

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

for

FISCAL YEAR 2022: JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Fiscal year 2022 marked the 47th anniversary of the formation of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC). The mission of the AAC is to establish goals and priorities to promote Alexandria Archaeology (AA), encourage volunteerism, and to advise on the preservation and interpretation of Alexandria's extraordinary sites and collections. The key accomplishments over FY 2022 are:

- 1) Continued advocacy for waterfront historical projects and initiatives derived from the 2018-2019 Ship Committee recommendations including, "ponding" the ship timbers for preservation in Ben Brenman Pond as a best practice, the Waterfront Museum Feasibility Study, the SeeWorthy exhibition of the conjectural ship models, and participation in the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Committee.
- 2) Outreach and advocacy for the AAC to be a key stakeholder in the evolution of the "Action Plan for Vibrancy and Sustainability Plan at the Torpedo Factory Art Center" both as a partner in the building's future, the home of the Archaeology Museum and Division, and as a voice for the historic preservation of the 100-year-old building.
- 3) Telling the full story of Alexandria's history continues to be a guiding light for AAC activity. To interpret the histories of Alexandria's diverse residents requires diversity among commission members. To that end, the AAC encouraged participation from the African American history community by changing the ordinance.

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The AAC is dedicated to *providing guidance and responsive advocacy, assisting in establishing goals and priorities, as well as supporting AA staff and ongoing outreach and education to our community*, so that AA can continue to be one of the country’s most respected, innovative, and leading city archaeology offices. Even with the continuation of the pandemic, the AAC remains active and through their achievements, continues to positively impact and enrich the lives of residents, attract visitors (in person as well as online), and bring national and international attention to Alexandria’s discoveries.

Key Accomplishments

Continued advocacy for waterfront history projects and initiatives derived from the 2018-2019 Ship Committee recommendations



In May 2022, AA with AECOM and the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory (and excellent support from the Department of Project Implementation) successfully submerged or “ponded” over 1000 ship timbers at the bottom of Ben Brenman Pond for a medium-term storage solution. The AAC recommended this strategy after discussion and study through 2019 and is pleased to see the City act as leaders in historic preservation by undertaking this effort. The potential

for future generations to study or conserve the timbers is preserved. **It is fitting that the innovative curation solution for the timbers is in park named after a champion of AA and the chair of the AAC for 21 years, Ben Brenman.**

AA launched the temporary *SeeWorthy: Modeling Maritime Alexandria* exhibit from April 1st- June 5th highlighting the four conjectural ship hull models. Members of the AAC supported the exhibit by providing in-person interpretation, which ultimately reached over 2000 visitors in the two short months it was on display on the first floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.



The AAC continues to provide representation to the Waterfront Commission and this year, provided input to the Flood Mitigation subcommittee given the potential impact of alternatives on waterfront archaeological resources.

Outreach and advocacy for AAC to be a key stakeholder in the evolution of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Vibrancy and Sustainability Plan

AAC remains highly focused and determined that AA has representation in the both the short and long-term plans for the TFAC. To that end, in FY22 the AAC selected Ivy Whitlatch to represent the AAC on the Torpedo Factory Art Center Task Force. The Alexandria Archaeology Museum and all of the associated outreach programs and exhibits created by the museum team are a significant contributor to the vibrancy and appeal of the TFAC for both visitors and residents. There are facility issues, space issues, staffing issues, and long-term upgrade needs that remain a priority within the current Museum, lab and office settings. In addition, the recently funded Waterfront Museum Feasibility Study findings may affect the TFAC. As a significant presence in the TFAC since its inception, we look forward to participating in this process as a key stakeholder.

AAC Support of Telling the Full Story of Alexandria's History

In the spring of 2022, Alexandria City Council approved an ordinance change from a representative of “the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage” to “the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage or equivalent organization.” The goal of this change was to encourage participation from residents with an interest in African American history. The AAC has reached out to several organizations to inform them of the vacancy.

The AAC continues to contribute to and collaborate with community partners and the Alexandria Black History Museum to complete the southern waterfront African American Heritage Trail StoryMap and associated website, launching to a computer or phone near you in 2022!

Based on concerns shared by members of the descendant families, the AAC advised that the City provide adequate funding for City of Alexandria staff to work closely with descendants of The

Fort community to ensure the proper recognition and commemoration of Fort Ward's burial grounds including the Jackson Cemetery.

Ongoing Priorities

Ponding for Preservation

As a kickoff for Archaeology Month in October, AA will host an archaeology festival at Ben Brenman Park to talk about the ponding project and install three new historic interpretation signs that describe the journey of the ships from the river to the pond. The AAC will volunteer as part of this effort and looks forward to reaching out to residents in this new venue.

Waterfront

The AAC strongly believes that the upcoming return of the Hotel Indigo Ship, represents a tourism, economic, and business moment. The ship hull remnant and the thousands of other artifacts need exhibit space to highlight the stories they have to tell about Alexandria's seaport history. The AAC looks forward to participating in the Waterfront Museum Feasibility Study to address this issue.

African American History Initiatives

Fundamentally, the AAC strives for a more diverse commission stacked with members with a passion for history and archaeology of different racial backgrounds. To ensure equity in historic preservation, people of color need to feel invited, included, and heard at the table. Through outreach efforts and with City Council, we hope to make strides in this direction over the coming year.

The AAC applauds the City for seeking funding to preserve Douglass Cemetery and work towards a solution to alleviate the drainage issues. The AAC supports this work in close collaboration with the Social Responsibility Group and the Friends of Douglass Cemetery and will closely monitor progress in FY23.

Freedom House reopened to broad acclaim in May. The AAC intends to continue to advise City Council on this initiative beyond the installation of the two-year exhibit.

Museum

The AAC continues to enjoy a collaborative relationship with the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology and were excited to bring back the annual Volunteer Party. This year marked our 44th annual celebration held in conjunction with the opening of the *SeeWorthy: Modeling Maritime Archaeology* exhibit at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.



Elizabeth Lankes received the Volunteer of the Year Award, presented by Christine Hines, President of FOAA and Eleanor Breen, City Archaeologist.

AAC has actively participated in the review of new exhibit panels for the museum, to be installed this FY with partial funding from Historic Alexandria Foundation.

The AAC advised on public education and outreach associated with bottle digging activities targeting historic wells and privies.

The AAC's partnership with FOAA continues to grow in many ways, including the 2022 George Washington Birthday Parade.



50th Anniversary of AAC in 2025

Planning has begun for this important milestone. The AAC will advise staff and City Council on how to be commemorate the anniversary of the oldest commission of its kind in the nation.

Ben Brenman Awards

Annually the AAC, in conjunction with AA, present the **Ben Brenman Awards** to those individuals or organizations that have demonstrated exceptional involvement with city history. In October 2021, the Ben Brenman recipients made significant contributions to African American history. **Griffin Burchard received the award as an Outstanding Preservation Advocate**, for his contribution to the stewardship of Douglass Cemetery, one of Alexandria’s historic Black cemeteries; for planning and implementing his 2019 Eagle Scout project at Douglass Cemetery, including the creation of a new interpretive historical sign at the site; for raising awareness about these sacred and fragile sites and the recognition that preserving Black cemeteries means preserving the history of Black Alexandrians; and for immeasurably enhancing the quality of life in Alexandria by caring for the final resting place of those buried here.

African American Heritage Trail Committee (Councilman John Chapman, Susan Cohen, Gwen Day-Fuller, Elizabeth “Indy” McCall, Maddy McCoy, Krystyn Moon, McArthur Myers, and Ted Pulliam, founding and current members) received an award for Outstanding Community History, in recognition of their dedication to researching and highlighting the contributions of African Americans to Alexandria’s historic waterfront and throughout the city; for their leadership in the community history movement that engages residents and visitors with new ways of telling Alexandria’s unique history; and for their commitment to instilling a sense of collective ownership of the past for all Alexandrians.

In the Commission’s increasing outreach to the community, members of the Community Engagement Committee (Jake Hoogland and Dylan Colligan) proposed an additional award be authorized by the Commission in recognition of those who support and advocate for Archaeology.



AAC and Ben Brenman Award Winners all masked up at the reading of the Proclamation for Archaeology Month, October 2021.

Supports of Note

Appreciation of Budget support for Staff Position and the Waterfront Museum Feasibility Study

One of AAC's key objectives has been to advocate for AA's staffing needs, a critical goal given their increasing workload with the substantial waterfront discoveries and amazing creativity and ability to maintain significant community and education programming.

AAC sincerely appreciates City Council approval of the requested full-time Archaeologist employee position for two years. Please note, however, the Commission will continue to advocate for this employee position to be changed to permanent full time going forward.

In addition, to fully achieve archaeology's education mission, the AAC will continue to request funding to change the Museum Education Specialist position to full-time. Since the part-time Museum Education Specialist created the Ship Science lesson in FY18, this program has been given 75 times to over 1630 students Alexandria students and educators and even beyond to school districts in Fairfax, Essex, D.C., Montgomery, Arlington Counties. We predict demand for these STEM-based history lessons will continue.

Recognition of the Social Media Work by AA

AAC would be remiss if we did not, again, take this opportunity to acknowledge and advocate for the social media efforts of AA.

Across all platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram – AA has 7,696 followers/likes. The #WaterfrontWednesday series has become a staple.

The most popular Facebook post this year showcased our wonderful volunteer award recipients (from April 2022) and reached nearly 2,000 people. This post honored two volunteers who have gone above and beyond, contributing their time and expertise to preserving and sharing our rich archaeological heritage.

The most popular video on the AA YouTube channel was the February 2021 release of "The 46 Petitioners - Mapping Alexandria's Free Black Population." It received modest views in FY21 but increased by 3,450 views in FY22. The "Celebrate Juneteenth Along the Waterfront" video also received a jump in viewers this fiscal year, gaining nearly 450 views (437). We added three new videos this fiscal year and reached a total of 5,807 new views over the course of the year.

AA staff have continued their support of OHA's social media by creating content and advising on strategy.

COMMISSION MEMBER ACTIVITIES

AAC members have followed, advised, and participated in multiple aspects within Alexandria that focus on the city's history. Most notable in FY22 include:

- Monitored progress of the **Waterfront Plan** via our participation on the Waterfront Commission and the waterfront public art process. Represented, as a member of the Waterfront Commission, the voice of archaeology and history on the waterfront and the plan/justification for the Waterfront Museum Feasibility Study.
- Supported the implementation of the **Fort Ward Interpretive Plan**.
- Requested consulting party status on the Section 106 process for Samuel Madden Homes Redevelopment.
- Spearheaded the efforts of an ad hoc committee to launch the first length of the **African American Waterfront Heritage Trail** and are continuing to develop the southern route.
- Volunteered a total of 254 hours in its commitment to review, advise, and advocate to Council for the many important occurrences of archaeological discovery and areas of historic importance throughout Alexandria.
- Continued representation on the **Historic Alexandria Resource Commission** focusing primarily on the Advocacy Committee.

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

The goals of the AAC for the future, at the time of this report can best be summed up as we did in 2021-2022 – we are open and ready to be a partner with the City in navigating the upcoming challenges and opportunities regarding:

- Raise awareness about the bottle digging activity that is destroying history one privy at a time in partnership with FOAA.
- Successful collaboration on and implementation of the Waterfront History Museum Feasibility Study.
- Continued advocacy for representation in the TFAC Vibrancy Plan and Stakeholder Group so that AA remains a key partner.
- Continued interpretation of the African American story of Alexandria through the support of initiatives like Freedom House and other sites, projects, and collaborations.
- Support for innovative solutions for the storage, exhibition, conservation, and accessibility of maritime and other artifacts.
- Support for the continued leadership, staffing, and professional development of AA, including education, museum upgrade, and lab facilities to remain one of the country's leading archaeology programs.
- Continue to advocate for a sustainable budget in support of a viable archaeological program for the city and seek new funding sources to support the work of the program.
- Recruit membership to the Commission to fill vacancies.

LEADERSHIP AND CURRENT AAC MEMBERSHIP/TENURE

The Commission elected officers in September 2021. Ivy Whitlatch was elected as Chair, Esther White as Vice Chair, and Elizabeth Vehmeyer as Secretary.

Three new members were appointed (Nicholas Dienna, Ann Greer and Paula Whitacre) during the year and one member resigned (Christopher Warren).

The Commission is actively seeking representation from the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage or equivalent organization and the Alexandria Historical Society. As noted in our key accomplishments, AAC is pleased to have filled the two Members at Large seats and the Planning District III representative.

Chair	Ivy Whitlatch	Planning District I Rep	December 2022
Vice Chair	Esther White	Planning District II Rep	December 2025
Secretary	Elizabeth Vehmeyer	Member at Large	December 2023
Members	Ralph Rosenbaum	Member at Large	January 2025
	Seth Tinkham	Historic Alexandria Foundation Rep	April 2025
	Jacob Hoogland	Member at Large	September 2025
	Richard Owens	FOAA Rep	April 2026
	Dylan Colligan	Area Business Community Rep	September 2022
	Edward Pulliam	Alexandria Association Rep	March 2023
	VACANT	Alexandria Historic Society Rep	
	Rebecca Doser	Visit Alexandria Rep	April 2025
	Nicholas Dienna	Member at Large	October 2025
	Ann Greer	Member at Large	September 2025
Paula Whitacre	Planning District III Rep	October 2025	
VACANT	Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage or equivalent		

Eleanor Breen, City Archaeologist, is the staff liaison.

ATTACHMENTS

January 10, 2022

Mayor Justin M. Wilson
Vice Mayor Elizabeth B. Bennett-Parker
City Council
301 King Street, Room 3200
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker, and City Council,

RE: Torpedo Factory Art Center Implementation Plan

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC) would like to express its deep concern with the proposed Torpedo Factory Art Center Implementation Plan scheduled to come before City Council on Tuesday, December 14.

As the Commission tasked with advising City Council and the Mayor on issues affecting Alexandria Archaeology, it is impossible to do so without having had the opportunity to provide meaningful input into its development throughout this process. The Plan directly affects Archaeology, of course, because the Torpedo Factory houses the Archaeology division and the Alexandria Archaeology Museum.

The AAC requests that the Council defer the vote on accepting the Plan, specifically Scenario Two, the Custom Program, due to the lack of input and dialogue given to future needs of Archaeology, an original occupant of the Torpedo Factory.

At the November 17, 2021, AAC meeting, the Office of the Arts presented an updated version of the Plan that was to include the financial component. The financial analysis of the scenarios within the Plan, however, had not been completed. The Commission was informed the analysis would not be available until sometime after the Thanksgiving holiday, at which time commissioners can attend presentations to see the analysis.

It is unlikely that the AAC would be able to hold an additional meeting, especially to achieve a quorum, within the timeframe of post-Thanksgiving holiday and the presentation to City Council on December 14.

The Commission recognizes that the financial analysis would, in all likelihood, have minimal impact on the proposed allocation for the City's Archaeology division. However, based on the initial presentation of the Plan, there are significant implications for the future of Archaeology. That presentation provided an assessment of

the building condition, pictorial representations of the possibilities of Scenario Two, and reconsideration of space for all occupants other than Archaeology. There are several elements of this scenario of concern to AAC. Surely there is a better procedure to express our concerns, illicit our input, and reach a scenario worthy of Council deliberation.

The Commission truly appreciates the enormity of the task asked of the Office of the Arts and we all agree that there is a need for revitalization of the Torpedo Factory. However, this arbitrary and compressed schedule is precluding proper Commission and community input. Additionally, it sets a poor precedent for city/public process – especially for a City owned historic structure within the Old and Historic District, a defining center on the Waterfront, the workspace for so many individuals and the office of Alexandria Archaeology and the Archaeology Museum.

Warm Regards,

Ivy Whitlatch
Chair
Alexandria Archaeological Commission

jeb
cc: Mark Jinks, City Manager
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks &
Cultural Activities
Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director, Office of the Arts & Events



Alexandria Archaeological Commission
America's First Archaeological Commission



January 4, 2022

The Honorable Sarah Bagley
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Bagley:

The Honorable Alyia Gaskins
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Gaskins:

The Honorable R. Kirk McPike
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. McPike:

The Honorable Canek Aguirre
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Aguirre:

The Honorable John Taylor Chapman
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Chapman:

The Honorable Amy Jackson
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Jackson:

The Honorable Justin Wilson
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson:

Congratulations on your recent re-election and thank you for your service to our city!

As you know, Alexandria's historical and archaeological resources shape the City's identity. The members of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission (formed in 1975, the oldest such group in the country!) are pleased to work with you, staff, and fellow community members to ensure these resources continue to benefit present and future generations.

Our responsibilities, established by City Council, are organized to fulfill a three-fold mission: preservation, education, and advocacy. A few highlights of recent efforts by the Commission in support of the award-winning work of Alexandria Archaeology include--

- **Ships/Waterfront archaeology:** Discovery of the remains of four ships and thousands of artifacts on the waterfront literally garnered global attention for Alexandria. In addition to supporting Archaeology staff with the monumental task of properly conserving these items, the Commission is contributing to a long-term vision of how to conserve, interpret, and/or exhibit these extraordinary finds.
- **African American history:** As part of the city's commitment to bring justice to the interpretation of Alexandria's Black history, Archaeology staff have been active for many years in research at the Contrabands & Freedmen Cemetery Memorial, Freedom House, Fort Ward, African American Heritage Trail, and other sites. Working with other partners, the Commission took the lead in successfully nominating the cemetery memorial to become part of the African American Civil Rights Network in summer 2021.
- **Impact on Alexandria's economy and quality of life:** Surveys consistently show that residents and visitors value Alexandria's rich history and archaeology. The Commission works with other formal and informal groups—including other Boards and Commissions, the business community, descendants of Fort Ward residents, and many others—to ensure the viability and integrity of Alexandria's archaeological resources. And because Alexandria Archaeology's museum is in the Torpedo Factory, where it draws tens of thousands of visitors annually (in a non-COVID-19 year), we continue to offer our input and assistance in development of the Implementation Plan for the Torpedo Factory.

We have enclosed a few materials about archaeology in Alexandria. We also invite you to visit the city website for more information about Commission activities (<https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic/archaeology/default.aspx?id=28168>) or about Alexandria archaeology more generally (<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Archaeology>). And we are here to work with you at any time.

Sincerely,

Ivy Whitlatch
Chair, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

*Alexandria Archaeology Museum, 105 North Union Street, #327, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-321,
Phone: 703/746-4399*



Alexandria Archaeological Commission
America's First Archaeological Commission



November 23, 2021

Mayor Justin M. Wilson
Vice Mayor Elizabeth B. Bennett-Parker
City Council
301 King Street, Room 3200
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker, and City Council,

RE: Torpedo Factory Arts Center Implementation Plan

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There are several elements of this scenario of concern to AAC. Surely there is a better procedure to express our concerns, illicit our input, and reach a scenario worthy of Council deliberation.

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Warm Regards,

Ivy Whitlatch
Chair
Alexandria Archaeological Commission

jeb

cc: Mark Jinks, City Manager
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
James Spengler, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Diane Ruggiero, Deputy Director, Office of the Arts & Events

*Alexandria Archaeology Museum, 105 North Union Street #327, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3217
Phone: 703/745-4399*



Alexandria Archaeological Commission
America's First Archaeological Commission



October 8, 2021

Mr. Mark Jinks
City Manager
Office of the City Manager
301 King St.
Suite 3500
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Jinks

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission thanks you for this opportunity to provide input in your FY2023 budget.

For the Commission this comes at a very timely moment where we feel the City can make a significant impact with minimal dollars to demonstrate its commitment to being an equitable City.

As you know, Fort Ward Park, the home of many African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was also the site of four burial grounds, including the Jackson Cemetery, the Old Graveyard, and the Adams and Clark family burial sites. A recent public meeting was held in July to discuss ideas for formally demarcating and memorializing these sacred spaces. At the July meeting and at our September Commission meeting, a member of the Jackson family spoke about the pressing need to place a memorial stone dedicated to her family at the site. We support this request and any funds needed. We ask that the FY 2023 budget include the funding necessary for City of Alexandria staff to work closely with descendants of The Fort community to ensure the proper recognition and commemoration of our African American heritage at Fort Ward's burial grounds. The Commission is prepared to work with City archaeology, OHA staff, and the descendants to make this a reality.

As you know, Fort Ward Park, the home of many African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was also the site of four burial grounds, including the Jackson Cemetery, the Old Graveyard, and the Adams and Clark family burial sites. A recent public meeting was held in July to discuss ideas for formally demarcating and memorializing these sacred spaces. At the July meeting and at our September Commission meeting, a member of the Jackson family spoke about the pressing need to place a memorial stone dedicated to her family at the site. We support this request and any funds needed. We ask that the FY 2023 budget include the funding necessary for City of Alexandria staff to work closely with descendants of The Fort community to ensure the proper recognition and commemoration of our African American heritage at Fort Ward's burial grounds. The Commission is prepared to work with City archaeology, OHA staff, and the descendants to make this a reality.

Additionally, we appreciate the adoption of the FY 2022 budget increase of a 0.75 part time Archaeologist position to a 1.00 full time employee position. Currently, this position is funded by a grant until FY 2024 and has no impact on the General Fund. Making this a full-time permanent position after FY 2024 is critical. The position is essential for meeting the growing workload that the department faces, including the preservation and historic interpretation of waterfront discoveries and the City's increasing concentration on African American stories yet to be told by such sites as the Freedom House. In addition, to fully achieve archaeology's education mission, the AAC requests FY23 funding to change the Museum Education Specialist position to full-time. In the past two years, the part-time Museum Education Specialist created and provided more than 64 Ship Science lessons to Alexandria students and educators. We predict demand for these STEM-based history lessons will continue.

Lastly, we request that the FY23 budget maintain the \$50,000 contingency fund for Alexandria Archeology to continue to meet unexpected needs for conservation, documentation, and research.

Congratulations on your pending retirement and thank you for your support for Archaeology over all the years!

Warm regards,



Ivy Whitlatch
Chair, Alexandria Archaeological Commission

jeb

*Alexandria Archaeology Museum, 105 North Union Street, #327, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3217
Phone: 703/746-4399*