

Take Notice



NOTICE - NORTH OLD TOWN INDEPENDENT
CITIZENS CIVIC ASSOCIATION OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

WWW.NOTICE-ALEXANDRIA.ORG

Upcoming Events:

November 26 - January 6
Christmas at Mount Vernon
Decking the halls for Christmas at Mount Vernon make it a special time of year to visit. Daily 9-4pm

November 26
Alexandria Holiday Tree Lighting
Market Square
7-9pm. Free!

November 11
Veterans Day at the Alexandria Black History Museum
Celebrate the African American men and women who fought for our country. Speakers, music and presentations.

November 18 - December 19
A Broadway Christmas Carol at MetroStage
By Kathy Feininger, directed by Larry Kaye and choreographed by Nancy Harry. Daily

Continued...

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Noticing Our Urban Nature

By Christa Watters

Most of us in North Old Town think of ourselves as urban folk, and we are – easy walking distance to shops, restaurants, the docks at the foot of King Street, the bank, the library, even a theater. Yet we are also right on the edge of the Potomac River, and along it runs the Mount Vernon Trail, a path that quickly leads us into a scrap of urban nature. A sunny fall day is the perfect time to take that trail and explore an expanding wetland. Around the corner past Marina Towers, the woods on the right are almost jungle-like, with scarlet vines climbing the trees and entangling the underbrush. A few steps farther, the wetland begins.

Back in the 1980s, that wooden bridge spanned a seasonal swamp. The small stream flowing through it flooded its banks only after heavy rains or storms, and at those times often smelled heavily of brake fluid and other toxic liquids drained into the ground from Potomac Rail Yards. Then the rail yard was closed, and the toxic wastes were cleaned up prior to the construction of Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard. Gradually the waters cleared and the smells disappeared. Minnows and pollywogs appeared in the water, and ducks, geese and herons stopped to feed.

Some years ago, Hurricane Isabel brought exceptionally high water levels to the Potomac River, and at high tide the floods rampaged through our swamp. When the

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Update on Implementation of City/Mirant "Agreement"

By Lalit Sharma
Office of Environmental Quality, T&ES

The City and Mirant Corporation entered into an "Agreement" in July 2008 that required Mirant to invest \$34 million in its Potomac River Generating Station in Alexandria to pursue a "Project" aimed at reducing fugitive dust emissions (Phase I; \$2 million) and stack PM2.5 (particulate matter less than 2.5 microns) emissions (Phase II; \$32 million budget). Shortly afterward, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued to Mirant a state operating permit incorporating several provisions of this agreement. Accordingly, Mirant completed a \$35 million stack merge project in February 2009 aimed at reducing pollutant concentrations in the vicinity of the plant. This was in addition to the \$34 million committed in the Project. Monitoring data indicates that the ambient 5-minute SO2 (Oxides of Sulfur) concentration has been reduced after the stack merge project. SO2 stack emission limit was set at 3,813 tons per year which is a 75 percent reduction from the 2002-2003 actual levels. The Mirant plant was also one of the first existing power plants in

Virginia to get an emission limit for PM2.5.

The Phase I study of the Project was completed in April 2009. Following on the study's recommendations, which were endorsed by the Mirant Community Monitoring Group (MCMG) and City Council, a new, more effective street sweeper is currently operational at the plant on a daily basis. The new ash loader has also been operational for the past few months. These upgrades of Mirant's ash loading operation are designed to decrease fugitive dust emissions. Another project, the fogging dust suppression system, is expected to be operational by year's end. In consultation with the MCMG, the City will make a decision on whether to install proposed 30-ft windscreens for the coal pile as well as the coal conveyor drip pans as soon as the cost for the Phase II project is firmed up.

The Phase II engineering study completed in April 2010 recommends the conversion of cold electrostatic precipitators for boilers No. 3, 4, and 5 to polishing baghouses and the upgrading of the control system for the hot electrostatic precipitators for boilers No. 1 and 2. The City considers the conclusions of this study and resulting recommendations to be a major milestone in the implementation of its "Agreement" with Mirant.



Noticing our Urban Nature...Continued

waters receded, fish were trapped in the underbrush and hanging in the branches of young trees. Perhaps the floods triggered the change; I don't know. But muskrats and beaver began to appear, and the beavers felled trees, damming up the small waterways that meandered through the swamp, creating bigger bodies of water. Today, that wooden bridge has sizable ponds on either side. One day last month, I counted 50 frogs hanging out in the shallows, probably hoping to snag some of the insects buzzing past. There are turtles and sizable catfish. Sometimes egrets and Great Blue as well as Tricolored Herons come to feed.

A few years ago the National Park Service moved the trail that heads on toward Potomac Landing a few yards west to accommodate the rising waters. Trees have died as the expanding swamp has drowned their roots, but the snags will provide homes for owls, woodpeckers and other wildlife. And the reeds and cattails shelter overwintering geese and recently even a pair of harlequin ducks. This small urban wetland is burgeoning with life. I invite you to go look.

Update on Implementation of City/Mirant "Agreement" ...Continued

This study was a result of substantial engineering effort by the City and Mirant. It included a very detailed engineering analysis of the existing plant, testing of existing boiler fans, and elaborate transient analysis to evaluate safety issues with proposed upgrades. The City has been pushing for the installation of the baghouse since it is the most effective technology for controlling stack PM_{2.5} emissions. These recommendations were later endorsed by the MCMG and City Council.

The City is currently working with Mirant and the Engineer to evaluate potential bidders and choose an Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contractor for the implementation of the Phase II project. The goal is to complete the contractor selection process by March 2011. The City will continue to keep our community informed of progress on this important project. For more information or to get on the mailing list to receive regular updates, contact Khoa Tran at 703-746-4076 or by e-mail (khoadingh.tran@alexandriava.gov)

Lalit Sharma is an employee of the City of Alexandria.

NOTICE is for you

We Inquire: *Staying connected with changes and issues that affect North Old Town.*

We Inform: *Circulate information to our members through newsletters and circulars enabling you to be heard.*

We are Open: *Welcoming varying views of our role in North Old Town.*

We Discuss: *Remaining involved in finding alternative solutions and being tolerant of our neighbor's perspectives.*

We Meet: *Membership meeting three times a year, and a winter party in February.*

Cyprus: Crossroads of Civilizations

By Ann Kaupp

Cyprus: Crossroads of Civilizations, a new temporary exhibition at the National Museum of Natural History, showcases hundreds of artifacts that celebrate Cyprus' 11,000-year history in the Mediterranean and represent some of the latest discoveries from the early era of Cypriot archaeology. The exhibit is on view through May 1, 2011. <http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/cyprus/index.html>

Black Belt for Nonprofits!

By Susan Wobst

A new program to strengthen charities in Alexandria and nearby communities. Together with a small group of their peers, a board member and a senior staffer will receive best practice training, implement and report on their plans, and receive professional feedback. For information contact Betsy Frantz, CEO of Leadership Arlington at bfrantz@leadershiparlington.org.

Upcoming Events:

November 26 -
December 18

Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge
Little Theatre of Alexandria. A new spin on Charles Dickens' beloved holiday tale. Fri + Sat 9:30pm. \$15

December 4

Holiday Boat Parade of Lights

Alexandria's harbor lights up with more than 50 illuminated boats cruise the Potomac at our historic waterfront. 4pm

December 31

First Night Alexandria

Community celebration with performing arts. Scavenger hunt with prizes. www.firstnightalexandria.org. \$20 - 12pm to midnight

December 3

Holiday on the Avenue in Del Rey

Holiday tree lighting, Santa, hot chocolate, cider and cookies, lighting of the luminaries and carols. 5:45pm - 9pm

Thank you to all 'Take NOTICE' contributors!

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Contact NOTICE

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