



Legislation Text

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File #: 24-1798, Version: 1

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 20, 2024

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**THROUGH:** JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

**FROM:** GRETCHEN BULOVA, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of a Grant Application to the National Park Service for the Semiquincentennial Grant Program.

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**ISSUE:** The Office of Historic Alexandria is applying for a Semiquincentennial Grant from the National Park Service to fund the roof replacement for the historic Gadsby's Tavern buildings.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Approve submission of the grant application; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all the necessary documents to apply for, accept, and implement the grant, if awarded.

**BACKGROUND:** The Semiquincentennial Grant Program was created by Congress in 2020 to honor the 250th anniversary of the United States by restoring and preserving sites and structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places that commemorate the founding of the nation. For the purposes of this grant program, the "founding of the nation" is defined as the period ending December 31, 1800. Historic resources supported by this program may include those associated with the political ideas, well-known individuals, pivotal events, or sites of conflict typically thought of in conjunction with this period of American history.

Gadsby's Tavern Museum consists of two buildings, a ca. 1785 tavern and the 1792 City Tavern and Hotel. In those seven short years, the young Republic began to take shape through the conversations and choices being made in these tavern spaces. Taverns like these provided a place for discussing revolutionary ideas like liberty, equality, and justice, along with how best to put them into practice. These same taverns, however, also

reinforced traditional social order through their operations and activities. Named for Englishman John Gadsby who operated them from 1796 to 1808, the tavern businesses were central to Alexandria's port-based economy, offering spaces to dine, entertain, and spend the night. A large enslaved labor force made Gadsby's renowned hospitality possible.

The tavern buildings, long associated with hometown hero George Washington, were preserved by American Legion Post #24 in 1929 as a memorial to those who died in World War I. The Legion donated the buildings to the City of Alexandria in 1972, so that the historic structures could be restored and opened in time for George Washington's birthday celebration in February 1976. Since the Bicentennial, Gadsby's Tavern has operated as a city-owned museum, received accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums, and welcomed more than 24,000 visitors annually.

**DISCUSSION:** If awarded this grant, the funds would be used to continue the preservation initiatives outlined in the 2021 Gadsby's Tavern 10-Year Master Plan. This plan, commissioned by General Services, outlines maintenance and CIP priorities for the interior as well as the exterior of the buildings that comprise the Gadsby's Tavern complex.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** This grant, if fully awarded, will provide up to \$750,000 to fund the planned roof replacement for the Gadsby's Tavern complex. There is no required match from the City as part of this grant. This project is scheduled to take place in the Fall of 2024, regardless of grant funds.

**STAFF:**

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Liz Williams, Deputy Director, OHA

Donna Poillucci, Deputy Director, Department of General Services