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## **A statement by Bert Ely to the Alexandria City Council**

March 12, 2010

### **Comments on the City's waterfront plan**

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, I am Bert Ely, an Old Town resident since 1981. I am here to address the still-unresolved concerns many Alexandrians have about important aspects of the waterfront plan. However, I must emphasize that I am not speaking on behalf of any organization.

Last month, I spoke to you about serious shortcomings and questionable assumptions in the revenue and cost estimates for the waterfront plan. The draft waterfront plan released on February 25 stated on the attached page that prior to public hearings on the plan, the Planning and Zoning Department would post "additional information and re-analysis on phasing and costs/revenues" for the plan. That most important information has not been posted yet the first public hearing on the plan is scheduled to be held by the Planning Commission just 24 days from now. Even if that information was posted today, 24 days does not allow sufficient time to properly analyze that data and prepare to comment on it.

The February 25 plan also said that "additional design options for the restaurant proposed for Waterfront Park" would be posted. If those design options have been posted, where are they? As you know, the restaurant-in-the-park idea is strongly opposed by many Alexandrians. When will we see those design options for a restaurant concept so widely despised?

The February 25 plan said "a hotel use analysis" also would be provided. Where is the analysis that justifies putting 625 hotel rooms along the waterfront in what would hardly be boutique hotels like the Morrison House?

Perhaps of even greater importance, where is the language for two documents related to the Waterfront Small Area Plan – the Master Plan Amendment #2011-0001 and Text Amendment #2011-0005? The Planning Commission docket for its April 5 meeting cites those documents, but the links to them have not been activated, which suggests that they have not yet been drafted. As you know, the devil is in the details and those two documents will contain the devilish details. How can the public intelligently comment on a complex, multi-faceted waterfront plan without having seen those documents?

Clearly, the waterfront plan is not ready for consideration by the Planning Commission and Council this spring. Further, many elements in the plan – the restaurant in park, the piers and marina, the proposed hotels and restaurants – are neither legally nor economically feasible.

The time has come for Council to say STOP! Stop pushing forward with this so-called plan until it is trimmed back to a more modest and realistic scale that honors the unique, historical character of Old Town and honors the residents of Old Town and indeed all Alexandrians.

There is not enough time this spring for City staff to develop a scaled down and more realistic plan and to allow for sufficient public comment on that plan. I strongly urge Council to postpone until the fall any consideration of a waterfront plan by it or the Planning Commission. That delay will provide time for City staff and the public to go back to the drawing board to develop a much more feasible and acceptable plan.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions.

# Waterfront Small Area Plan - *Public Comment and Review Process*

The public is invited to review the draft Waterfront Small Area Plan (Plan) and to provide comments via the online comment board included on the website or by contacting the Department of Planning and Zoning directly through information also on the website at:

**<http://www.alexandriava.gov/Waterfront>**

Those comments will be taken into consideration for the staff's final recommendations. The Planning Commission and the City Council will hold hearings on the Plan, with their dates and times to be confirmed on the website.

## **Additional Information that is forthcoming for Public Comment and Review:**

Prior to the aforementioned public hearings, at the request of City Council and the community, the Department of Planning and Zoning will post:

- (1) additional design options for the restaurant proposed for Waterfront Park;
- (2) additional information and re-analysis on phasing and costs/revenues; and
- (3) a hotel use analysis.

Finally, with release of the draft Plan on the website you will find an updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document. The FAQs document was originally provided at the December 13, 2010 Waterfront Open House and Community Meeting but has been updated to further address common questions which have been shared by stakeholders. You will also find an updated Parking Summary Sheet. Moreover, notations in the draft Plan indicate that the earlier cost/revenue data has been removed, as it is being re-analyzed. While it is believed that the economic results of this Waterfront Plan are positive, a re-check of the cost and revenue details appear to be warranted.

SPEAKER'S FORM

DOCKET ITEM NO. 2

*speaker*

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**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND GIVE IT TO THE CITY CLERK  
BEFORE YOU SPEAK ON A DOCKET ITEM**

PLEASE ANNOUNCE THE INFORMATION SPECIFIED BELOW PRIOR TO SPEAKING.

1. NAME: Bert Ely  
2. ADDRESS: 200 South Pitt St.  
TELEPHONE NO: 7836-4101 E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
3. WHOM DO YOU REPRESENT, IF OTHER THAN YOURSELF? myself

4. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE ITEM?  
FOR: \_\_\_\_\_ AGAINST: \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

5. NATURE OF YOUR INTEREST IN ITEM (PROPERTY OWNER, ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST, CIVIC INTEREST, ETC.):  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. ARE YOU RECEIVING COMPENSATION FOR THIS APPEARANCE BEFORE COUNCIL?  
YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

This form shall be kept as a part of the permanent record in those instances where financial interest or compensation is indicated by the speaker.

A maximum of three minutes will be allowed for your presentation, except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard on a docket item shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation. If you have a prepared statement, please leave a copy with the Clerk.

Additional time not to exceed 15 minutes may be obtained with the consent of the majority of the council present; provided notice requesting additional time with reasons stated is filed with the City Clerk in writing before 5:00 p.m. of the day preceding the meeting.

The public normally may speak on docket items only at public hearing meetings, and not at regular legislative meetings. Public hearing meetings are usually held on the Saturday following the second Tuesday in each month; regular legislative meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays in each month. The rule with respect to when a person may speak to a docket item at a legislative meeting can be waived by a majority vote of council members present but such a waiver is not normal practice. When a speaker is recognized, the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply. If an item is docketed *for public hearing* at a regular legislative meeting, the public may speak to that item, and the rules of procedures for speakers at public hearing meetings shall apply.

In addition, the public may speak on matters which are not on the docket during the Public Discussion Period at public hearing meetings. The mayor may grant permission to a person, who is unable to participate in public discussion at a public hearing meeting for medical, religious, family emergency or other similarly substantial reasons, to speak at a regular legislative meeting. When such permission is granted, the rules of procedures for public discussion at public hearing meetings shall apply.

**Guidelines for the Public Discussion Period**

(a) All speaker request forms for the public discussion period must be submitted by the time the item is called by the city clerk.

(b) No speaker will be allowed more than three minutes; except that one officer or other designated member speaking on behalf of each *bona fide* neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association desiring to be heard during the public discussion period shall be allowed five minutes. In order to obtain five minutes, you must identify yourself as a designated speaker, and identify the neighborhood civic association or unit owners' association you represent, at the start of your presentation.

(c) If more speakers are signed up than would be allotted for in 30 minutes, the mayor will organize speaker requests by subject or position, and allocated appropriate times, trying to ensure that speakers on unrelated subjects will also be allowed to speak during the 30 minute public discussion period.

(d) If speakers seeking to address council on the same subject cannot agree on a particular order or method that they would like the speakers to be called on, the speakers shall be called in the chronological order of their request forms' submission.

(e) Any speakers not called during the public discussion period will have the option to speak at the conclusion of the meeting, after all docketed items have been heard.