

Docket Item #14
Planning Commission Meeting
March 6, 2018

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of February 6, 2018.

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – FEBRUARY 6, 2018

* * * M I N U T E S * * *

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

February 6, 2018

7:00 P.M.

City Hall Council Chambers
Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

Mary Lyman, Chairwoman
Nathan Macek, Vice Chairman
David Brown
Stephen Koenig
Mindy Lyle
Melissa McMahon
Maria Wasowski

Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Karl W. Moritz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Christina Brown	Office of the City Attorney
Nancy Williams	Department of Planning & Zoning
Kristen Walentisch	Department of Planning & Zoning
Ann Horowitz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Femi Adelakun	Department of Planning & Zoning
Madeleine Sims	Department of Planning & Zoning
Mary Christesen	Department of Planning & Zoning
Shaun Smith	Department of Planning & Zoning
Sam Shelby	Department of Planning & Zoning
Katherine Carraway	Department of Planning & Zoning
Robert Kerns	Department of Planning & Zoning
Dirk Geratz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Ryan Price	Department of Planning & Zoning

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The Planning Commission held a Work Session prior to the Public Hearing to discuss the FY19 Long Range Interdepartmental Planning Work Program. The Work Session was held at 6 p.m. and went until approximately 7 p.m. and was held in the City Hall Council Workroom, 2nd floor of City Hall, 301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

1. Call to Order.

The Planning Commission Public Hearing was called to order at 7:02 p.m. All Members were present.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

2. Special Use Permit #2017-0124
116 King Street (parcel addresses: 114 and 118 King Street) - Urbano 116
Public Hearing and consideration of a request to operate a restaurant; zoned: KR/King Street Retail.
Applicant: Urbano 116, LLC

P&Z presented the case and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

Randy Randol, 3 Franklin Street, spoke in opposition to the request, indicating conditions in past Special Use Permits (SUPs) for parking on the Waterfront are not observed. He also suggested that there is currently a lack of parking in Old Town and that parking spaces are inadequate to handle anticipated demand from new businesses. He requested that the City consider the cumulative demand on parking for restaurants.

Philip Matyas, 219 N. Pitt Street, expressed concerns about the parking impact of the restaurant on the neighborhood and requested that the entire number of allowable seats, employees and standing opportunities be looked at within the context of an impact of the parking within two or three blocks, particularly with plans for other new businesses in the area. He also indicated that the matter of an offsite alcohol license should be taken into consideration through a hearing rather than through the consent calendar. He requested deferral and suggested working out a parking/loading plan for this area.

Hal Hardaway, 311 South Union Street, expressed interest in accessing the Old Town Restaurant Policy and asked for clarification as to why SUPs docketed for full-hearing reviews may be placed on the consent calendar.

Chairwoman Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

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Discussion:

In a response to speakers' comments, Vice Chairman Nate Macek noted that data from the Waterfront planning process and the Old Town Area Parking Study show there are available parking spaces in garages in the Old Town area. He also noted the availability he has seen on his own excursions out in this part of the City. He further indicated that policies have been developed to help address parking problems, such as the option for residents to petition to have paid parking on their streets in the evening hours as implemented on the 100 block of Prince Street. This policy was designed to ensure that more visitors use the parking garages on King Street in order to open up more street parking for residents.

Commissioner Brown inquired as to how long the King Street Trolley operates. In response, the free King Street Trolley transports riders between the King Street Metro Station and the Potomac River Waterfront and back. The Trolley runs daily from 11:30 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. every 15 minutes.

Chairwoman Lyman asked for clarification on a speaker's question regarding the loading and unloading activities between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Staff clarified that Condition #22 restricts loading and unloading activities between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Commissioner McMahon indicated she heard the first speaker raise a concern about off-premises alcohol sale and use and she clarified that based on Condition #5 on-premises alcohol service may be permitted, consistent with a valid Virginia ABC license, but no off-premises sales shall be allowed.

Vice Chairman Nate Macek expressed support for the request for a number of reasons. He stated it is a site that has been vacant for a while and while it recently housed pop up retail it has not thrived as a retail location for a while. He believes a restaurant is better than an empty storefront. He expressed appreciation for comments about parking but believes the City has good policies to address those comments along with options for accessing King Street restaurants by multiple transportation modes, such as the Trolley, Bikeshare, Ridesharing, Walking and more. He indicated that part of this is why we have adopted new parking standards. He added that he thinks this will be a good addition to Old Town and he is pleased to support it.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: This item was removed from consent. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Chairwoman Lyman, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Special Use Permit #2017-00124 subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances, and staff recommendations. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

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3. Special Use Permit #2017-0126
1725 Duke Street - Sancerre Restaurant
Public Hearing and consideration of a request to operate a restaurant with outdoor dining, live entertainment, and off-premises alcohol sales; zoned: OCH/Office Commercial High.
Applicant: Sancerre, LLC

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Special Use Permit #2017-0126.

OTHER BUSINESS:

4. Discussion item: Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force Report
Lynn Hampton, Chair the Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force, provided an overview of the Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force Report. She indicated the Task Force was established by the City Council in May 2017 and had its first organizational meeting in July. She noted that, starting in September, the Task Force began looking at processes and projects. Additionally, they toured facilities and had 33 meetings. She outlined their charge as follows:
 - 1) Develop and recommend a long-range Joint City-Schools Facilities Capital Improvement Plan (“FCIP”) with prioritization of 28 identified City and Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) facility projects utilizing identified available funding for the period FY 2019 – FY 2027.
 - 2) Determine opportunities for joint facility / site / co-location opportunities for City and ACPS programs;
 - 3) Review and recommend municipal facility planning and civic engagement principles, standards and practices;
 - 4) Review and recommend alternative capital project delivery methods and project management structures;
 - 5) Review and recommend governance of capital planning and project delivery; and review and recommend asset management strategies

She mentioned the Task Force worked through three established subcommittees and was able to complete their charge within five months.

Chair Hampton mentioned that the Task Force’s final report was presented last week to the City Council and School Board, and it contains a number of recommendations plus an implementation plan. She summarized some of the recommendations and said the full report is online for more detail. Some recommendations include the City and the School Board to work together for the community of Alexandria to immediately:

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- 1 Create a joint capital facilities committee;
- 2 Identify a champion for alternative delivery by engaging with internal and external resources to obtain advice on drafting a process that can be replicated and criteria for identifying applicable projects;
- 3 Determine shared objectives and requirements for asset data and supporting computerized maintenance management systems;
- 4 Develop a City-wide Facilities Master Plan be developed;
- 5 Develop a concept of a new reality based on today's and the future needs of municipalities including continued strained budgets; and
- 6 Develop a concept of managing for the capabilities needed in our City instead of focusing on capital needs.

Discussion:

Commissioner Koenig indicated he is thrilled with the work of the Task Force and believes it is tremendously substantial. He inquired as to how the City and ACPS can work towards breaking down silos and working more jointly. Chair Hampton indicated that bonuses and recognition can be utilized to encourage people to think of ways to come to joint solutions. She also noted that the goal is to set up the joint capital facilities committee by February to assist with such efforts. Vice Chairman Macek thanked Chair Hampton and the distinguished members of the Task Force for their work. He inquired as to whether there are more opportunities for joint private and public ventures such as the fire station at Potomac Yard. Chair Hampton said yes and said the Task Force asked what they can do to make project delivery easier, faster and more creative. In response, she said, first, they will form the committee and then find a champion. She added they will also utilize Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP) to find a connection to the private sector. Commissioner Wasowski indicated that if there is thinking occurring around co-location she would like to remind everyone of the need for performance space in the City. Chairwoman Lyman commended the Task Force as well and indicated that she was impressed with the call for leadership and balancing that with civic engagement. She mentioned the recommendation for better public education and inquired how the Task Force would accomplish that. Chair Hampton noted that civic engagement is important. She thinks Alexandria does a good job at outreach and thinks we need to keep encouraging people to get involved and assure them they are being listened to and that leadership makes assessments based on all input.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND ITEMS PREVIOUSLY DEFERRED:

5. Text Amendment #2017-0001
Floor Area Ratio
(A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend sections 2-145, 2-195, and 7-202 and to add new sections 2-113.1 and 2-194.1 regarding floor area ratio.
Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning

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P&Z presented the text amendment and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

Ken Wire spoke in support of the text amendment stating that the proposal is much clearer than the existing floor area regulations. Mr. Wire also stated that calculation of above-grade parking garages should be re-evaluated at a later date if necessary.

Chairwoman Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

Discussion:

Chairwoman Lyman asked staff for clarification regarding floor area calculations of existing above-grade parking garages during and after the proposed six-month transition period.

Commissioner Lyle asked staff how the proposed amendment would affect office to residential conversion projects. She also confirmed that outreach was conducted to the development community to ensure they were aware of the text amendment's impact on floor area calculations of above-grade parking garages.

Commissioner McMahon spoke in support of counting above-grade parking garages as floor area. She stated that an above-grade parking garage adds to a site's overall bulk regardless of use of the space. She also stated that counting above-grade parking garages as floor area could encourage developers to construct garages that could more easily be converted to other uses.

Chairwoman Lyman and Commissioners Wasowski and McMahon noted that excluding the area underneath balconies and other architectural features would have a positive impact on residential buildings.

Commissioner Koenig stated that the proposed text amendment would provide more clarity to architects and builders than the existing floor area regulations.

Commissioner Brown stated that the proposed text amendment could minimize future problems with implementation of floor area regulations.

Vice Chairman Macek asked staff about a mechanism or plan to review the effect of the proposed text amendment on new development, especially infill, and to track any related unforeseen circumstances. Staff responded by indicating that the City will be looking at infill regulations and, as part of that, will analyze how these changes may impact infill. It was noted that if there is something that emerges that particularly requires study or more

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investigation than does clean up then staff will schedule a work session to discuss the matter with the Planning Commission as part of the process.

Chairwoman Lyman indicated that she is pleased with staff's work and how it is important to consider changes such as these to make regulations more sensible.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Text Amendment #2017-0001. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0. On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Text Amendment #2017-0001. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

NEW BUSINESS:

6. Special Use Permit #2017-0122
417 King Street (parcel address: 411 King Street)- Taco Bell Cantina
Public Hearing and consideration of a request to operate a restaurant and for outdoor dining; zoned: KR/King Street Retail.
Applicant: TB Cantina, LLC

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission voted to defer Special Use Permit #2017-0122.

Reason: The applicant failed to provide proper written notice.

7. Text Amendment #2018-0001
NR Zone
(A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; and (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend sections 4-1403, 4-1403.1, and 4-1404 of the Zoning Ordinance to add permitted uses, administrative uses, and special uses to the NR zone. Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Planning & Zoning

P&Z presented the text amendment and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

Duncan Blair, attorney for the Arlandria Center property owner, requested that the Planning Commission consider permitting health and athletic clubs located in a shopping center, hotel, or office complex and without hours limitation as a by-right use.

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Kevin Beekman, 3905 Elbert Avenue, supported the proposed amendments to the NR zone and stated that the proposed new uses would be compatible with the neighborhood plan.

Chairwoman Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

Discussion:

Vice Chairman Macek stated that he supported the removal of the hours limitation for permitted health and athletic clubs in a shopping center as he believed that neighborhood impacts would not result from a 24-hour operation and the location of a health and athletic club in a long-vacant tenant space at the Mount Vernon Village Center would benefit the community. He and Commissioner Lyle concurred that health and athletic club impacts should not be any greater than a retail operation, which is commonly a permitted use. Commissioner McMahon supported the Vice Chairman's position, including the proposal to add hotels and office complexes as locations for permitted health and athletic clubs. Commissioner Wasowski agreed with her colleagues' rationales, however, she expressed concern that the community would not receive enough notice prior to the City Council hearing regarding the Planning Commission recommendation to permit a 24-hour health and athletic club in the Mount Vernon Village Center as a by-right use. Planning Director Karl Moritz stated that staff would notify the Arlandria Implementation Advisory Group of the Planning Commission's recommendation prior to the City Council meeting.

Commissioner Brown asked the Planning Director to comment on the departmental approach to text amendment proposals. The Director replied that the department has responded to evolving business and community needs through individual amendments on specific issues, rather than waiting until resources are available to make comprehensive changes to the Zoning Ordinance.

Vice Chairman Macek suggested that staff consider revisiting the Special Use Permit (SUP) requirement for "bus shelters on private property," which appears in several zones. Commissioner Wasowski added that the SUP hours limitations for health and athletic clubs should be reviewed as these facilities often operate on a 24-hour schedule.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion made by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Commissioner Wasowski, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Text Amendment #2018-0001. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Text Amendment #2018-0001 with a revision to the permitted use section for a health and athletic club use from "health and athletic clubs if located in a shopping center and operating hours are limited from 5 a.m.

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to 11 p.m.” to “health and athletic clubs if located within a shopping center, hotel or office complex.” The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Reason: The Planning Commission generally agreed with the staff recommendation.

8. Development Special Use Permit #2016-0003

Special Use Permit #2017-0125

Special Use Permit #2018-0003

203, 205, 211 Strand Street - The Strand

Public Hearing and consideration of requests for: (A) a Development Special Use Permit and site plan with modifications to construct 18 new residential units and ground floor retail at 211 Strand and 205 Strand, including Special Use Permit requests for height over 30 feet in the Potomac River Vicinity Height District, for 2 mechanical penthouses, and a parking reduction; (B) a Special Use Permit for a restaurant in the W-1 zone; and (C) a Special Use Permit for a restaurant in the W-1 zone; zoned: W-1/Waterfront.

Applicant: The IDI Strand LC, represented by Kenneth Wire, attorney

P&Z presented the case and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

Ken Wire, attorney representing the applicant, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Wire noted the applicant has been reaching out to the neighbors over the past two years. Mr. Wire also commented on the parking, noting that under the new commercial parking regulations, that are not yet in effect, the project would not need a retail parking reduction. Commissioner Brown asked Mr. Wire why Chadwicks is being included in the project when no changes are proposed for the building. Mr. Wire noted that the land area allows for additional units in the project.

Eric Scott, 114 Prince Street, spoke in favor of the project but had concerns about parking. Mr. Scott noted that there is limited street parking available for residents and asked that the project be excluded under the Zone 1 parking option.

Philip Matyas, 219 N Pitt Street, spoke in favor of not permitting residential zone parking for the project. Mr. Matyas also expressed his concerns about the requested retail parking reduction. Mr. Matyas also noted he wanted to see an affordable housing unit on-site instead of the monetary contribution.

Robert Ray, 400 Prince Street, spoke in favor of the project. Mr. Ray noted there is more open space than required, and that the design of the building is excellent.

Chairwoman Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

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Discussion:

There was discussion about how the project evolved for the better over the course of the past couple of years. Vice Chairman Macek commented on how retail use on the ground floor fills in the gap of activity on The Strand between the Hotel Indigo and Chadwicks, and that the community support from the Old Town Civic Association goes a long way. Vice Chairman Macek noted that the proposed restaurant use is consistent with the vision of the Waterfront Plan and complies with the W-1 zone, and that he is comfortable with the parking reduction request for the retail uses.

Commissioner McMahon noted that the project provides good permeability on this block and has high-quality bike parking facilities. Commissioner McMahon also noted that the architectural design breaks up the scale of the building and fits in well with the surrounding context. Commissioner McMahon also echoed Vice Chairman Macek's comment that ground floor activation is key in this area, and the proposed retail lining the building achieves that goal. Commissioner McMahon also noted that she would prefer to have an affordable housing unit on site.

Commissioner Wasowski noted that typically she is supportive of on-site affordable housing, however, in this case she feels that it is not the right place for a unit, but the contribution will allow the City to buy a unit that has better transportation access. Commissioner Wasowski also noted that she likes the architecture, and that the project will fill in the Waterfront as envisioned by the Waterfront Plan.

Commissioner Lyle noted that she is very happy to see the final block of the Waterfront Plan come forward for approval. Commissioner Lyle also noted that it is one of the best Waterfront projects she has seen.

Commissioner Koenig also expressed his support of the project, noting the massing and architecture fit well with the neighborhood. Commissioner Koenig also commented on the two pedestrian alleys and how the retail integrated in the alleys is a critical and successful design move.

Commissioner Brown expressed his support of the project. He noted that the project is well designed so including Chadwicks is not an issue in this specific case. Chairwoman Lyman expressed her support of the project, noting that the project is highly commendable, and agreed with Commissioner Wasowski that this is not a good site for affordable housing and that the dollars will go further in a less expensive part of the City. Chairwoman Lyman also noted her comfort with the parking reduction request and that the size of the retail will not negatively impact parking in the area. Chairwoman Lyman also noted that the design of the project is her favorite among the Waterfront projects.

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PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chairman Macek, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Development Special Use Permit #2016-0003, Special Use Permit #2017-0125, and Special Use Permit #2018-0003 subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and other staff recommendations. The motion carried on a voted of 7-0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

OTHER BUSINESS:

9. Commissioner Reports, Comments & Questions

MINUTES:

10. Consideration of the minutes from the January 4, 2018 Planning Commission meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission voted to defer the minutes from the January 4, 2018 meeting.

11. Adjournment

The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.