



# *The Old Town Crier*

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

## **NOVEMBER PROGRAM AND NOTICE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday November 10, 2010  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m., Socializing with neighbors  
7:30 p.m., Program  
**Location:** The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street  
**Agenda:**

- Announcements
- Police Reports
- Presentation by Val Hawkins , President and Stephanie Landrum, Senior Vice President , the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership on” **What’s Happening Along King Street?”** - the business dynamics of King Street and Old Town
- Traffic/Transportation Report
- Other Business

## **WHAT’S HAPPENING ALONG KING STREET?**

Old Town’s King Street is a unique framework for shopping, entertainment, civic life and commerce. It is a focal point for our community identity and pride with a sense of place, connectivity, integration and cohesion for residents and visitors alike. King Street is THE primary attraction for visitors and projects a healthy community image upon which investors rely to make their location decisions. It provides small business ownership opportunities, jobs, retail sales and property tax revenues. For all these reasons, a thriving King Street commercial district is central to our community's quality of life.

Along the King Street corridor, there is an ever changing retail mix, some you like, some you hate, resulting from a changing economy and evolving retail industry patterns. But King Street is not monolithic; study after study have stressed that it can best be understood as a corridor made up of several distinct districts.

Each district appeals to different economic drivers. Lower King Street anchors, together with the waterfront, the tourist infrastructure. The middle section is supported by local residents and regional shoppers. And the upper section provides service retail and food serving the workers in offices clustered around the Metro station.

How do we preserve the corridor’s unique attributes, while recognizing the range of economic and retail forces at play? Come hear the **Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)** give a presentation at our November 10, 2010 members meeting. The AEDP will discuss the business dynamic of King Street and Old Town in the context of the current business climate in detail. **Val Hawkins, President,** and **Stephanie Landrum, Senior Vice President,** will provide insights into how retailers and

restaurants are surviving in this challenging economy and explain what factors are considered when a prospective business explores opportunities in Old Town.

The AEDP is also soliciting input from our community to use as they recruit new businesses. Please be ready to fill out their brief survey addressing the following questions: **list three retailers that you would hate to lose in Old Town, and list three retailers/uses that you would like to see come in Old Town.**

#### **FINAL MAKE-UP OF THE TORPEDO FACTORY ART CENTER BOARD (TFACB)**

**As a result of public outcry and commentary at public hearings by members of the Artists Association, the Art League, civic associations including OTCA, an amended resolution for the composition of the TFACB was proposed by City Councilman Ron Krupicka and seconded by Councilwoman Del Pepper and adopted by City Council at the October 26, 2010 legislative meeting.** The earlier September 23<sup>rd</sup> TFACB resolution proposed a Board make-up that was heavily skewed to the business community as a result of legitimate confusion about the term “ex officio.” This confusion resulted in the proposed make-up of the Board leaving the Artist Association with very minor representation with the artists outnumbered 3 to 6.

This latest resolution establishes the articles of incorporation and by-laws and a 13 member voting Board with 11 appointed by City Council as follows:

- 4 members appointed at large and representing a diversity of expertise which may specifically include marketing, retail/commercial facility management, public relations, arts management or other knowledge, skill or ability the City Council may from time to time deem appropriate
- 5 members representing the Torpedo Factory Artists Association; such members to be endorsed by the TFAA governing body prior to consideration of appointment by City Council
- 1 member representing the Art League
- 1 member representing the Alexandria Commission for the Arts
- 2 additional ex-officio member positions (with voting rights) will represent the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association and the City Manager’s Office.

A member of the Alexandria Archaeology Commission (AAC), may serve as an “Invited Participant” to the proceedings of the TFACB but will have no vote.

**The City is now seeking applicants for these newly created positions. For further information contact Jackie Henderson or Lora Love in the City Clerk/Clerk of Council Office at 703 746-4550.**

While we see this amended resolution as an improvement in the artists favor, we wonder if this type of intervention by the City is premature at a time when the Waterfront Plan is still a work in progress. If the City is going to the trouble to intervene in the operations of the Torpedo Factory to improve its attractiveness to tourists and visitors, why not the Food Court (the City owns the ground lease there)? Why not Waterfront Park (events programming throughout the year)? Or the Full Metal Jacket building (now owned by the City)?

In other words, if the City is creating an operational Board for one element in the Waterfront Plan, why not create an oversight board that includes other City- owned properties that have proximity, synergistic relationships, and cross marketing potential that make up the core area of the tourist dominated zone at

the foot of King Street? At the very least, as the Torpedo Factory is such an important anchor for the waterfront, we would suggest that, before City Council takes legislative action on the “Waterfront Plan,” it should allow the TFACB time to develop their program of change in order to guarantee a more comprehensive and synergistic implementation strategy for the waterfront.

## **STATUS OF THE WATERFRONT CONCEPT PLAN**

The Concept Plan was first presented by City Planning staff to the public in early May, 2010, and over the course of this summer the OTCA Board and many individuals and groups have provided comments, input and advice. **The City Planning staff is now finalizing the “Draft Plan Refinement” material for presentation to City Council and the general public later this fall.** This material will contain considerably more detail on the elements in the Concept Plan, including changes that are the result of expert evaluation of proposals, such as retail market realities or marina design; phasing; a parking and transportation plan; costs/ benefits; and other implementation issues, such as approvals from public agencies.

The key elements in the current plan include:

- A continuous pedestrian path at the waters’ edge
- An “Art Walk”
- Active recreational spaces and water based activities
- A King Street pier
- An expanded Point Lumley park
- New pedestrian-only public spaces at the foot of King Street
- New restaurants in the Strand area
- Preserved historic buildings
- Redevelopment of the Robinson Terminals
- An expanded City Marina;, and
- Flood control devices

In order to provide a constructive evaluation of the up-coming Draft Plan material we offer the following test questions:

1. **Does the new plan material address the physical constraints at the waterfront area including not just a lack of parking, but also capacity limits on streets and sidewalks during peak times, such as weekend evenings?** The City’s position is that as the existing parking supply is not fully utilized, except on rare occasions, adding new development at the waterfront is not an issue at this time. OTCA’s position is that the parking supply may not be fully utilized because shops and restaurants are not operating at their full capacity for a variety of reasons including a down economy. There could be a considerable impact on surrounding neighborhoods as the policies promoting shops or the Torpedo Factory staying open later (an initiative being pursued by ACVA), or an influx of more efficient shops and restaurants (e.g. national chains) could quickly soak up this surplus.
2. **Are the high impact events and activities (farmers markets, art fairs, concerts, etc.) located in appropriate places (parking, noise, lights, and frequency)?**
3. **Are the City’s past commitments to waterside improvements being honored (e.g Windmill Park bulkheads)?**
4. **Assuming favorable cost/benefit analysis, how will specific elements of the waterfront plan, such as the proposed King Street pier and breakwaters, nuisance flood controls, or an enlarged marina be funded?**

- 5. How will the City manage the land use balance and the synergistic relationships?** It is OTCA's belief that waterfront concepts should be compatible with the existing shops and small businesses along King Street and recommend either reinforcing the existing "SUP Process" and "Old Town Restaurant Policy" or creating, like most successful urban waterfronts, some form of overlay district management structure.

The City must also acknowledge that several elements of the Waterfront Plan cannot be finalized until the pending waterfront litigation is fully resolved.

#### **OTHER NEWS.**

##### **The OTCA Web Site**

An updated website is a first priority in improving OTCA's operations, managing the association's finances, and improving information flow to the members. The Board is seeking information and advice from our members on websites specializing in turnkey services for small organizations. Any information will be gratefully received and should be communicated by e-mail to Board members Ivy Whitlach [iwhitlach@oldtowncivic.org](mailto:iwhitlach@oldtowncivic.org) or Bert Ely [bely@oldtowncivic.org](mailto:bely@oldtowncivic.org)

##### **Membership Renewal**

If you have renewed for 2010-11, thank you; if you have not, please renew at your earliest convenience. The current membership dues are \$ 25 per household and run from September to June each year. The dues pay for the necessities of running an association: meeting rooms; printing and mailing the Crier; and, in the future, an interactive website. Please mail your checks together with your return address (names of other family members and your e-mail address if desired), made out to OTCA to:

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