Board believes that a thorough review and reformation of the bylaws is in order, to bring our governing document into line with current best practices, to conform it to the requirements of the Virginia Non-stock Corporation Act, and especially, to clarify uncertainties and ambiguities that have developed over time. (OTCA’s “Constitution” was first adopted more than fifty years ago, and there has apparently never been a comprehensive review of that document since.)

The Board has reviewed new draft bylaws which are now ready for Board and Membership discussion and action. A summary of the proposed new bylaws is enclosed. The full text of both the present, “interim” bylaws and the proposed new bylaws can be found at our website (www.oldtowncivic.org), Electronic or hard copies are available on request or by attending or by attending the February 14 meeting. Member questions, comments or concerns will be welcome at that meeting or otherwise, in advance of the Board’s action on a final revision at its February 22 meeting. The proposed new bylaws will be on the agenda for final action by the Members at your March 14, 2007 meeting.

A SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED NEW BYLAWS FOR OTCA

Article I: Purposes. States the purpose of the Association as in the interim bylaws (“preservation of the historical and residential character, architecture, and traditions” of Old Town), but clarifies that the permissible activities in pursuit of those objectives are not limited to those listed.

Article II: Members; Memberships; Dues. Membership is open to adult citizens or legal residents who subscribe to the purposes of the Association; each Member has one vote. The membership dues schedule is fixed each year by the Board; it does not require a membership vote.

Membership may be terminated by resignation; or by lapsing, if the Member’s dues remain unpaid after December 1st of each year. A membership may be terminated by a two-thirds vote of the Board and a two-thirds vote of the Members at a special meeting called for the purpose.

Article III: Members’ Meetings. The Annual Meeting is held in June of each year; notice is provided not less than 10 nor more than 60 days before the meeting date. Regular meetings are held according to a schedule set by the Board and published to the Members at the beginning of the year (rather than specified in the bylaws, as at present); additional notice is not required for such meetings unless the Board is aware of any business that will require a vote of the Members. Special meetings may be called by the President, a majority of the Board, or a petition of 25 Members; business at special meetings is

limited to the matters stated in the call and specified in the notice of the meeting. Fifty Members present in person constitutes a quorum. Members may vote at meetings only in person; proxies are not permitted.

Members entitled to vote are those on the Association's roll as of a Record Date fixed by the Board not more than 35 days in advance of each meeting. Action by written consent of the Members is permitted only if determined by the Board to be necessary and if the proposed action receives the vote of a majority of all Members.

Article IV: Board of Directors; Directors. As at present, the Board consists of five Directors from designated areas and an At-Large Director, elected to two-year terms; five Officers elected to one-year terms; and the Immediate Past President. The At-Large Director may reside anywhere in the City of Alexandria, but preferably within the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Directors serve without compensation.

The Board meets not less than four times each year, in a schedule of regular meetings determined by the Board, or at special meetings called by the President or on the request of any four directors. Five of the eleven voting members of the Board constitute a quorum.

In the event of a vacancy, the President appoints a member to serve until the next Annual Meeting. If such service does not complete the unexpired term of the previous Director (since Directors are elected to two-year terms), the Members elect a Director to serve from that Annual Meeting until the completion of the unexpired term.

The Board may establish committees of the Board, prescribe their duties, and delegate to them the power to exercise the authority of the Board, to the extent permitted by law; the provisions of the bylaws governing the conduct of the Board's business apply as well to any such committees. Members of the committees are appointed by the President with the approval of the Board. The President may also appoint informal advisory boards or task forces as deemed necessary, but they are not authorized to exercise any authority of the Board.

Article V: Officers. The Members elect the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary, and Recording Secretary. The Immediate Past President is a member of the Board, but does not vote and is not considered a Board member in determining whether a quorum is present or whether a requisite number of votes has been obtained. The duties of the officers are those common to similar officers in similar organizations, essentially as described in the present bylaws. The Officers serve without compensation.

An Officer may resign, or may be removed for cause by the vote of 80% of the Members present and entitled to vote.

Article VI: Nominations. The President appoints a five-member Nominating Committee with the approval of the Board, composed as at present (at least one past President, and at

least one member from each of four areas: North of King, King to Franklin, and South of Franklin, east of Washington St.; and west of Washington St.). The Committee is announced at the February (not March) Members Meeting. The Committee delivers its report to the Corresponding Secretary by April 15th, and the identity of its slate is published in the notice for the May meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the May meeting, if supported by a petition of five Members and accompanied by the written acceptance of each such additional nominee. The notice of the Annual (June) Meeting includes notice of all persons nominated either by the Nominating Committee or from the floor at the May meeting, and the election at the Annual Meeting is among those candidates; no additional nominations are accepted at the Annual Meeting.

Article VII: Electronic Notices & Voting. Notices may be given via e-mail or other electronic means to Members who provide an electronic address for the receipt of notices or other information from the Association. The Board may vote via electronic means if each member has the ability to communicate his or her vote to the remainder of the Board.

Article VIII: Seal; Article XI: Offices. New articles provide for a seal of the Association in the form adopted by the Board, and that the principal office of the Association shall be located in the City of Alexandria.

Article IX: Finances; Article XII: Fiscal Year. Revised language is used to govern the execution of negotiable instruments, deposits, disbursements, and the Association's fiscal year, substantially as in the present bylaws. All expenditures require the advance approval of the Board, either by adoption of a budget or upon specific request.

Article X: Indemnification. Improved language is employed to govern indemnification of directors or officers, largely as in the present bylaws, with the proviso that the Association shall not indemnify any person for any willful misconduct or knowing violation of the criminal law.

Article XIII: Amendments. An amendment affecting the classes, rights, privileges or qualifications of Members or the number, classes or terms of Officers or Directors requires a 2/3rd vote of the Board and also a majority vote of the Members, upon proper notice, for adoption. The Board may adopt amendments on other matters by a majority vote. The Members may amend the bylaws in any respect, without adoption of the amendment by the Board, if 20% of the Members (not 20 Members, as at present) petition for the amendment and it is approved by a 2/3rd vote of the Members present; the notice for the meeting includes the wording of the amendment, the Board's recommendation thereon, and a supporting statement from its proponents.

Article XIV: Civic Participation. Members are urged to exercise their right to vote, but the Association may not endorse or recommend any candidate for political office.

Article XV: Parliamentary Authority. Where not in conflict with the Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, or rules adopted by the Board, Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, governs all proceedings. If the Board has adopted any rules conflicting with Robert's Rules, such rules are available for review at the meeting.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Together with others in the historic preservation community we presented our appeal to Council regarding the BAR's approval of drilling 22 holes into this historic Latrobe Gothic Revival Church built in 1817. OTCA suggested other ways to accomplish the same covering of the alleyway between the Church and Norton Hall. The Council supported the BAR 7-0.

Waterfront Survey was put together by OTCA's Waterfront Committee and forwarded to the membership on the 30th of January. Date due back is the 9th of February. Attend a Fun Side of the Potomac briefing by ACVA regarding the necessary planning for the waterfront. Councilman Ludwig Gaines gave a superb presentation.

OTCA's and the City's pressure on the USPS to relocate the George Mason Post Office has finally paid off. The two final locations for consideration are very close to the current George Mason Post Office on Prince and South Washington Street.

Attended along with other OTCA Board Members, a boat tour of National Harbor sponsored by the Potomac Riverboat Company. This extremely large facility will open in the spring of 2008. We need to have our ducks in a row before that or we will be overcome by tourists. Also attended a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce regarding getting ready for National Harbor's grand opening. Brought up the parking problems that will be encountered as everyone won't be taking the boats across the river.

Townsend A. "Van" Van Fleet, OTCA President