



The Old Town Crier

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

DATE: Wednesday, November 11, 2009
TIME: 7:00 p.m., Socializing with Neighbors; 7:30 p.m., Program
LOCATION: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street

PROGRAM AGENDA

1) REMEMBERING THE VETERANS

1. Moment of Silence (See Tribute on page 6)

2) ANNOUNCEMENTS

3) POLICE REPORT

4) STAYING SAFE DURING WINTER HOLIDAYS

1. Captain Tammy Hooper Alexandria Police Department

5) WATERFRONT PLAN

*1. City Staff Presentation
2. Discussion*

Crime Prevention

This summer has been unusually active, from a brazen copper thief who stole the downspouts in broad daylight to a serial thief who seemed to know where and when to strike. Then, there are all the other activities that we have been reporting.

We do not wish to cause a panic, because the first miscreants were, after all apprehended. However, the Christmas season is fast approaching, and with it comes crimes of opportunity. So, we must be more vigilant about potential threats, but also more proactive in not standing out as targets of opportunity. How do we do that? I am glad you asked that question.

Captain Tammy Hooper from the Alexandria Police Department will show us easy steps everyone can take to protect not only ourselves and our property, but our neighbors as well, during this busy time. While the season might sometimes overwhelm us, there are simple preventative measures that will diminish the chance of it being ruined by a robbery or worse.

WATERFRONT

No more affected is Old Town than by the redevelopment plans on the Waterfront. The City Planning staff will be at the meeting to give a presentation on the current vision that they are recommending that the City pursue. I cannot overemphasize the relevance of your presence at this meeting. It may in fact be the only opportunity you will have to express your concerns about their vision to the City Staff.

I suggest that in their eagerness to ensure we did not control the waterfront development, the City has gone too far and given us little or no say. While there might be numerous arguments explaining why the City chose this path; they unfortunately all lead to the same marginalization of our ability to have a positive influence on the outcome of this vital part of our community.

Contravening the chorus calls for vibrancy, are some fundamental planning issues that do not go away because we wish it. This is captured in the policy section of the 1992 small area plan, which identifies a fragile balance between the commercial and residential area that must be preserved if “the character of Old Town is to survive”.

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.

The significance of this aspect has not waned over the years, and it was in fact reiterated in the King Street Strategy that the City adopted in 2005. Not only did the City underline the need to preserve the balance, but also emphasized that Old

Town “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”.

If the City is dropping balance as a consideration, there ought to, at the very least, be an open review and dialogue prior to discarding the balance. There are four set of issues that are worth considering before proceeding.

Energy

By placing all activity at end of King Street and the waterfront, the City might inadvertently create conditions at the lower end of King Street that result in the energy being sucked from the rest King Street. This would cause more harm than benefit to the retailers on the street. If that were to happen, the small retailers would be most affected.

Small independent retailers

A surprisingly large number of studies that have been conducted in areas comparable to Old Town all seem to reach the same conclusion. Small locally owned stores inject more money back into the local economies than do chain stores. Furthermore, travel planners know that visitors come to Old Town Alexandria because of its charm and distinctive buildings and shops.

Statement of Constraint

Old Town is constrained by the physical limitations created over 200 years ago. The size of the City Blocks is smaller than usual, so are the streets and sidewalks. Talking that into account, just how much can actually fit on the lower end of King Street. While, much of the discussion is based on an implicit assumption that Old Town has the capacity to accommodate unlimited number of buses, cars and pedestrians. The question is really, can it?

Parking

The Old Town Restaurant Policy is actually an amendment to the 1992 small area plan. Because it deals with parking, it is only natural to think that the 1992 plan itself was about parking, which, as described above it is not. It is about the “fragile balance”. Nevertheless, parking is a big problem.

...Not another One!

A new so called “medicinal adult toy store for couples” opened on King Street. When the first adult store opened, we did not want to give them the notoriety they sought, but were clear about wanting the City to respond.

The City has, frankly, taken too long to react, but is now bringing forth a text amendment to deal with this issue, see the summary bellow.

Summary

This text amendment addresses the issue of sexually oriented businesses and the appropriate degree of regulation for such businesses in Alexandria. The regulations proposed here do not prohibit such uses, but they do require that they be located outside of the City’s historic districts and dispersed so that no two such businesses are close together.

Complicating the issue is the first amendment protection the Supreme Court has given adult uses. However, reasonable, objective standard will be sustained. This includes distance requirements from each other and from schools, playgrounds, churches, residential zones, etc.

The text amendment will be discussed at the planning commission on November 5th and at the City Council on Saturday November 21st. Stay tuned, because we will need your help on getting this passed.

Separately, the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association has accepted the first adult store \as a member and advertised its wares on the ACVA web site. We have made it abundantly clear that it is highly inappropriate for an organization that receives more than \$2 Million annually from the City and demand its removal.

City Strategic Plan; what happened to historic preservation?

The City Council is currently reviewing the existing strategic plan and is holding public hearings and accepting public input with regard to the suggested changes. One notable change is the absence of historic preservation among the goals of the new plan and the means through which it would be achieved. While the 2004 plan says the following;

2004 Strategic Plan

Goal 2: A City that Respects, Protects, **Preserves** and Enhances the Natural Environment and Historic Resources

MEANS:

1. We preserve and celebrate our historical roots and diverse heritage.
2. We preserve our historic resources including neighborhoods, buildings, structures, places, and archaeological sites.
3. We maintain our distinctive architectural character and design.
4. We plan new developments so that they are compatible with historic buildings and neighborhood character.
5. Residents understand and appreciate Alexandria's heritage.
6. Alexandria's history contributes to the local economy through tourism development.

The proposed change to the Strategic plan does not include preservation as one of its goals and merely references the existence of history instead.

Goal 7: Alexandria Is a Caring Community That is Affordable and Diverse .
with a Rich History and Culture.

Please contact the City Council members to let them know how you feel about this change.

Poul Hertel

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

To those who have renewed their membership, we are very grateful. You make this organization possible. If you have not 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.

OTCA WEB SITE: can be found at <http://oldtowncivic.org>

POLICE LIASON: Lieutenant Len Fouch Len.Fouch@alexandriava.gov

POLICE E-MAIL LIST: Contact phertel@oldtowncivic.org

VETERANS DAY

*by
Townsend "Van" Van Fleet*

At the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day of November in 1918 World War I, also known as The Great War, ended. However, it wasn't until the 28th of June 1919 that the actual Treaty of Versailles was officially signed. In November of 1919, President Wilson proclaimed that the commemoration of Armistice Day would be observed on the 11th of November. He said "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..."

In 1938, Armistice Day was officially enacted as a federal holiday. Subsequently, in 1954 Congress amended the act and replaced the word Armistice with Veterans, in order to honor not only those who had fought in World War I but to bring praise upon those who had also fought in World War II and the Korean Conflict. President Eisenhower issued the very first Veterans Day Proclamation which in part stated: "On that day let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought as valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain."

Our service men and women have bravely served their country during other conflicts since the early fifties, most notably in the Vietnam War and the recent on-going War on Terrorism. This holiday is celebrated on November the 11th, regardless of what day of the week it falls upon. Needless to say it "helps focus all of us on the important purpose of Veterans Day: a celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good". As we gather at the Lyceum for our community meeting on this Veterans Day let us start by remembering all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

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.