



NOTICE Community Meeting

Thursday, May 22, 7:30
p.m.
Best Western Old
Colony Inn
1101 N. Washington
Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

**Topic: Bus Barn
Development site**
See article to right

T.C. Williams Band Concerts

Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band

May 21, 2014
7:30 p.m.
T.C. Williams Auditorium
Parking and admission are
free!

T.C. Williams Jazz Band

June 4, 2014
7:30 p.m.
T.C. Williams Auditorium
Parking and admission are
free!

Bus Barn Advisory Committee Report

By Tom Soapes, NOTICE President

The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee charged by the City Manager with drafting development guidelines and design standards for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) bus garage site bounded by Pitt, Wythe, Royal, and Pendleton Streets held four meetings, starting February 8. Members of the committee included representatives of five homeowners' associations, NOTICE, Old Town Civic Association, North Old Town Urban Design Advisory Committee, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Annie B. Rose House, Northern Virginia Building Industry Association, and two at-large members. Staff of the city's Planning and Zoning Department served as facilitators, and Mary Lyman, a member of the city Planning Commission, chaired the group. A representative of WMATA attended.

The committee was appointed to meet before WMATA issued its request for proposals (RFP). This gathering of stakeholders gave citizens an early opportunity to influence the changes coming to this two-acre site in the heart of North Old Town.

Discussions were lively and wide-ranging at every meeting. Initial meetings focused on expectations and opportunities for improving the block. Discussions explored access issues and streetscape, including curb cuts, building materials, sidewalk canopies, walkability, and the relationship of new construction to existing buildings. We considered open-space connections, including setbacks, private and public open spaces, and visual connections to the Potomac River. Building scale and height transitions were the most difficult issues. There was early agreement that the new development should be predominantly residential, with a limited amount of ground floor retail, personal service, or community-serving use. There was also early agreement on the need for a variety of heights, quality architectural details and materials, and articulation of walls. No one wanted a single, large building.

What became more controversial were height limitations. Most agreed that if townhouses are built they should not be more than 50 feet high. The group agreed to offer the opportunity for additional height in the northeast corner or the center of the site. Some argued that the highest point should be no more than 60 feet; others favored a 70-foot limit to permit the higher ceilings in demand in today's real estate market and to allow more opportunities for innovative design. The latter position won a substantial majority vote of the committee.

A majority also agreed to a zoning change from RM (Residential, medium density that does not allow for multi-family units) to CRMU (Commercial Residential Mixed Use that does allow multi-family units) and a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 2.5. Recent examples of FAR 2.5 developments are The Oronoco near the waterfront and The Asher near Braddock Metro. The 1992 Old Town North Small Area plan had designated the area RM, with a 50-foot height limit and a 1.5 FAR.

Committee members will take the draft recommendations to their organizations for comment and submit those comments to Planning and Zoning staff before final recommendations are sent to the City Manager. He will forward the advisory committee's recommendations to WMATA, and WMATA will write and issue the RFP. Many steps remain before anything is built, and there will be many more opportunities to review and affect the design of what is built.

The May NOTICE member meeting will be the opportunity for citizens to comment on the draft principles (copies will be available before the meeting), and we will forward those views to the city. The meeting will be held May 22 at the Best Western Old Colony Inn, 1101 N. Washington Street, at 7:30 p.m.

Potomac River Generating Station Update

By Christa Watters

At an April 23 meeting of the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) Monitoring Group, City staff and representatives of PRGS owner NRG briefed members and residents on the petroleum contamination found on site as a result of soil and water testing.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) had directed NRG to test the site for soil contamination. Results of the December tests, released by VDEQ, state that 16,000 square feet of soil contaminated by petroleum hydrocarbons have been identified on the site. The contamination plume is consistent with petroleum leakage from the two 25,000-gallon underground diesel fuel storage tanks on the power plant site and extends from the storage tanks and the power station basement to the Mt. Vernon Trail at the Potomac River edge.

Although the storage tanks were emptied, cleaned, and filled with concrete during the plant shut-down, the test results indicate the risk of ongoing releases of petroleum contaminants to the Potomac River.

The Virginia DEQ requires a corrective action plan (CAP) to be developed for the site by September 5, 2014. The VDEQ, the National Park Service (owner of the Mt. Vernon Trail), and the District Department of the Environment (DDOE), which controls the Potomac River as far south as the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, will all participate in the remediation process. The City of Alexandria is a designated liaison to these stakeholders, receiving all correspondence and information.

Regarding the 4,000 gallon kerosene tank, February 2014 groundwater sampling related to prior releases of kerosene from this tank found that all organic compounds analyzed were at nondetectable levels except in two places where total petroleum hydrocarbons — diesel range organics (TPH-DROs) were found at above laboratory reporting limits. The sampling involved drilling 14 monitoring wells. Based on the test results, VDEQ closed this pollution control case and no further actions were required by NRG.

The PRGS Monitoring Group will meet again when more information is available.

Other Development Issues *By Tom Soapes*

In addition to the WMATA Bus Garage, other properties in North Old Town are also in play. The building at 801 N. Fairfax and the building directly south of it where the health club is located are said to be under contract for sale. We have no definite word as to the buyer's intentions. We understand that they have made inquiries regarding conversion of the sites to residential use and buyouts of tenant leases. Whether they would retain the current buildings or demolish them is also unknown. Other properties slated for redevelopment that we are watching are the Giant/ABC block, the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) properties, and the Cotton Factory building on North Washington Street.

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, email and our website.*

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.*

Membership - Join NOTICE

Single \$15, Family \$25, Sponsor \$50, Angel \$150+

NOTICE is a 501-C3 organization. Dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Mail this form and payment to:

NOTICE; P.O. Box 25571; Alexandria, VA 22313

Torpedo Factory Celebrating 40 Years!

Thursday June 5
6:30-8pm
Torpedo Factory

Reception featuring delectable fare from Main Event Catering. View the 40th anniversary exhibition: The Alexandria Community Art Library. Curator Roman Petruniak will be in attendance along with other special guests.

RSVP by May 30th
to mbustamante@
torpedofactory.com

Farmers' Market

Make sure you stop by to support our local farmers.

**Saturdays
7 a.m. - noon**

Located in the market square at 301 King Street.

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What did we miss?

Email us your suggestions for articles, links, or subjects you would find interesting to you.

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