

Statement of Michael E. Hobbs
before the
City Council
October 14, 2006

Alexandria's Planning Process and the Recruitment of Its New Director of Planning and Zoning

Thank you, Mayor Euille, Vice Mayor Macdonald, and members of Council; I am Michael Hobbs, residing at 419 Cameron Street. I have testified before you at other times on behalf of the Old Town Civic Association and the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations, and although I hope my opinion has been informed by those responsibilities, I am speaking now on my own behalf.

I and many other individuals and organizations have testified many times in recent years on planning and zoning matters before you, the Planning Commission, the Boards of Architectural Review, and the Board of Zoning Appeals. Our opinions have often been strongly felt, and I hope sincerely presented, and I suspect that seldom have any of us been 100% satisfied with the outcome on any particular matter.

But I think that too often we may take the quality of that process for granted. For the fact is that I think that during all of this time, most of us have felt that, regardless of any difference of opinion we may have had with the Planning Department on a particular point, we have had no doubt of the sincerity and good faith of the staff of that Department, from the Director on down, and of their genuine dedication to the principle of broad and honest public participation in the process.

This is not an accident, and not a trivial matter. It takes genuine dedication and very hard work, and all of us in Alexandria—you as our Council, our residents, landowners, and developers alike, have benefited from that dedication to the public interest. Without it, your decisions on planning and zoning matters would be suspect and uncertain. With it, we have seen planning decisions that have aspired to excellence and that have for the most part enjoyed the broad public support that is essential to their success.

You are now at a critical juncture, as you set about the selection of a new Director for the Planning Department and a new Director of Code Enforcement, and those officers select additional staff in their departments. The decisions that you and the City Manager make on those appointments, and the policy and philosophy you communicate to the appointees about how you wish the process to be conducted in Alexandria, will determine whether we will further strengthen the success we have enjoyed up to this point, or whether we will slip back to an earlier, unfortunate time. Mr. Hartmann is to be commended for the steps he is already taking to ensure broad and effective public and civic participation in the selection process. And I urge you, too, not to take the result for granted, and certainly not to reverse course, but to capitalize on the strength that has been thus far so painstakingly built, and to assure that it carries forward renewed and restated into our City's future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Received at 10/14/06

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To Rose 10/10/06 9:45 AM

COUNCIL REQUEST

TO THE TOWN COUNCIL, THE MAYOR AND CITY MANAGER. Consider This as Formal REQUEST FOR SOMEONE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICE FOR THE ALEXANDRIA POLICE DEPARTMENT TO CONTACT ME. MY PHONE # IS 703-683-3684 AND MY ADDRESS IS 3303 B Commonwealth Ave Alexandria VA. I would prefer THAT THIS MEETING TAKE PLACE EITHER AT THE COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY'S OFFICE OR SOMEWHERE AT THE FRANKLIN BACKUS COURTHOUSE (SINCE I AM CURRENTLY BARRED FROM CITY HALL) AND QUITE FRANKLY MY LEVEL OF TRUST IN ANY DUE PROCESS IS NONEXISTENT AT THIS POINT. AS WE ALL WELL KNOW JUST ABOUT EVERY NEGATIVE ENCOUNTER I'VE HAD OVER THE 2 YEARS WITH POLICE CODE ENFORCEMENT AND THE FIRE MARSHALLS OFFICE STEMS FROM MY OCCUPATION AT 3025 MT VERNON AVE (THE OLD YELLOW CAB SITE) REGRETFULLY NOT ONLY HAVE YOU BEEN DISMISSIVE BUT NEGLIGENT TO THE POINT WE HAVE NOW ENTERED IN THE ARENA OF CRIMINAL.

Richard W. Stepp

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