



[Alexandria Beautification Commission](#) (ABC) May Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, May 8, 2025 – 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm  
Oswald Durant Center | Alexandria, VA

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**Present in person:** Eleanor Trice (Chair), Liz Gelfer (Vice Chair), Kelsey Pramik (Secretary), Russ Bailey, Dereth Bush, Felicia Hackett, Oscar Mendoza, Eleanor Quigley, Daniya Tamendarova, Alisa Wong

**Present via phone:** Alexandra Garza, Laura Norfolk, Kevin Fisher

**Excused absence:** Sarah Hill, Sara Kohn, Kenneth Krupa, Emily Swaim

**Also present:** Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley; ABC intern, Harlow Barbic; Harlow's father

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**1. Vote to approve April meeting minutes**

a. *Passed unanimously*

**2. Review of recent events**

a. Eleanor T gave a recap on several recent events and activities, including:

- i. The ACPS partnership featured so many community connections, including nurseries, Boy Scouts, the ALX Dog Walk, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia and Brightview planting almost 200 native plants; next steps will be convening a small group to continue the work and build on the partnership.
- ii. There were over 1,000 attendees at the Del Ray Garden Fest; ABC members talked about how engaged and knowledgeable event attendees were.
- iii. Liz's library native garden talks were a major success with an engaged audience - 35+ attendees.
- iv. ABC members were reminded of the Eco-City Festival on May 10.
- v. The Urban Forest Manager has reported 100% survival from Four Mile Run & Mount Jefferson park tree plantings, surviving a drought & looking a bit rough at times. ABC & Tree Stewards helped save the city \$10K with our volunteer work.

- vi. The City has hired a new Director of Parks and Recreation, Hashim Taylor, who is an Alexandria native.
- vii. The new Natural Resource Managers will come to the June meeting.
- viii. Bike gateway signs are getting installed on major networks throughout Alexandria.
- ix. Bicentennial tree signs have arrived & the website is ready.

### 3. Update re: budget & City finances

- a. Sarah gave an update on the Budget passed by the City Council, which did not raise taxes and did not cut positions or services, despite significant cuts from the federal government.
- b. Budget highlights include: a slight expansion to free DASH bus service, an additional \$1 million to ACPS, slight expansion to affordable housing, adding 10 units more housing; giving parking attendant raises; NOT taking funding from Office of Climate Action, with \$200,000 held in contingency, pending a detailed spending plan due in October; designating funding to address food insecurity; increasing stormwater fees incrementally year over year based on prior plans; and raising parking residential fees.  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/news-citywide/2025-04-30/alexandria-city-council-unanimously-adopts-9565-million-fiscal-year-2026#:~:text=The%20Alexandria%20City%20Council%20voted,our%20residents%2C%20and%20our%20workforce>
- c. The City Council will hold a hearing on gas blowers on May 17. It entails a one-year phase out for the city and two-year for residents with a potential incentive program. If passed, Alexandria would be the first jurisdiction in the Commonwealth to do so.
- d. Sarah encouraged ABC members to speak up for natural areas at planning meetings; ex. Robinson Terminal North could have 14 acres of open space.

### 4. Reports from each subcommittee

- a. Awards subcommittee:
  - i. There are five complete nominations and one partial.
  - ii. Kelsey shared a reminder about zone canvassing; ABC members are asked to meet up with their partner before the next meeting and follow emailed instructions to nominate homes.
  - iii. Members confirmed their participation in the July 12 van tour (as of the meeting, at least 10 attendees).
  - iv. Other key dates include:
    - 1. Awards nominations close on June 15.
    - 2. Ceremony will be held on Thursday, Oct 16 evening.
  - v. A thank you to Liz who has been exploring venues and to Sara and Alexandra who are exploring speaker options.
  - vi. The Awards Committee is looking for recommendations on software to create the most streamlined route.
- b. Education subcommittee:
  - i. Daniya gave a reminder about the upcoming Zebra deadlines and thanked ABC members for their contributions to articles.
  - ii. She noted that social media channels continue to see growth.

- c. Advocacy subcommittee:
  - i. Eleanor Q spoke about arts and culture in Old Town North
  - ii. Old Town North is a growing arts hub, including The Muse, which has art studios at ground level, and the future home of Metro Stage at The Anchor; AEDP has issued an Expression of Interest for art space.
  - iii. She invited the committee to take a walk of a proposed route from cultural partners in the area and give feedback.
  - iv. **Vote: That the Commission will walk the streets of North Old Town and identify sites for potential art features.**
    - 1. *Passed unanimously*
- 5. **Public comment/discussion**
  - a. Oscar spoke briefly about the shift in messaging from “no mow” to “environmental area”, which resonates more with residents who see it as getting benefits vs losing recreational space.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.