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6-25-11

My name is Bob Wood and I live at 711 Potomac Street in Alexandria.

I am glad you've delayed any vote on the Waterfront plan until later. This was a wise move. The plan and the planning process behind it was a failure, plain and simple. It failed to provide decision quality information to this Council, it presented a single flawed alternative that simply could not be amended to reflect true imagination and innovation, it failed to resolve or adequately address crucial legal issues, and, most importantly, it failed to unite our community.

The tired refrain that we spent two years to get here and we consulted the community is equally flawed. This city spent six months to buy a concept from a consultant and the rest of the time attempting to amend this single, overbuilt alternative and mollify increasingly frustrated citizens.

We desperately need a vision for our waterfront that we can all rally behind instead of rail against.

This pause is a moment filled with opportunity. I fervently hope this moment isn't wasted. The signs are not good.

Already, we see a proposal from the city manager that in every way looks like a replay of the structurally hidebound and conflicted Waterfront committee. The vote and the views are preordained by the stakeholder makeup. It is another stalemate or ramrod...pick your own noun...waiting to happen.

It, most assuredly will not produce a new uniting vision or restore trust in the process. And, it will not articulate a new imaginative alternative that is so sorely needed.

I sent a proposal for an alternative structure to this Review Group to each of you last week.

I respectfully recommend the creation of a Citizen Ad-Hoc Review Group with the following suggested mission:

*Review current waterfront planning actions and proposed zoning changes, explore alternative approaches to accomplish agreed to objectives, and recommend changes to the vision, the objectives, and planning concepts that optimally resolve competing interests and promote a waterfront that better serves all of Alexandria as it celebrates this city's remarkable history, present vitality, and future potential.*

The title of this proposed entity is chosen carefully. This group is comprised of private citizens, it is short term or ad hoc, its job is to review and by implication recommend, and it is a

group without political ties or special interest affiliations. The group should be small (eg. five to seven members) to streamline support and business activities. Members, appointed by the city council, should be residents of the city, distinguished in their profession and entirely unaffiliated with any interests competing in the waterfront area.

This Group would have four key attributes. It would be independent, empowered, transparent, and informed.

It would work for the council or the mayor directly and call on staff assets, subject matter experts, and citizen groups to hear their perspectives.

Further details are included in the plan I sent to you. A variety of citizens and citizen groups have seen this plan and favor it over what looks to be old mistakes, recycled membership, and

predictable outcomes. Regrettably, obvious conflicts of interest, if left uncorrected, doom this bright opportunity to rally the community.

I respectfully ask for serious consideration of this alternative approach and would be happy to answer questions.