

# The Old Town Crier

The Monthly Newsletter of Te Old Town Civic Association

**Announcing the November Meeting of the Old Town Civic Association**

**DATE:** Wednesday, November 8, 2006

**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) WATERFRONT PRESENTATION  
(3) PEDESTRIAN PLAZA SURVEY RESULTS

## **THE WATERFRONT**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, the Council and the Planning Commission, in a joint work session decided that the Alexandria waterfront will be one of its top planning priorities early next year. Specifically, planning for the waterfront should 'kick off' sometime in February. OTCA members need to be prepared to address this issue so that we are able to state what we want and what we don't want to see on our waterfront. Therefore, the City's Acting Planning Directorate, Rich Josephson, will brief us regarding the waterfront at our membership meeting on November 8<sup>th</sup>. This presentation should highlight the current status of all the properties in question along the waterfront from Marina Towers to Jones Point Park.

## **ON THE WATERFRONT AT AGENDA ALEXANDRIA**

Ann Breen the Co-Director of The Waterfront Center, which promotes the most beneficial and diverse uses of urban waterfront resources in the overall, long-range public interest, will present a wide range of waterfront planning approaches that other cities have used, followed by questions from the audience. Agenda Alexandria will sponsor this presentation at the Holiday Inn at 2460 Eisenhower Avenue on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November. The reception starts at 6:30 pm, dinner is served at 6:45pm and the program starts at 7:15pm. For reservations (deadline 17<sup>th</sup> November) contact Sherry Brown at 703-549-4696 or at [agendaalexandria@aol.com](mailto:agendaalexandria@aol.com).

## **WATERFRONT WALK**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, a number of your Board of Directors walked Alexandria's historic riverfront with Pam Cressey of the Office of Historic Alexandria as our guide. The tour started at the corner of Oronoco and Union Streets where "West Point" was the first important European settlement along the waterfront and predates the city of Alexandria,

The warehouse that was constructed there in 1732 was the first permanent substantial structure established on the waterfront and led to the founding of the town. The walk proceeded along Union Street and ended at Duke Street or Point Lumley, where in 1752, Thomas Fleming built the first ship constructed in Alexandria. If you ever have the opportunity to walk this tour with Pam, it will certainly be worth it, as you will be exposed to our history on the waterfront. In the meantime, a copy of her waterfront slides will be available to all attending the 8 November membership meeting.

### **THE DEMISE OF THE PAPERBOXES**

For several years I have been working with Rich Baier, the Director of the Transportation and Environmental Sciences Department, to get rid of the vast number of unsightly paper boxes that adorn King Street. At one count there were over 100 paper boxes on King Street from the Strand to Washington Street. A large number of them contained no papers, were of the wrong color scheme, were damaged or just flat looked unsightly. It took quite a while to start picking them up and subsequently destroying them as there were a number of legal issues involved. Rich Baier and crew picked up over 40 paper boxes late last year and about 50 additional ones just in the past few weeks. It certainly makes a great difference. Thanks Rich!!!

### **WILKES STREET TUNNEL**

Five members of your Board of Directors met with the City Staff on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October to discuss the Wilkes Street Tunnel. The City Engineer, Emily Baker, orchestrated this meeting which proved very beneficial. A number of issues regarding the renovation of the tunnel were discussed. OTCA will be actively involved during the renovations which will start early next year after a contract to do the work is awarded and be completed by the summer. Some of the issues discussed at the meeting were: the use of granite verses slate curbing, the use of historic mortar composition, the use of asphalt sand wash, the visibility of the steel ribs and getting the tunnel registered on the National Register.

### **"LOST ALEXANDRIA" FOUND IN OLD TOWN**

Did you know that one of the most prominent historic buildings in Princeton NJ was moved there from Alexandria, VA or that Columbus Street between Queen and Princess was once the site of a Court House building designed by Robert Mills, the architect of the Washington Monument, Treasury Building and the Patent Office Building?

These and many other secrets of Old Town's past are revealed in the new photographic exhibit in the lobby of the Washington Square office buildings in the 600 block of N. Washington Street. The enlarged, high resolution photos capture an important part of our city's past in great detail. Together with the essays that accompany the photos, the exhibit shows us a far grander Alexandria than the one that now exists and teaches us why historic preservation is important.

Today, Alexandria's rich architectural history is still threatened, as evidenced by this past January's demolition of several historic buildings in the 1600 block of King Street. Fortunately, modern-day Alexandrians are committed to preserving our rich architectural history and, through the auspices of the Old Town Civic Association, have formed a task force to address the threats that face us today. Your help is needed. We are reaching out to everyone in this effort. Taking part requires no particular skill set, just an interest in the preservation of Old Town. To get involved, contact John Johansen at [makeadifference@comcast.net](mailto:makeadifference@comcast.net) or 703-836-5651.

### **THE CITY'S 2007 LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, the City Council received the Legislative Package for the 2007 General Assembly Session. A public hearing of the proposals will be held on the 18th of November. Adoption of the package is currently scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> of November. The City has submitted a Charter Change regarding the preservation of structures in Historic Districts. Currently the Charter gives the right to a property owner under certain circumstances to move or demolish a structure if he has:

1. applied to the BAR to do so, and to City Council on appeal, and been denied;
2. made a good faith offer to sell the structure for its fair market value to a party that will preserve the structure; and
3. received no purchase offers during the period of time set out in the Charter as the minimum time to receive offers from buyers (one year for any property with an offering price of \$90,000 or more).

If a buyer makes a good faith offer to buy and preserve the building or structure, but the owner rejects the offer, the owner will not be entitled to demolish the building or structure.

The City recommend that the Charter be amended to make clear that the fair market value must be based on the assumption that the historic structure will not be moved or demolished—not the value of the property if the structure is demolished and replaced with something else. The OTCA Board of Directors intends to send a letter to all five of our state legislators asking for their assistance in amending the Charter.

### **GADSBYS GETS A FACELIFT**

Recently, the Old Town Civic Association sent a letter to the Mayor and City Manager regarding the disrepair of the interior of Gadsbys Tavern. The City who contacts out the culinary services owns this historic site. The City took immediate action and had the entire interior repainted. The three dining rooms now look spectacular. No longer are their cracks in the ceiling and paint over wallpaper in the main dining room. In addition, the stairways leading to the bathrooms in the basement and to the second floor also have been repainted. The City can now be proud to showcase this historic facility. In addition the food is terrific. Thanks Alexandria City Government for your rapid response and a

job well done. My great, great, great, great, great grandfather George Mason IV, who ate many a meal at Gadsbys, would be proud of you.

#### **WHERE WE HAVE BEEN**

During the past month your Board of Directors has been quite busy on a number of projects. A number of us walked the waterfront with Pam Cressey and listened to her historic pitch. Several of us who are on the Hunting Terrace Task Force attended a meeting on Affordable Housing. The Board has taken the position that no density bonuses (including heights) should be awarded in the Old and Historic District and that is our message to the Task Force and the City Government. Five Board Members attended a meeting with the City on the Wilkes Street Tunnel. The Pedestrian Plaza Surveys were sent out and received by the 20<sup>th</sup> and were analyzed. Appeared before the BAR to voice our displeasure with putting visible HVAC units in the historic area. We sent a letter to our Members of Congress indorsing the National Park Service's Environmental Assessment of Jones Point Park. Had one member attend the Small Business Task Force meeting who's aim it is to make starting a small business in Alexandria much easier. We were able to assign three OTCA members to the Potomac Waterfront Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee.

*Townsend A. "Van" Van Fleet  
President*

**THE NEXT OTCA MEETING WILL BE ON THE 13TH OF DECEMBER**

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