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Title: Consideration of approval for the Office of Historic Alexandria to apply for a Virginia Humanities grant in the amount of \$10,000.

Sponsors:

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Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 3, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of approval for the Office of Historic Alexandria to apply for a Virginia Humanities grant in the amount of \$10,000.

ISSUE: The Office of Historic Alexandria is seeking a \$10,000 grant from Virginia Humanities, formerly the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, to partially fund a Virtual Reality recreation of the ca. 1863 Alexandria waterfront.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of a grant application for \$10,000 to Virginia Humanities which is due on April 15, 2019; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) is partnering with an inter-disciplinary team of graduate students in the GIS, History, Archaeology, and Gaming Departments at George Mason University (GMU) to develop a Virtual Reality cityscape of the Alexandria waterfront in the 1790's, 1860's, and early 20th century. The first step toward this goal is to develop a virtual model set in the early 1860s, based on the 1863 Bird's Eye View of Alexandria image and other maps of Alexandria. The model will depict the waterfront between Prince Street and Cameron Streets, up through Columbus Street. Landmarks such as the Apothecary Museum and Gadsby's Tavern that were in operation during that period, will be featured. The Virtual Reality experience uses portable Oculus Go devices and could be used at outdoor interpretive stations, inside the Torpedo Factory Arts Center, or at any of the OHA Museums.

DISCUSSION: The ability to help visitors visualize the past through technology, using augmented and virtual reality, is growing in popularity. The equipment as well as the software is becoming cheaper and easier to use. With the redevelopment of the waterfront and interest in understanding the history of Alexandria as the seaport, virtual reality can be an effective teaching tool.

FISCAL IMPACT: \$25,000 is needed for the first phase of this project. Grant funds are being sought from multiple sources to support the development of the Virtual Reality model, six Oculus Go devices, and the annual software license. The project will be overseen by OHA Administration and Alexandria Archaeology staff.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Gretchen M. Bulova, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria