



[Alexandria Beautification Commission](#) | P.O. Box 178 | Alexandria, VA 22313  
[facebook.com/AlexandriaBeautification](https://www.facebook.com/AlexandriaBeautification) & [instagram.com/beautifulalx](https://www.instagram.com/beautifulalx)

### **Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, May 9, 2024 @ 7:30 p.m.  
Charles Houston Recreation Center | 901 Wythe St

ABC MISSION: The Alexandria Beautification Commission was established by the City to advise City Council and citizens on all matters related to City beautification.

**Present in person:** Steven Cohen, Elizabeth Gelfer (Vice Chair), Felicia Hackett, Kenneth Krupa, Monica Murphy, Laura Norfolk, Eleanor Quigley, Yanique Revers, Sara E. Rhoades, Emily Swaim, Daniya Tamendarova (Secretary), Eleanor Trice (Chair); Oscar Mendoza (City Staff)

**Present remotely:** N/A

**Excused absence:** Leah Bancheri, Maralyn O'Brien

**Unexcused absence:** N/A

The meeting began at 7:35 pm.

1. Motion approval of [April 11 meeting minutes](#)

**Sara** motioned to approve March 14 meeting minutes; **Steve** seconded. Approved unanimously.

2. General updates – Eleanor T. – (15 minutes)

Sarah Bagley agreed to be our City Council advisor. **Eleanor T.** and **Elizabeth** are now working with her on finalizing our Awards Ceremony location. The Garden is donating the space but this donation needs to be approved by the City Council. Elizabeth is in touch about getting this on the City Council Agenda in June.

**Eleanor Q** – moved to have Eleanor T. and Elizabeth work with Sarah Bagley on getting the City Council approval of The Garden as the location for our Awards Ceremony; Ken – seconded. Approved unanimously.

Sarah Bagley will attend our meeting on August 8. She will discuss her partnerships in the areas of environment and sustainability; we need to decide what priorities we would like to bring to her.

**Steve:** Do we have her mission statement, so we can better understand her priorities?

Eleanor T.: Sarah Bagley doesn't have a public mission statement online, but here are some recommendations we could consider bringing up to her:

1. Invasive plants ban ordinance
  - a. **Steve:** instead of "ban," consider incentivizing or disincentivizing certain behaviors; **Laura** – yes, ban would be disruptive for many properties
  - b. **Sara:** incentivizing nurseries to identify native plants would be a good start (this was vetoed by the VA governor)
  - c. Liz/Eleanor asked Greenstreet to identify natives through a large display sign & we'd like to ask other garden centers to do similar action.
2. Recommendations for the Potomac Yards property
3. Suggestions for planning and zoning

4. Making Fort Ward as the City arboretum (do we want to push for it?)
  - a. **Monica:** there is a specific definition of what constitutes an “arboretum.” **Monica will look into definitions and some alternative designations that would be realistic for the location.**
5. Update the local ordinance around owners’ responsibility to cut weeds a certain distance from public walkways
  - a. **Oscar:** there is an existing ordinance, but it’s very general and hard to enforce. **Oscar will check on what challenges are currently in place with this existing ordinance, so ABC would be better prepared with a suggestion(s) in this area.**

**Eleanor T** would like the **Sustainability, Education, and Awards Subcommittees** to discuss these suggestions (or add new ones) and bring ideas for approval to the June meeting as we are not usually meeting in July.

**Steve:** Additional ideas – something on renewable energy? Something about recycling, encouraging rain barrels? Solar panels?

**Monica:** I like the idea of rain barrels as a solution to stormwater runoff. Since rain barrels are relatively inexpensive, perhaps the City could provide them. **Sarah:** they are being provided at workshops twice a year, but could be something more frequent.

**Eleanor Q:** In Charlottesville, there is a movement to provide free replacements for removing Bradford pears. Something like this would need to be approved by City Council for Alexandria to request from Richmond.

**Eleanor T.:** Would the **Environmental Subcommittee** in particular come up with top 3 priorities for consideration, since Sarah Bagley is so focused on environment/sustainability in particular? **Monica/Eleanor Q:** Yes.

**Eleanor T./Yanique:** Other updates from the **275 Anniversary events:** During the **275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick-off event**, we handed out ABC Awards flyers and talked about awards with both Alexandria residents and non-residents.

**Eleanor T.:** We also participated in the **Alexandria Dog Walk event**—it was great to pass out our flyers at a place with so much emphasis in sustainability. It was useful to talk to other vendors there. The event was attended by 800-2000 people.

**Eleanor T.:** We also participated at GardenFest. There was an uptick in nominations after that event in particular.

3. EcoCity Festival update (Saturday, May 11 at NVCC from 10 am – 1 pm) – Eleanor T. (10 minutes)

**Eleanor T.:** Our Commission will have a booth at EcoCity Festival; we are partnering with the City to give out 275 seedlings (in collaboration with Tree Stewarts, who will be at the event to provide advice on planting and provide mini-demonstrations on how trees are planted).

Several tree types will be available – 3 different types of oaks (135 total), as well as 70 red buds, and 70 flowering dogwood.

**Eleanor T.** Planting the right tree in the right place guidance is available at [treestewards.org](http://treestewards.org). Commission members planning to attend EcoCity should [review this planning doc before the event](#), so we know how to answer likely questions from the public.

4. Awards-related updates & decisions – Eleanor T. (5 minutes)

**Eleanor T.:** What do we think about **Phil Jubert** (the new Urban Forestry Manager) speaking at the Award ceremony? We could have him discuss his urban forestry plans.

**Steve:** Could we (in addition?) have a business/community representative talk about why they invested in something we are celebrating – e.g., public art/mural.

**Eleanor T.:** There is a new mural going up on Brandlee Center – we could invite the artist to talk about her mural (if it is nominated or if she nominates it).

**Eleanor T.:** What do you think of inviting the Alexandria City Poet Laureate? She will read a new poem on Alexandria Birthday in July. She could read that again at the Awards Ceremony or one of her poems about nature/beauty. [There was general support for this idea around the room.]

**Eleanor T.:** We will also invite Tree Stewarts or Master Gardeners and EcoCity to have a table at the awards ceremony.

**Monica:** I like both highlighting the new forestry position and celebrating it, but also having shorter speaking opportunities from people being recognized.

**Steve:** We could take a hybrid approach to celebrate the position and have him talk on how his plans are relevant to Alexandrians' everyday lives.

**Ken:** Maybe we could select some awardees to talk about their experience/their winning spaces for 2 min or so each (perhaps have their pictures)?

**Eleanor T:** Let's table these decisions until the July meeting.

5. Sub-committee update/discussion/decisions (sub-committee chairs) – 45 minutes

- **AWARDS – Yanique (10 minutes)**

**Yanique:** The deadline for receiving nominations is **May 24**. As of May 9, we have **5 viable submissions (3 community and 2 commercial)**, so more submissions will need to come from Commission members. We will create some more videos to post and talk to as many people as possible at EcoCity.

**Steve:** Can we have a tablet and nominate people on the spot? **Eleanor T:** We can consider doing this next year, since this year we have the seedling giveaway. We will have handouts with the link and QR code leading to the nomination form.

**Eleanor T.:** We need to decide on which date is best for the van tour to review nominees? The Tree Steward is available on a Saturday of June 1 or June 8 (June 1 would give us more time to submit and tally votes).

**Yanique** – motion to have the van tour for ABC members to see the nominated properties and vote on **June 1**; seconded – **Sara/Ken**. Approved unanimously.

**Key Awards dates:** public nominations close on **May 24**; **June 1** van tour for all Commission members to view the nominated properties and vote; complete voting and identify winners by **June 14**.

**Steve:** During the van tour, can we submit our feedback/votes live? Would it be possible? **Yanique:** Will look into it.

**Elizabeth Q:** Consider reviewing our scale – move from 1-10 to 1-5. **There was general preference for using the 1-5 scale.**

- **EDUCATION/Communications – Sara (10 minutes)**

**Sara:** We've been posting almost every day for the past month, driven by the Awards content. There was a great reel about the Awards by Yanique and Leah (the most popular reel on our social media account, with over 1,300 views).

In May to June we will focus more on native plants and planting; will plan to do videos of last year's award winners in June; Alex275; reduce your lawn on May 28 and no-mow May.

**Zebra** articles are doing well. So far, Zebra is printing everything we send them (3-4 articles). Please think about future posts for July.

- Leah suggested to do something about natural mosquito traps
- Sara would like to do something about natural herbicides that don't hurt plants/wildlife – any suggestions from Sustainability Subcommittee is welcome
- interview with the arborist still not received (**Eleanor T.** – the interview was completed, so should receive soon).

We would also like to refresh the website. If you have some time, **subcommittees, please look at your content by May 17 to provide feedback to Sara.**

**Sara:** Forgot to mention: We are also considering to work with Russ, the Tree Steward, to provide content to *Alexandria Times* (so an additional communications opportunity beyond Zebra).

- **SUSTAINABILITY/advocacy (15 minutes)**

**Monica: Richard Dorrier** is helping with the Gateways project. He and Monica are drawing up the site plans – the process is underway. The goal is to provide recommendations to the City for plantings. Before any planting is done, must wait for the July 1 budget approval. The Gateways timeline: 1) in September, add top soil and mulch; 2) order and install plants later in the year (October) by City's landscaper, RightView.

**Eleanor Q.:** For the tree plantings, we are focusing on 3 areas:

- 1) Four Mile Run Park
- 2) The area between Cameron and Eisenhower
- 3) Instead of Ben Brennan Park, refocus on Mount Jefferson Park and Greenway.

The Sustainability Subcommittee will get together with the Arborist after the spring rush in June/July to agree on our planting approach for the fall.

We will have 100-175 trees to plant, divided between these 3 locations (planting dates: Sept. 28, Oct. 19, Nov. 9), would be great to have as many of us as possible attend for plantings.

**Eleanor T.:** Several Commission members visited the Fort Ward Arborist Memorial. It's in a bit of disrepair, and one tree is dead. Monica thought it'd be nice to replace that dead tree with a flowering dogwood, along with a plaque about the new Arborist. This would be part of a phased approach.

**Steve:** Since the 1975 plaque also references the then-Beautification Committee, we could also mention the current Beautification Commission members. Eleanor T. noted that is in the plans.

**Eleanor T.:** As an educational event for Commission members, we could go on an informal kayak tour, if people are interested.

**General feedback:** Would prefer a fall event, and an informal educational opportunity. **Eleanor T. will provide more info.**

Meeting ended at 8:54.

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## ABC GOALS

1. Inspire beautification through the awards program.
2. Promote environmental sustainability through collaboration and engagement with City Council, City staff, and private organizations.
3. Educate local community on beautification and sustainability best practices.

## RESOURCES on the ABC Google drive

- [See updated roster/contact list](#) on ABC Google drive (most recent posted Jan 11, 2024)
- Bylaws, meeting notes, etc. in [General folder](#)

- Draft [2024 planning calendar](#) with key dates
- ABC [partners & collaborators](#)

“Though the word beautification makes the concept sound merely cosmetic, it involves much more: clean water, clean air, clean roadsides, safe waste disposal and preservation of valued old landmarks as well as great parks and wilderness areas. To me ... beautification means our total concern for the physical and human quality we pass on to our children and the future.”

Lady Bird Johnson