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City Council Public Hearing – September 13, 2025

Good morning Mayor Gaskins and Members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Sandra Welch, and I have lived in Old Town for 30 years.

I am here to ask you to **pause before giving away a large portion of Waterfront Park for a massive pump station**. I strongly support flood-mitigation efforts—the seawall, new street drains, and other improvements will make a real difference. But if a pumping station is necessary, it belongs in one of the alternative locations under discussion—not in our city's most visible and beloved park.

Over the past three decades, I've seen Old Town transformed. When I first moved here, the river was brown, the shoreline was dotted with vacant buildings, and the waterfront felt neglected. Then came the Olin plan—a bold vision that gave us a clean, vibrant riverfront with homes, businesses, and open spaces. The City made that vision real. Today, when residents and visitors walk from King Street to Jones Point, they experience one of the most iconic waterfronts in America.

At the heart of that experience is **Waterfront Park**—the most accessible and welcoming park in Old Town. Every week I pass through or sit there. I see young families, parents watching babies take their first steps, older neighbors resting in the shade of the willow oaks, kids tossing balls, couples on picnic blankets, and dogs happily sniffing the grass. It is a community gathering place in the truest sense.

That would all change with a pump station. Not only would green space be lost, but families and visitors would no longer choose to picnic or stroll beside an industrial facility. The trees would be cut down, the shade gone. Instead of fresh air and grass, there would be brick, concrete, and steel radiating heat—ugly, noisy, and smelly. It would drive people away.

Losing Waterfront Park in this way would be a **huge step backwards** after decades of progress. It would diminish daily life for Alexandrians and lessen the experience for millions of visitors who help sustain our local economy.

So I respectfully urge you: **pause this decision**. Reconsider the location. Let's protect the heart of our waterfront and preserve the beauty, accessibility, and sense of community that Waterfront Park provides.

Thank you.