

Docket Item #11
Planning Commission Public Hearing
March 7, 2023

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of March 7, 2023.

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 7, 2023

***** MINUTES *****

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

March 7, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Council Chamber

Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

Nathan Macek, Chair
Melissa McMahan, Vice Chair
David Brown
Stephen Koenig
Mindy Lyle
Jody Manor
Vivian Ramirez

Members Absent:

Staff Present:

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|-------------------------|---|
| Karl W. Moritz | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Christina Zechman Brown | Office of the City Attorney |
| Nancy Williams | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Jeff Farner | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Tony LaColla | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Robert Kerns | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Ann Horowitz | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Rachel Drescher | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Jared Alves | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Maya Contreras | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Michael Swidrak | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Dustin Smith | Office of Climate Action |
| William Skrabak | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |
| Jesse Maines | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |
| Melanie Mason | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |
| Alex Boulden | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |
| Ryan Knight | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |
| Brian Dofflemyer | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |

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1. **Call to Order.**

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Commissioner Brown was participating remotely from his home in Alexandria due to health reasons. All other members were present at the Call to Order.

Chair Macek then read the following statement into record:

“If you wish to speak on a docket item and have not already signed up to do so, please fill out a Speaker Form online by following the “Sign Up to Speak” hyperlink present on the cover page of this evening’s Public Hearing docket or in person by filling out a hardcopy speaker form, which can be found on either materials tables (located immediately outside the Chambers or at the back of the Chambers), and providing it to Ms. Williams, who has her hand raised.

Please note, comments from the public are limited to 3 minutes per speaker, with the exception of applicants and their representation. To make your public comment through the Zoom application, please click on the "Raise Hand" button located on the Zoom taskbar once you hear your name called upon to make your statement, in order to let Staff know it is you who needs to be unmuted in order to make your public comment.

To make your public comment if you are dialing into tonight’s meeting via phone, please press *9 to execute the “Raise Hand” function once you hear your name called upon to make your statement, followed by *6 to toggle the unmute function. To make your public comment in person, please come up to either podium located at the front of the Chambers when you hear you name called upon to make your statement. Before starting your public comment, please first identify yourself by first and last name.

The City encourages and welcomes public comment from all residents on Planning Commission matters. In keeping with that principle, and with the principle of inclusiveness, this is a reminder of the shared expectation that the content and tenor of public comments always be civil and respectful. Thank you for honoring those principles.

A reminder to all, including Commissioners, Staff, and Speakers in the Chamber to please speak clearly into the microphone to ensure all are able to hear in a clear manner.”

2. Election of Planning Commission Officers for Chair and Vice Chair.

The Planning Commission re-elected Nathan Macek as Chair and re-elected Melissa McMahan as Vice Chair.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Chair Macek inquired as to whether there were any changes to tonight’s Docket. Staff responded that there was a request from staff to defer Docket Item #4, Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00012.

3. Special Use Permit #2022-00109

625 Burnside Place

Public Hearing and consideration of a request for a Special Use Permit for a recycling and materials recovery facility, including a review and increase in the number of permitted vehicles per day (amending SUP #2007-00029, Condition #2).

Applicant: AWRF, Inc., represented by Duncan W. Blair, attorney

Ann Horowitz (Planning & Zoning) presented the Docket Item and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speaker:

Duncan Blair, applicant attorney, spoke in favor of the Special Use Permit (SUP) request and stated that his client was in favor of removing the ceiling on the number of vehicle visits to the site.

Discussion:

Commissioner Lyle recommended that the daily vehicle limit of 225 vehicles in Condition #2 was not necessary as other limits mitigated impacts, specifically the 1,000 ton limit each day. She recommended amending the condition to reflect this. She recognized that other City businesses are not limited by number of vehicles in SUPs.

Chair Macek agreed with Commissioner Lyle’s comments, confirming that a tonnage ceiling was sufficient to control vehicle visits. Prior to the Public Hearing, he researched typical vehicle visits for businesses and found that 250 vehicle trips reflected a sharply lower figure representing trip demand for other retail uses.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Vice Chair McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing and to recommend approval of Special Use Permit #2022-00109, with an amendment to Condition #2 and subject to all other conditions, code requirements and ordinances. The

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motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Reason: The Planning Commission generally agreed with the staff analysis, with an exception to the staff recommended limit of 225 vehicle daily visits in Condition #2.

NEW BUSINESS:

4. **Staff has requested for deferral of this item.**

Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00012

(A) Initiation of a Text Amendment and (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend Article XI, Section 11-700 related to Transportation Management Special Use Permits, to adopt a policy for Transportation Management Plans (TMPs) and to allow changes to existing TMPs administratively.

Staff: City of Alexandria, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to defer Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00012. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

5. Special Use Permit #2022-00106

3603, 3605, 3607, 3609 and 3701 Mount Vernon Ave - The Birchmere

Public Hearing and consideration of a request for a Special Use Permit to waive the sign requirements of Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance; zoned: CDD #6, Coordinated Development District #6.

Applicant: Just a Honky Tonk, LC, represented by M. Catharine Puskar, attorney

Rachel Drescher (Planning & Zoning) presented the Docket Item and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speaker:

M. Catherine Puskar, attorney, representing the applicant, spoke in favor of the request, agreeing with staff conditions with the exception of Condition #4, requesting to change the 10:30 p.m. turn off time to midnight. Ms. Puskar noted other signs in the area that are lit up to and past midnight. The Birchmere operates later into the evening and lit signage is needed as people are leaving the property. This also allows people to see which performers are coming in the future. The previous signs at the Birchmere were illuminated later into the evening.

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PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Vice Chair McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Discussion:

Commission Manor asked staff whether RT's restaurant signage had restrictions on illumination after 10:30 p.m. Staff stated they did not.

Commissioner McMahon stated she was comfortable with the applicant's request, inclusive of the change to Condition #4 allowing for illumination until 12 a.m., as this corridor has compatible signage.

Commissioner Lyle stated she agreed with Commissioner McMahon, noting signage illuminated past 2 a.m. existed in this area. Ms. Lyle recommended that a future text amendment address the allowance for digital signage as school signage could also benefit.

Chair Macek stated he supported the request and amendment explaining this is not inconsistent with the approvals in the past with performance venue uses that require signage that has continuously changing shows, noting the Old Town Theater. He echoed Commissioner Lyle's position on the inclusion of electronic and digital sign allowances in a future Zoning Ordinance text amendment.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Vice Chair McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Special Use Permit #2022-00106, amending Condition #4 and subject to all other conditions, code requirements and ordinances. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis, with the exception of the recommendation of Condition #4 for the signage to not be illuminated between 10:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m.

Chair Macek recused himself from Item #6 below.

6. Development Special Use Permit #2022-10023
Transportation Management Plan Special Use Permit #2022-00112
Inova West End (Landmark) - 6001 Duke Street
Public Hearing and consideration of a request for a (A) Development Special Use Permit with modifications to construct an over one million square foot hospital campus consisting of a hospital, cancer center, specialty care center, Block Q of the Central Plaza, and above and below ground parking garages, including a Special Use Permit for a penthouse exceeding 15 feet in height on the hospital building and (B) a Tier III Transportation Management Plan; zoned CDD #29/Coordinated Development District #29.
Applicant: Inova Health Care Services, represented by M. Catharine Puskar, Attorney

Chair Macek recused himself from Docket Item #6.

Jared Alves (Planning & Zoning) presented the Docket Item and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

M. Catharine Puskar, attorney for the applicant, spoke in support of the project and said that staff and the applicant agreed on the proposed conditions and that the project should be celebrated.

Ann Shack recommended providing convenient parking for the cancer center since patients should be able to travel there easily when they are unwell.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0, with Chair Macek recusing himself.

Discussion:

Commissioner Koenig asked whether the project included a solar ready condition, which has been included on other projects, and then for additional clarification on whether the solar ready condition is part of a typical approval or a discretionary item.

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Staff said that their recommendations do not include a solar ready condition as the primary sustainability features were determined at the Coordinated Development District (CDD) discussion. However, the applicant is exceeding the CDD requirements by providing considerable green roof and by making 75 percent of new parking spaces Electrical Vehicle (EV) charger ready.

Vice Chair McMahon noted that the project is requesting more parking than is typical in a development project and asked staff to clarify their support for the proposed parking. She observed that the proposal provides parking in locations throughout the site, including the existing garage, and asked whether the applicant could reallocate those spaces to other users in the future. Finally, she noted the discrepancy between the Zoning Ordinance requiring 31 loading bays versus the four proposed and asked staff to explain their reasoning for supporting so few.

Staff said that the CDD recognized the uniqueness of the hospital campus by leaving the ultimate parking requirement to the Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) review rather than the Zoning Ordinance provisions. The applicant worked with DESMAN, a parking consulting firm, to project the parking demand and then reduced that estimate to account for transportation demand management goals. Staff supported the analysis and confirmed that the applicant may reallocate any of the parking spaces to other users in the future. For the loading docks, staff discussed the design of the centralized loading area, which means that each building does not need its own loading dock. Staff also observed that the CDD anticipated the loading needs of the site by providing for easy access via Landmark Street/Road 7 and around the existing garage.

Commissioner Lyle reflected on the significance of the Landmark Mall redevelopment and the importance of the new hospital for the region. She highlighted that the Planning Commission has now reviewed multiple projects that have generated little or no public comment, which signifies that staff and applicant outreach has succeeded. She also noted that in some instances, including this one, architecture can function as public art. She accepted that the project has a significant amount of parking.

Commissioner Ramirez supported the project including the proposed parking, given the need for ease and convenience for hospital users.

Commissioner Brown noted that Landmark Mall has long had free parking and he wondered whether that would be continued for users of the new hospital.

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M. Catharine Puskar said that the applicant is still determining whether they will charge for parking, but any amount would likely be nominal like other Inova locations.

Vice-Chair McMahon agreed with Commissioner Lyle’s recognition of the urban design of the hospital campus. She highlighted the proximity of the hospital to the regional transportation network and new transit connections. She understands the challenges of convincing hospital users and staff to use transit and transit alternatives. However, she was pleased that the project can reallocate parking in the future, as needed, as well as the additional open space for the neighborhood.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Development Special Use Permit #2022-10023 and Transportation Management Plan Special Use Permit #2022-00112. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0, with Chair Macek recusing himself.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis. The Commission found that the proposal satisfied the Coordinated Development District #29 and master plan requirements.

7. Public Hearing and consideration of a request for the Planning Commission to adopt a resolution to set its FY2024 meeting schedule and establish continuation dates for meetings.

Staff: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to approve the resolution. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

ITEMS PREVIOUSLY DEFERRED:

8. Public comment will not be taken for this item. This item is for Planning Commission discussion only. Public comment on the Potomac River Generating Station - Coordinated Sustainability Strategy will be accepted at a later date.

Discussion Item: Potomac River Generating Station - Coordinated Sustainability Strategy

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Staff: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

Dustin Smith, the Office of Climate Action, and Michael Swidrak and Rob Kerns, Planning & Zoning, gave a presentation on the Potomac River Generating Station's (PRGS) Coordinated Sustainability Strategy (CSS); staff's presentation was preceded by one from the applicant, HILCO Redevelopment Partners (HRP).

Applicant Presentation: Mary Catherine Gibbs, Wire Gill, LLP and Linda Toth, Arup, gave a brief presentation to the Commission on the Coordinated Sustainability Strategy (CSS) for the Potomac River Generating Station (PRGS) redevelopment. They included the following: information on how the project would achieve the targets outlined in the Coordinated Development District's sustainability conditions, the CSS related to energy codes, Energy Use Intensity (EUI) estimates, district energy feasibility analysis, and renewable energy production and procurement; and targets for energy, water, human health, and climate and resilience. They discussed the CDD's reporting requirements, tracking at a block level, and financial considerations/potential incentives that are to be evaluated by the project's teams for supporting the redevelopment's sustainability strategies.

Staff Presentation: Dustin Smith, Green Building Manger in the Office of Climate Action, gave a brief staff presentation on the following: the project's historic context of the community effort to close the coal power plant, a summary of various regulations which apply to the PRGS site and have informed the sustainability targets in the redevelopment's CDD conditions, a review of the CSS process prior to March 7th, 2023, and how the staff approached assessing what has been included in the applicant's CSS. The staff presentation included a summary of the CDD conditions, strategies outlined in the CSS which will be used to meet the targets outlined in the CDD conditions, and the staff position that the applicant is on track to meet the CDD requirements. Staff is working with the applicant to identify challenges to incorporating district energy systems into the development and is pushing the applicant to design the site and buildings so that future sustainable technologies can be incorporated to the fullest extent possible.

Discussion:

Chair Macek requested clarification on when the written CSS is to be approved by Planning Commission. Staff clarified it is the goal to return to Planning Commission for CSS endorsement in May. Staff will also clarify what approval procedure will be utilized for CSS endorsement. Karl Moritz, Director of Planning and Zoning, echoed that sentiment. Staff is to confirm.

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Commissioner Koenig asked whether staff is expecting to continue to encourage the applicant to explore technologies currently deemed infeasible. Dustin Smith confirmed that staff is and expects to continue working with the applicant to gain a full understanding of what limitations and barriers exist specifically to the PRGS site, so that staff can approach future projects with knowledge of these challenges. Commissioner Koenig encourages staff to continue to explore the possibility of these technologies rather than only outlining the reasons why a technology could not be implemented. The comment was acknowledged by staff.

Commissioner Koenig noted that carbon neutrality is built into the CDD requirements as a goal to be striven for and asked if this a CSS that puts this project on the path to carbon neutrality in the future. Dustin Smith stated that staff believes that it is. This requirement of the Small Area Plan will be achieved overtime through improved technologies, some of which are not currently market-ready, efficient building operations, and the decarbonization of the energy grid.

Commissioner Koenig addressed the applicant's presenter: Linda Toth, Arup. He praised the latest version of the CSS and the role the Environmental Policy Commission has played in this process, and the applicant's presentation. Commissioner Koenig acknowledged the use of International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) 2021 and EUI as a metric for the project is very helpful. He encouraged the applicant to continue to ensure the design for EUI is developed in a way that is as close as the operational EUI we will see once the building is occupied. Commissioner Koenig acknowledged the applicant's targeted optimized design EUI of 35 as a major milestone in this project which will deliver the reductions in energy consumption he has been hoping to see on this project. Commissioner Koenig noted he would like to see projects before the Planning Commission continue to use EUI as a way for the body to evaluate the projects before them.

Commissioner Koenig asked how optimistic the team is that they will be able to find ways to integrate the renewable energy in a way to optimize the amount of renewables onsite, giving the project the possibility of exceeding the minimum required onsite generation. The applicant stated they are working through a photovoltaics (PV) budget for each block and analyzing these opportunities, but technical and regulatory challenges exist. Commissioner Koenig encouraged the applicant to continue to explore ways to exceed the minimum 3% target.

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Commissioner Koenig asked whether the team is evaluating the use of building-material integrated PV. Linda Toth, Arup, explained the four types of PV being evaluated. None are integrated into building materials, such as glazing.

Commissioner Koenig acknowledged challenges with procuring offsite renewable energy. He is looking forward to additional information on how this team evaluates the options to address this issue.

Vice Chair McMahon asked for “commissioning” to be defined. Dustin Smith responded.

Vice Chair McMahon emphasized that amenity roofs should be covered with PV. She encouraged the applicant to look into maximizing the amount of rooftop PV for each building. She then asked how the Green Building Policy can be aligned with IECC 2012. The applicant and staff explained the various benchmarking standards referenced by LEED and the City’s Green Building Policy compared to the state’s energy code, Virginia Energy Conservation Code 2018. Vice Chair McMahon acknowledges the challenges faced by the applicant for use of district energy on this site.

Commissioner Koenig asked when the applicant expects to submit their Concept 2 submissions. The applicant indicated that Concept 2 submission for Blocks A, B, and C are expected in the coming months.

Chair Macek conveyed his appreciation to the applicant for the level of detail they have included in their CSS and their presentation, and that the applicant has conveyed a serious effort to meet the standards in the Old Town North Small Area Plan and in the CDD for this site.

OTHER BUSINESS:

9. Commissioner’s Reports, Comments & Questions

Commissioner Lyle reported the Duke Street in Motion is moving along. She reported that an information session would be held to address misinformation related to the Duke Street project.

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Ms. Williams gave the Planning Commission an update about the Zoning for Housing/Housing for All Kickoff Event that will occur on March 20 and March 21. These sessions will address the why and how related to the goals of this initiative.

Chair Macek reported that the Waterfront Commission did not meet in February. Chair Macek also reported that there is a proposal for a Business Improvement Service District in the King Street corridor that is being fostered by the Old Town Business organization. He reported that the Old Town Business organization's goal is to bring the idea forward to City Council as part of the budget process.

MINUTES:

10. Consideration of the minutes from the January 5, 2023 Planning Commission meeting.

On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to approve the minutes of January 5, 2023 and February 7, 2023. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

11. Consideration of the minutes from the February 7, 2023 Planning Commission meeting.

On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to approve the minutes of January 5, 2023 and February 7, 2023. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

ADJOURNMENT

12. The Planning Commission Public Hearing was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.