



# *The Old Town Crier*

**The Monthly Newsletter of the Old Town Civic Association, Inc.  
October Program and Notice of the Meeting**

**DATE:** Wednesday, October 14, 2009  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m., Socializing with Neighbors; 7:30 p.m., Program  
**LOCATION:** The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street

## *PROGRAM AGENDA*

- 1) ANNOUNCEMENTS
- 2) POLICE REPORT
- 3) CONNECTING THE WATERFRONT THROUGH ART
- 4) TORPEDO FACTORY
  1. *Comments from invited stakeholders*
  2. *Question and answer session*

---

## **Historic and Cultural Crossroad**

Although the battle scars have a way of blinding us, it is time to remind ourselves just how magnificent it is to have the history of our Town re-lived at every step we take. Walking around, we get to see many buildings and Christ Church as George Washington saw them. We see the Lee Boyhood Home and other delightful prisms from the times of yore, continuously reminding us of glories past.

Here we have historic charm, or is it historic ambiance so cherished, that beckons tourist from all over the world. Why it is so, people may ask. The reason is that it so authentically ties us to the past, and it gives life to a young nation's history and cultural heritage. If one continues down King Street to where it meets the Potomac River, suddenly there is a possibility to celebrate a crossroads of where history meets culture, with the Torpedo Factory serving as a cultural anchor. On October 14<sup>th</sup>, you will see a magnificent presentation prepared by the Alexandria Commission for the Arts about a

concept that explores the use of public art on Alexandria's waterfront. Imagine how nice it would be to have a continuous walkway connected by the interplay of artistic features advising you of the path to take.

“Our concept for public art on the waterfront is based on the belief that art has the potential to be a strong unifying element on the waterfront. Art can create a sense of place and community. It can express universal emotions. It can celebrate history. It can delight and it can please”.

In the center of it all is the Torpedo Factory, where the living art, as expressed by the interaction between the artists and tourists takes place. How could anyone pass the Torpedo Factory by without being affected, and yet it has been subject of much misunderstanding. The artist community will be there to clarify and explain the functionality and significance of the Torpedo Factory and why it is an iconic feature.

## **IN RESPONSE TO**

Several articles, beginning with the article in the Alexandria Gazette Packet "suggesting" that the Torpedo Factory needs changing made me realize what that special place means to Alexandria, its residents and its tourists. It is no accident that certain prominent proponents of cultural tourism point to the Torpedo Factory as a sterling example.

Art is really difficult to define in a manner that gives a precise meaning, but its effects are immeasurable. Unlike a piece of lumber, the brain is an ever evolving entity that is capable of wonderful things if we nourish it. As everyone knows, the brain gets fairly dormant when watching television, but it becomes very active from interacting with art, and this effect is magnified in the young.

Some years ago, my teenage niece was visiting us, and I took her to the Torpedo Factory. While there, she stopped in a gallery with paintings that were difficult for me to make out, but after standing there for some time a lady started up a conversation with my niece. They talked about what inspired the painting, and how it was done, in essence the creative process. This procedure repeated itself in a pottery studio, a wood carving studio, another gallery, and so on forth for over 4 hours. As you have all figured out by now, the people my niece was talking to throughout that day were in fact the artist themselves, the very people who had been and were in the process of creating art right there.

I was rather fascinated to watch how a young girl was literally experiencing doors inside her brain opening up and shedding light to a whole new facet of consciousness. I know

this because all along, I was standing there experiencing it myself. This is the kind of cultural experience money cannot buy and we have it right down the street.

Anything can be made better through insightful and deliberate thought, but may I suggest that the staleness referred to by members of the Sustainability Implementation Committee, is not from the factory, but rather, the self accentuated thinking process created by a committee operating in the dark without the benefit of the sunshine of openness. There are some big underlying issues hidden here, but for the present, suffice it to say that judging cultural contributions in terms of direct sales receipts of art works during the largest economic downturn since the depression does not add to the credibility of the committee. By the same token, judging the effect of tourism on the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. by the sales receipts at the gift shop is a bit de-minimus. It is not what Old Town is about and it is not what Alexandria is about. So stay tuned, because this is about the future of the crossroads of history and culture at the crossroads of Old Town and the Waterfront

## **ENCHANTED EVENING ON THE POTOMAC**

The OTCA's annual Membership Party took place aboard the Cherry Blossom on September 20, and it turned out to be the perfect End of Summer party. The lovely weather provided a perfect setting to complement the leisurely cruise on the authentic paddle cruiser up the Potomac River to Haines Point. On the way, guests were treated to glorious sunset over the Masonic Temple as if to bid them farewell to the last day of summer.

Many thanks for **Vice Mayor Kerry Donley, Councilmember Frank Fannon, Councilmember Del Pepper, Councilmember Paul Smedberg, and City Manager Jim Hartmann** for joining us.

We wish to thank **Mother Nature** for the delightful weather, **Charlotte Hall** of the **Potomac River Boat Company** for the wonderful setting, and **Bryan Watson** of **Carriage House Catering (Bugsy's)** for the really great food. Without their help and support, this event would not have been possible. We also wish to thank the **T.C. Williams Jazz Band** for the magnificent music they played the entire evening.

Many thanks are due the **OTCA Board Members** for their efforts to ensure a successful party by donating their labor and time. We are also extremely grateful for the cadre of volunteers who stepped in. A special thanks to **Charlie Huettner** for hosting the raffles, and to **Teresa Miller** for the flowers and the many other things she did to help. More special thanks to **Richard Miller, Boyd Walker, Carolyn Roehrenbeck, Robert Ray** and **Michael and Lynn Sauls** for their help setting up and arranging the flowers; and to

**Katy Cannady** and **Margaret Hodges** for assisting at the sign in table and **Gail McCurry** for with serving the cake.

Many thanks to our Old Town neighbors and merchants who contributed door prizes to add to the festivities. These are great shops, unique to Alexandria, good neighbors and good friends, and we thank them for their support. **The Christmas Attic, Eldercrafters, The Enchanted Florist, David Martin's Gold Works, Gossypia, King's Jewelry,** the **Potomac Riverboat Company,** the **Winterthur Shop,** and from Old Town's own two great theaters: **MetroStage** and **Little Theatre of Alexandria.** In addition, the following restaurants contributed complimentary meals, **Bugsy's, Hank's Oyster Bar, Pat Troy's Ireland's Own, Royal Restaurant, Trattoria Da Franco's,** the **Warehouse Bar and Grill** and **Asian Bistro.** Please thank all of these fine businesses with your sustained patronage.

## **NEW OTCA WEB PAGE TO HELP FIGHT CRIME**

The spate of burglaries in Old Town Alexandria has been a serious problem .For that reason, OTCA has with the help of the Police Department opened a Fight Crime web page on its web-site that talks about what we can do to help protect all of us by providing specific links to crime prevention advice.

[http://www.oldtowncivic.org/Pages/fight\\_crime.htm](http://www.oldtowncivic.org/Pages/fight_crime.htm)

In order to prevent this criminal behavior as well as catch the thief or thieves, it is imperative that ALL Old Town Residents become the eyes and ears and report any and all activity that appears out of the norm. These reports made to the police should be immediate and little concern given to their importance. Clues can be added up to become answers.

To keep this from happening to you and others, everyone should install and leave on lights outside their homes—front and back. Criminals like to work in the dark. It is especially important that you tell your neighbors when you are going to be away and ask them to take in all fliers, newspapers, door hangers, telephone books, etc. Please do this even if the neighbor forgets to ask you.

## **PARKING IN OLD TOWN**

Parking in Old Town has been and always will be a serious constraint unless we start looking at it in a meticulous and holistic manner. However, this is more than just finding

parking; it's about balance as you can see in the Old Town Small Area Plan adopted by the City.

**POLICIES FOR OLD TOWN**

Old Town is unique in that it maintains a very fine residential area in close proximity to the commercial establishments on King and Washington Streets. While both the residential and the commercial areas are currently strong, there is a fragile balance which must be preserved if both are to remain strong and if the ambience of Old Town is to be preserved. Further, the commercial areas contain a mix of activities that is unique within the metropolitan area, and that mix needs to be protected if the character of Old Town is to be preserved.

Policies without the proper tools for their execution are rather weak, and the way that **Valet Parking** is being implemented concerned OTCA. For this reason we submitted a letter to Faroll Hamer director of Planning and Zoning Department requesting a more comprehensive rather than piecemeal approach to how the City is giving away public space.

Dear Faroll Hamer

The Old Town Civic Association (OTCA) requests that you not approve further valet programs in the Old and Historic District until such time that a comprehensive parking program has been adopted by the City.

This request is grounded in the small area plan adopted in 1993 including the restaurant policy change to that document. The "restaurant policy" is actually an amendment to the old Town Small Areal Plan that recognized the need to ensure not only diversity, but more importantly, the balance between the residential and business communities. Although encompassing fast food business, the amendment to the small area plan clearly dealt with the parking problems.

The same issue of balance also applies to the retail on King Street and the consequences of taking public right of way and giving it to the restaurants, as this is surely one of many requests to come. While we are fully cognizant that the zoning perspective does not differentiate retail from restaurant, the residents and the restaurant policy do, and do so precisely, because it an integral element in the precarious balance in Old Town.

OTCA obviously shares in the desire for successful restaurants, but feels this application will create a mad dash to the door for the first come first serve, unless, a comprehensive plan is brought about first. OTCA is concerned about the ad-hoc chaotic manner in which we are proceeding to deal with parking, because it will, ultimately affect the balance between all stakeholders unless it is implemented with enlightened forethought for all the effected parties.

Valet parking can be a means by which cars are effectively moved into a location with the less adverse effects. However in doing it is important to take into account that it does so by taking away from the public space on King Street, by giving it to the first come first serve entity, much to the disadvantage of the not so first come and those relying on street parking. Furthermore, it does require that the cars actually be parked in a garage instead of just moving them to residential streets as has been the case in the past.

The City has talked about implementing a parking sharing arrangement for years without result, and we suggest that it is sorely needed in order to ensure a reasonable balance between the residents, restaurants, retail and commercial, before any other action is taken.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

To those who have renewed their membership, we are very grateful. You make this organization possible. If you haven't yet gotten around to it, we urge you to fill in the form on the next page, because we just cannot afford the cost of mailing it to non renewals. We have been urged to mail it out to more people, but OTCA just does not have the funds to cover those costs. So please renew if you wish to continue receiving the CRIER.

### Next Meeting will be November 11.

Rich Baier will give a presentation on possibility of increased flooding in Old Town as a result of infrastructure decay and the Planning Department will give an update on the Waterfront plan.

*Poul Hertel*

## OTCA Officers and Directors for 2009-2010

<i>President</i>	Poul Hertel	<a href="mailto:phertel@oldtowncivic.org">phertel@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>Vice-President</i>	Doug Thurman	<a href="mailto:dthurman@oldtowncivic.org">dthurman@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>Corresponding Secretary</i>	Linda Couture	<a href="mailto:lcouture@oldtowncivic.org">lcouture@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>Treasurer</i>	Bert Ely	<a href="mailto:bely@oldtowncivic.org">bely@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>Recording Secretary</i>	Tim Elliott	<a href="mailto:telliott@oldtowncivic.org">telliott@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>At Large</i>	John Gosling	<a href="mailto:jgosling@oldtowncivic.org">jgosling@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>North of King- East Of Washington Street</i>	John Kester	<a href="mailto:jkessler@oldtowncivic.org">jkessler@oldtowncivic.org</a>

<i>North of King- West Of Washington Street</i>	Christa Lyons	<a href="mailto:clyons@oldtowncivic.org">clyons@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>South of King-West of Washington Street</i>	Chip Carlin	<a href="mailto:ccarlin@oldtowncivic.org">ccarlin@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>Central - East of Washington, North of Franklin, South of King</i>	Ignacio Pessoa	<a href="mailto:ignaciopessoa@oldtowncivic.org">ignaciopessoa@oldtowncivic.org</a>
<i>South of Franklin</i>	R. Allan McCurry	<a href="mailto:ramccurry@oldtown.org">ramccurry@oldtown.org</a>
<i>Immediate Past President</i>	Michael Hobbs	<a href="mailto:mhobbs@oldtowncivic.org">mhobbs@oldtowncivic.org</a>

# OLD TOWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

## 2009/2010 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL FORM

**To Join or Renew:** Please complete the information below. For membership, the dues period begins each September 1 and ends each August 31. Dues paid after July 1st are applied to the dues for the next period.

### Contact Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(For a Household Membership, please list up to two persons)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

In an effort to keep dues low, we are trying to produce as few paper copies of our monthly newsletter as possible. Can we send you our monthly newsletter by email? [ ] Yes [ ] No

### Dues:

Single (\$12.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Household (\$20.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Dues Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Remittance:

Please make checks payable to "OTCA." Mail the Completed Form and your check to:

**The Old Town Civic Association  
P. O. Box 1213  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1213**

### Suggestions:

Please provide us any programming ideas you would like to have at a Monthly Membership Meeting.

---

---

---

### About Old Town Civic Association, Inc.:

Originally founded in 1951 as The Old Town Civic Association, Old Town Civic Association, Inc. is the oldest preservation organization in the City of Alexandria. Old Town Civic Association, Inc. has as its purpose "to further the common good and general welfare of the people of the community of Old Town in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, particularly through the preservation of the historical and residential character, architecture, and traditions of that community."