

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes

Lloyd House
Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Attendance

Present: (11 for quorum)

Christina Bembenek
Christopher Brownlowe
Gayle Converse
Donna DeBlasio
Tyler Hale
Ed Jayne
Nigel Mease
Michael Pope
Rick Price
Russell Simonaro
Roberta Stevens
Steve Stuart
Margaret Whitesides
Ivy Whitlatch

Excused:

Mia Mulrennan
Lisa Schumaier
Rebecca Super
Jenny Waters

Online:

Carol Black

Absent:

Corinne Marasco
John Patrick

Public:

Scott Vierick

City Staff

Liz Williams, OHA Staff
Bill Conkey, P&Z Staff

Agenda

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Brownlowe at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was established.

Approval of Minutes from June 16, 2026:

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ed Jayne and seconded by Donna DeBlasio. The June 16, 2026, minutes were approved unanimously.

Presentation:

Kathy Seifert, Executive Director of the Tall Ship Providence Foundation, provided an update on the future of the Tall Ship Providence. The tall ship needs extensive repairs and the foundation has not been able to successfully fundraise to cover costs.

Commissioner Updates:

Steve Stuart – Planning District 3

- No Report

Christina Bembenek - Planning District 1

- No Report

Gayle Converse - Volunteer

- “Sails on the Potomac” had nearly 100 volunteers at the event. Almost 15,000 people toured the ships and 96% reported that they had a great experience.
- There is a volunteer opportunity at the Alexandria Archives and Records Center at 801 South Payne Street. Information about the center and volunteering there is available online.
- The Junior Docents program at Gadsby’ Tavern Museum will be running through Sept 6th.

Donna DeBlasio – Planning District 1

- No Report

Tyler Hale – Old Town Civic Association (OTCA)

- No Report

Ed Jayne – Community Member

- Jenny Waters has been promoted to Director of the Lee-Fendall House Museum & Gardens. He encouraged members to visit the new exhibit on Light Horse Harry Lee.

Ivy Whitlatch – Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC)

- The State’s approval of the PIF (Preliminary Information Form) for the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex allows its nomination to the National Register to move forward.
 - A Historic Alexandria Foundation grant will support the National Register nomination’s writing.
 - The goal is to get the application submitted by end of 2026.
- Ivy went on Dave Heiby’s tour on Saturday at Old Presbyterian Meeting House.

- She noted that John Carlyle's gravestone is not the original but a 1920s version.
- Plaques and signs on buildings are not necessarily accurate and HARC could explore assisting with updating signs across the city.

Corinne Marasco – Houses of Worship

- Absent

Nigel Mease – The Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission (AHRPC)

- The commission continues to bring Alexandria's easement policies into alignment with Virginia's policies.
- In the fall they will begin work on a strategic plan.

John Patrick – Planning District 2

- Absent

Michael Pope – Alexandria Historical Society (AHS)

- The Digital Museum Launch Party will be on July 28th at 7 p.m. at the Athenaeum.
- A George Washington Presidential Library Field Trip is scheduled for Alexandria Historical Society members on Sept 11th.

Rick Price – Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF)

- The re-roofing project of the Alexandria Academy building has been completed.

Margaret Whitesides – Houses of Worship

- She participated in Dave Heiby's Old Presbyterian Meeting House's cemetery tour.
 - He would be open to giving a tour to HARC of the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex.

Russell Simonaro – Tourism and Business Community

- He is doing research on Marian Van Landingham as there has been talk about the Torpedo Factory being renamed in her honor. Russell recommends the Torpedo Factory name remain, but instead consider naming the plaza behind the building in her honor.
 - Ivy Whitlatch noted that Alexandria's Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA), the Alexandria Waterfront Commission and the Alexandria Commission for the Arts need to be part of the discussion of this possibility.

Roberta Stevens – Alexandria Association

- Karen Paul, the Alexandria Association's president, is close to completing the calendar of speakers for the 2026-2027 membership year. It will be posted on the association's website.

Chris Brownlowe – Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association (NVFAA)

- The Athenaeum is hosting the Alexandria Historical Society's Digital Museum launch.
- Tickets are available online for several upcoming music programs, including The Art of the Duo with Tom Teasley and Dave Ballou on August 5th, Kapwa on August 7th and The Music of Words on August 8th.

Carol Black – Planning District 2

- No Report

Lisa Schumaier – Torpedo Factory

- Excused Absence

Rebecca Super – Carlyle House

- Excused Absence

Jenny Waters – Lee-Fendall House Museum (*report submitted electronically*)

- Jenny Waters, previously the Museum Manager, has been promoted to Museum Director.
- They are continuing to boost indoor programming since the museum is not doing walking tours in the summertime. Lectures include Civil War Women Soldiers, The Secret Interrogators of P.O. Box 1142 and Dr. Richard Bell book talk. Special house tours and collaborative journaling/sketching events are also scheduled.
- They launched the museum's second special exhibition in 2026. *At Home with Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee* is Lee-Fendall's America250-inspired exhibit that explores both how Lee became one of the Revolutionary War's most celebrated figures as well as his ties to this historic house. It will be on display now through the end of the year.
- They are launching a small permanent exhibition on August 29: *Dog Days of Lee-Fendall: Historic Hounds and Their Influence on Lee-Fendall's Current Collection*. Through Lee-Fendall's modern collection, this exhibit will exemplify the role of dogs in American households while simultaneously familiarizing visitors with the home's four-legged residents.
- There is a summer project underway to restore the back porch to its nineteenth-century appearance. The majority of the porch will turn into another historic period room, while a small section will be used for the gift shop.

Mia Mulrennan – Tourism and Business Community

- Excused Absence

Chair Update:

- Chris Brownlowe offered opportunities for organizations to do presentations during future meetings on their backgrounds and what they do.
- HARC's annual report will be forthcoming soon. If there are things that need to be included, let Chris know.

New Business:

September Meeting - A tour of the Wilkes Street Cemetery with David Heiby

- Margaret Whitesides will reach out to Dave regarding a tour for HARC. She recommended the tour last an hour and a half. The discussion resulted in a suggested starting time of 5:30 p.m. with a potentially short business meeting following the tour.

Topics for presentations at future HARC meetings

- Chris asked HARC members to think about topics for presentations related to their organizations to occur during the course of the year.

Old Business:

New Member Onboarding

- Steve Stuart, who is coordinating the new member onboarding effort, will work with Gretchen on the best timing for discussion and on finalizing the materials.
- He shared a draft material list and solicited additional items for the list.

Standing Committee Reports:

Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP) – Nigel Mease

- The August remembrance for Benjamin Thomas is being planned for August 28th, the date Thomas' memorial was held at the Shiloh Baptist Church.

Board of Architectural Review (BAR) Update: Bill Conkey

333 North Fairfax Street

- The BAR approved a Certificate of Appropriateness and Permit to Demolish for the proposed construction of 32 townhomes in the 300 block of North Fairfax Street. Two office buildings on the site will be demolished to make room for the proposed townhomes. Each townhome will be three floors plus a stepped back fourth floor with a roof deck. These will encompass three quarters of the block with the exception of the multi-unit development project at the northeast corner of Queen Street and North Fairfax Street.

802-804 North Washington Street

- The previously approved multi-unit residential development at 802-804 North Washington Street has been purchased by the Van Metre Company. Fencing with new signs are around the perimeter of the site. Demolition work on the below grade structure will begin soon with construction work to follow.

Design Guidelines

- As previously mentioned, the BAR Design Guidelines Committee has broken down the remaining chapters into thirds which will be adopted by the full Board as a group. They have completed the first third of the chapters and will be holding a community meeting on August 17th at the Lee Center to present these chapters and gain public feedback before they go to the Board for adoption. There is also a link on our website where the public can provide feedback if they are not able to attend the community meeting.

Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) Update: Liz Williams

- A few events to highlight:
 - This Saturday is the 1776 sing-a-long and discussion at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. This ground-breaking movie, written by a history teacher and inspiring the musical *Hamilton*, provides insight into the people and politics of the 18th and 20th centuries.
 - The annual ACRP Benjamin Thomas Remembrance will be held on August 28th instead of August 8th. The 28th marks the day of Thomas' funeral in 1899. The event will be held at Shiloh Baptist Church at 7 p.m. Tours of the historic church, where the original funeral service was held, will be offered from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.
 - The annual Friendship Firehouse Festival will be held on August 1st. Great activities and cake are planned for visitors.
- On July 11th, a Naming Committee Ceremony and reception was held at the Alexandria Black History Museum for the dedication of Stevens Street to Moses Stevens Street.

- Greg Beaman published the City Hall, Market Square, and Slavery Documentary Study, a project funded by the Virginia Museum of History and Culture's Commonwealth History Fund Grant. The report and the associated StoryMaps can be found online.
- New Alexandria Heritage Trail Signs were installed at the Tidelock development (about the 1930 annexation and Cross Canal neighborhood) and on Eisenhower Ave in the former location of Bush Hill plantation.

Public Comment:

Scott shared that it was great to be here. He is a member of Alexandria Archaeological Commission with Ivy Whitlatch and the Alexandria Historical Society with Michael Pope. He is looking forward to seeing everyone at the AHS's Digital Museum Launch party.

Adjournment:

The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m. The next meeting is planned for September 15, 2026. No meeting will take place in August.

Respectfully Submitted:

Liz Williams, OHA

Roberta Stevens, HARC Secretary