



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 7, 2018

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

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

National Trust Planning Grant for Freedom House Museum. Consideration of a Grant Application to the National Trust For Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund in the Amount of \$125,000 to Fund a Museum Planning Grant as Part of a Collaboration Between the Office of Historic Alexandria and the Northern Virginia Urban League.

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of approval for the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) to apply for a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund in the amount of \$125,000.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council authorize the City Manager to:

- 1) Endorse the submission of a pre-application Letter of Intent to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, requesting funding for a museum planning grant;
- 2) If selected to apply to the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund in April, approve a grant request in the amount of \$125,000; and
- 3) Execute all necessary documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** The Freedom House Museum, located at 1315 Duke Street, was opened to the public by the Northern Virginia Urban League in 2008, inside the remaining building of the former Franklin & Armfield slave trading complex. The site, known as the Alexandria Slave Pen, was one of the most notorious slave trading firms in the country between 1828 and 1861. Today, the Freedom House Museum occupies an actual slave pen in the building's lower level and provides an overview of the domestic slave trade in Alexandria and

the United States, featuring known stories of enslaved men, women, and children held at the site.

Ten years later, the Northern Virginia Urban League offers a wide of array of educational, mission-based programs for youth but does not have the resources to staff and manage the Freedom House Museum. Recently, the Board of the Northern Virginia Urban League approached OHA to form a partnership to manage Freedom House Museum's operations.

**DISCUSSION:** The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently launched the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and is soliciting proposals for funding. OHA submitted a Letter of Intent on January 31 subject to subsequent City Council endorsement for a planning grant to explore the current and future use, viability, and preservation of the Freedom House Museum.

With the information derived from the grant funded preservation plan (individual studies about the building, museum operation, financial viability, and public dialog process) both OHA and the Northern Virginia Urban League will be able to better plan for the long-term future of the site and this important museum in the City of Alexandria.

The application process includes an initial online Letter of Intent. Successful projects will be notified in April and applicants will be invited to apply for funding in a second competitive grant process. Notification of award will take place in August. Given the current financial situation of Freedom House the Northern Virginia Urban League, the City, community stakeholders and other interested parties will not wait for the grant decision in August to begin to plan for and address the financial and programmatic issues associated with Freedom House. The planning grant if awarded will enhance those initial planning efforts.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Grant funds will be used to hire consultants to conduct the necessary components of the planning grant.

**ATTACHMENTS:** None.

**STAFF:**

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Gretchen M. Bulova, Acting Director, Office of Historic Alexandria