

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 28, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *ps*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST TO PERMIT AN EXCEPTION TO THE MAJOR EVENTS POLICY TO ALLOW THE ADDITION OF FOUR SPECIFIC VENUES EAST OF WASHINGTON STREET FOR FIRST NIGHT ALEXANDRIA

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a request to permit an exception to the Major Events Policy to allow the addition of four specific venues east of Washington Street for First Night Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council permit an exception to the Major Events Policy to allow for the addition of four specific First Night Alexandria venues. This recommendation is in response to a request by First Night Alexandria to permit four specific venues for their annual New Year's Eve celebration, and is supported by the Old Town Business Association, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, KSMET, and the Old Town Civic Association.

BACKGROUND: The City's policy on City-endorsed major events, adopted by Council in May 1986 and modified twice since then, limits major events held in the Old Town area to every other weekend, and prohibits the addition of new major events in Old Town east of Washington Street without prior City Council approval. This limitation derived primarily from concerns of City residents living east of Washington Street who felt that they were being inundated by traffic and crowds generated by special events.

First Night Alexandria, a non-alcoholic New Year's Eve celebration, was first held in 1994. In its first year, a total of 24 performance sites were provided along Washington Street from Duke Street to Queen Street and along King Street, west of Washington Street to the George Washington Masonic Temple. Approximately 4,500 individuals attended this family-oriented event in its first year.

In 1996 and 1997, First Night requested an exception to the Major Events Policy for the purpose of holding performances east of Washington Street because of the success and popularity of the program. City Council approved the exception and permitted First Night Alexandria to hold

performances at specific venues east of Washington Street. First in 1996, one specific site (the then Crestar Bank at 515 King) was permitted and then in 1997 four specific sites (Market Square, Alexandria City Courthouse, and Gadsby's Tavern Museum were permitted, in addition to the Crestar Bank site). In 2001 First Night added the Little Theatre as a site and in 2002 expanded also to the Old Presbyterian Meeting House. Both of these sites are east of Washington Street and were not officially authorized by Council as exceptions to the Major Events Policy (not a situation that First Night nor City staff realized at the time).

For 2003, First Night Alexandria, Inc. has requested an exception to the Major Events Policy to permit four sites east of Washington Street. This expansion was in part a follow up to a meeting last fall of the Old Town Business Association where a request for expansion of First Night to the lower King Street area was articulated. The venues requested by First Night for 2003 include the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Little Theatre, the Torpedo Factory and the Art League.

First Night would have expanded to a few more additional sites in the lower King Street area, but as a pilot program expansion and in reaction to concerns of the Old Town Civic Association, First Night agreed to limit their expansion to just these four sites. The Torpedo Factory site was obtained by City staff by using New Year's Eve as one of the allowed use nights set aside for the City in the City's lease with the Torpedo Factory Artists Association.

First Night Alexandria is a way of promoting the City as an arts and cultural venue and encouraging tourists and residents of the Washington D. C. metropolitan area to visit Old Town and shop and dine during the event or return to the City at another time. Last year First Night attracted approximately 7,000 persons and received extensive regional media coverage. For 2003, First Night Alexandria has again arranged for parking and free Dash Bus service. City staff expects that there will be no disruption to traffic and parking in the Old Town area. The use of Metrorail is also encouraged by First Night Alexandria.

The Special Events Committee supports this request because every First Night Alexandria event since its inception on 1994, has been well-planned and well-organized, and the organizers have worked successfully with City staff to meet all the requirements set forth by the City to hold the events. These requirements include providing additional parking spaces, encouraging the use of Metrobus, and providing free shuttle bus service between performance sites and parking areas. In addition, First Night Alexandria hires and pays for the appropriate number of additional police officers to provide the necessary support for this family-oriented event which features diverse entertainment and fireworks at the Masonic Temple.

The Special Events Committee will evaluate First Night Alexandria with regard to the additional venues east of Washington Street, and report back to City Council recommendations related to First Night for 2004 and beyond. Since venues rely on the donation of space and goodwill by a building owner or tenant, venue availability can change from year-to-year (or month-to-month). As a result, if this year's pilot program works well and the feedback from the business and residential community is generally positive, then it is contemplated that the staff recommendation

for 2004 and beyond may be for City Council to authorize, starting in 2004, up to a specific number of unnamed sites east of Washington Street for First Night. The request for specific sites could then be submitted by First Night to the City Special Events Committee which would make a recommendation on the specific sites for the City Manager to approve.

FISCAL IMPACT: As has been the practice in the past, all out of pocket costs associated with City support on New Year's Eve for First Night activities will be paid by First Night Alexandria. Last year, the cost for City support for this event totaled approximately \$4,908. First Night receives support from the City's Marketing Fund. For 2003, the Marketing Committee has approved \$28,850 for First Night.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1. Letter of Support from Old Town Civic Association
- Attachment 2. Letter of Support from the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
- Attachment 3. Letter of Support from the King Street Metro Enterprise Team

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Janet Barnett, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Old Town Civic Association

P.O. Box 21333
Alexandria, VA 22320

August 21, 2003

Ms. Ann M. Dorman, CMP
Meetings and Events of Distinction LLC
2724 Kenwood Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ann,

In response to your request, the Old Town Civic Association (OTCA) has queried the membership about adding First Night venues east of Washington Street. In order to get a prompt response, we sent the inquiry by email, which reaches about half of our members. We received a good response. Almost all of the respondents were enthusiastic about having some venues east of Washington Street. Therefore, OTCA will support the change. We would, however, like to reserve our approval for future years until we have reviewed the experience with the first year.

Thank you for consulting the OTCA, and please let me know if we can be of help to you in this matter.

Yours truly,

Carolyn L. Merck
President

**ALEXANDRIA
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**

801 N. FAIRFAX ST.
SUITE 402
ALEXANDRIA
VA 22314

PH 703.549.1000
FX 703.739.3805

www.alexchamber.com



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Chamber of Commerce
of the United States of America

Mayor Bill Euille
City of Alexandria
Suite 2300
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Euille:

I hope you will agree that for the past two years *First Night Alexandria* has provided a wonderful New Years Eve experience. In addition to providing a safe environment for all who attend *First Night*, this event had a positive economic impact on the City of Alexandria.

In attempt to keep this event a success and to continue the high reputation of the City of Alexandria, *First Night Alexandria* would like to expand the location of venues down through Washington Street, ending at Union Street. We are aware that as many as eight venues may be available.

On behalf of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, we would like to ask that you look at this request favorably. Experience has shown there is minimum impact on the neighborhoods in the current area. We believe that the neighborhoods in the new area would also have a minimal impact. In fact it would provide those in the area, an opportunity to have easy access to a positive, family oriented, New Years Eve experience.

We support the establishment of venues east of Washington Street, which we understand is an exception to the Major Events Policy that limits new venues east of Washington Street. We hope you will endorse this proposal, which is for a one-year trial, as submitted.

Sincerely,

Ken Moore
President & CEO

CC: Members – City Council
Phil Sunderland

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King Street Metro Enterprise Team

107 S. West Street #179 Alexandria, VA 22314

August 27, 2003

The Honorable William D. Euille and City Council
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Suite 2300
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Euille and City Council Members,

On behalf of the King Street Metro Enterprise Team (KSMET), I want to express our support for First Night Alexandria's proposal to extend venues east of Washington Street for this year's First Night Alexandria celebration. This is an exception to the Major Events policy, which normally limits venues east of Washington Street.

We are aware of and support as many as eight venues that include the Little Theatre and Old Presbyterian Meeting House, which were venues in 2002, as well as the Torpedo Factory, the Art League at Union and Duke Streets, Ben and Jerry's, Starbucks at King and Union, Books-a-Million, and the Holiday Inn. All but the last two have verbal commitments.

We are aware that extending this footprint is a one year trial and will be reassessed after the event to determine if it should be done again in 2004.

It is important for the city of Alexandria that the First Night experience has continuity from block to block, and not just be in pockets of our city. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Begly, MBA
President, KSMET

17

9-9-03



V I R G I N I A

Mayor William D. Euille and Members of City Council
City of Alexandria
City Hall
Alexandria, VA 22314

Alexandria Convention
& Visitors Association
221 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

August 27, 2003

Dear Mayor Euille and City Council Members,

703.838.4200
800.388.9119
Fax 703.838.4683
www.FunSide.com

As President of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association, I am writing in support of First Night expanding its locations east of Washington Street.

Accommodations:
800.296.1000

ACVA continues to support First Night as a major holiday event for the City of Alexandria. In speaking with many of our members, I hear only support for the efforts of this group. It is a quality event which deserves the full support of City Council, city staff, residents and the business community.

If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to give me a call at 703-838-4200 x 202 or email me at Jmitchell@funside.com.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne Mitchell

Cc: Philip Sunderland

Alexandria Hotel Association
Dandy Restaurant Cruise Ships

17

9-9-03

OTBA
Old Town Business Association
205 The Strand - Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Tel: 703-684-0580 - Fax: 703-548-9001

September 1, 2003

Mrs. Ann Dorman
Executive Director
First Night Alexandria
421 King Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314

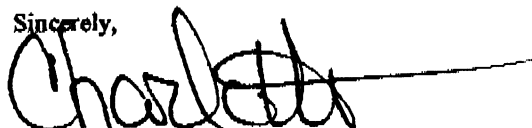
Dear Ann,

On behalf of the Old Town Business Association, I am writing to inform you that we support the expansion of First Night Alexandria east of Washington Street for December 31, 2003. We understand that this is a one year trial that will be observed by both the merchants and the residents.

First Night Alexandria has blossomed into a spectacular event since its first year. I suspect that there will be somewhat of a challenge to create a balance of venues between upper and lower King Street. I trust that you will make the most of the regular venue sites, such as the Torpedo Factory, the Art League Annex, Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Ben & Jerry's, and Starbucks, however, I encourage you to seek additional sites so that "downtown" has as much to offer as "uptown" that evening.

We are confident that by expanding this event east of Washington Street, we are enhancing the opportunities for the business community, not just that evening, but for the future. Thank you for considering the expansion of First Night Alexandria east of Washington Street.

Sincerely,



Charlotte A. Hall
President