

Docket Item # 17
Planning Commission Public Hearing
May 6, 2025

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of April 1, 2025.

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

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

April 1, 2025 7:00 P.M.

Council Chamber

301 King Street, City Hall Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

Melissa McMahon, Chair

*(Chair McMahon
participated electronically)*

David Brown

Robert Dubé

Stephen Koenig, Vice Chair

Holly Lennihan

Jody Manor

Vivian Ramirez

Staff Present:

Karl Moritz

Paul Stoddard

Nancy Williams

Christina Zechman Brown

(Christina Zechman Brown participated electronically)

Rob Kerns

Nathan Randall

Leon Vignes

Katherine Carraway

Julia Taylor

Maya Contreras

Margaret Cooper

Mavis Stanfield

Lanning Blaser

Helen McIlvaine

Ryan Freed

Dustin Smith

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Office of the City Attorney

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Office of Management and Budget

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Department of Planning & Zoning

Office of Housing

Office of Climate Action

Office of Climate Action

#1. CALL TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Public Hearing was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Chair McMahon participated electronically from Denver, Colorado, where she was attending an American Planning Association Conference. All other members were present at the Call to Order.

Vice Chair Koenig presided over the Public Hearing and called the meeting to order.

“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 your 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 comments 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 Chambers to please speak clearly into the microphone to ensure all are able to hear in a clear manner.”

Vice Chair Koenig asked if there were any changes to the Docket. Ms. Williams announced there are no changes to the Docket. She did share that Commissioner Brown will be requesting to pull Item #4, a Rezoning and Development Special Use Permit for 126 Longview Drive and 2921 Nob Hill Court – Westridge Towns -- from the Consent Calendar. The Item was pulled by Commissioner Brown.

CONSENT CALENDAR

- #2** Consideration of adoption of a Resolution setting the FY 2026 Planning Commission meeting schedule and to establish continuation dates for meetings.
Staff: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Manor, seconded by Commissioner Ramirez, the Planning Commission voted to adopt the Resolution setting the FY 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0 on the Consent Calendar.

- #3** Special Use Permit #2025-00007
4001 Mount Vernon Avenue
Public Hearing and consideration of a Special Use Permit for a 10-year review to assess the compatibility of a nonconforming automobile service station use with other uses and redevelopment in the area (amending SUP #2025-00001); zoned NR/Neighborhood retail (Arlandria).
Applicant: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Manor, seconded by Commissioner Ramirez, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of SUP #2025-00007. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0 on the Consent Calendar.

- #4** Rezoning #2025-00001
Development Special Use Permit #2024-10010
126 Longview Drive & 2921 Nob Hill Court - Westridge Towns
Public Hearing and consideration of requests for (A) an amendment to the official Zoning Map to change the zoning designation for a portion of the site from R-8/Residential zone to the RA/Multi-unit zone, and (B) a Development Special Use Permit with a Site Plan and modifications to construct one single-unit dwelling and three multi-unit dwelling buildings, and Special Use Permit requests for additional density pursuant to Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance and a parking reduction to allow compact parking spaces; zoned R-8/Residential.
Applicant: Old Creek Homes LLC, represented by Duncan Blair, Attorney

Staff made a presentation and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers

Ronald Garner, adjacent neighbor, spoke of concerns with on-street parking conditions, particularly if the compact-sized spaces in the garages push residents with larger vehicles to park on the street. He also expressed concern about the safety of children with an increase in traffic and how the reduced setback on the north side of multi-unit Building #1 would negatively impact his property next-door.

Duncan Blair, attorney for the applicant, spoke in support of the project and answered a series of questions from Commissioner Brown about the financial risks developers might experience if they used Zoning for Housing regulations in their projects. He also represented to the Planning Commission that he will work with Department of Planning & Zoning (P&Z) staff on the two matters identified by Chair McMahon, namely, landscape screening of adjacent properties and site lighting, as part of the Final Site Plan review process

Discussion

Commissioner Brown questioned Duncan Blair, attorney for the applicant, regarding the financial risks for developers of projects utilizing the newly adopted Zoning for Housing single-unit reform, given that such regulations are still being litigated. Commissioner Brown stated that he disagreed with staff analysis that the Small Area Plan designation of Residential Low is consistent with the proposed RA/Multi-unit zoning for this site. He also expressed a preference for avoiding rezonings unless absolutely necessary, believing that development should use Zoning for Housing regulations instead. He stated that, hypothetically, Zoning for Housing could be utilized with the existing R-8/Resident zoning to allow for a similar number of units at the site on four or five lots, each with one four-plex building.

Chair McMahon agreed with the staff analysis. She found that the proposal is consistent with the Residential Low designation in the Small Area Plan, pointing to an area developed with townhouses west of this site as being in the same Residential Low category. She stated that, while she would like to see Zoning for Housing regulations used when possible, they may not be the right tool to use in every instance. For example, their use at this site might have led to no parking being required. She believed that it wouldn't be appropriate to deny approval of the project merely because it doesn't use Zoning for Housing regulations. Chair McMahon noted that this location, close to Duke Street and its future Transitway improvements, is a good location for new additional housing, at a smaller size than seen with other projects, and with an on-site affordable unit. She also considered the Special Use Permit (SUP) setbacks requested as reasonable for this development. She asked staff, and the applicant, to review the planting and lighting plans as part of the Final Site Plan review process to ensure that glare from street light fixtures is reduced and that landscaping can provide a degree of screening from adjacent residences. Commissioner Brown responded to Chair McMahon's comments, stating that rezoning a single parcel from single-unit zoning to multi-unit zoning is not preferred in his viewpoint. Also, he does not agree that the precedents cited in staff's response to his memorandum are comparable to this situation as they predate Zoning for Housing.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Lennihan, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of DSUP #2024-10014. The motion carried on a vote of 6-1.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Lennihan, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of REZ #2025-00001. The motion carried on a vote of 6-1.

New Business

- #5** Advisory recommendations to the City Manager, under Section 6.14 of the City Charter, regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Improvement Program.
Staff: City of Alexandria, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) and the Department of Planning & Zoning

Staff made a presentation and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers

N/A

Discussion

Commissioner Manor had a clarifying question pertaining to transportation capital costs. Julia Taylor from the Office of Management and Budget indicated that most of the capital costs are for WMATA and DASH.

Commissioner Dube asked a question pertaining to whether the Federal Transit Administration grant for the Duke Street Small Area Plan that has been awarded to the City will actually be forthcoming. P&Z staff responded that the City has been assured that the \$550,000 in Federal Transit Administration grant funding will be forthcoming.

Chair McMahon indicated that she thinks the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is very consistent with the City's Master Plan. She summarized examples of City-wide Master Plan elements as well as Small Area Plans (SAP) that are being funded through the CIP as described by staff. She said that is important because when we talk about consistency, we are talking about how we use the CIP to implement the vision of the community.

She further stated that she likes the process because every time we adopt a new SAP, staff ensures recommended improvements are placed into the funding process as necessary. For example, she said CIP continues to fund our critical affordable housing projects. She indicated that there are affordable housing projects in the pipeline and how CIP will be helping to bring them to fruition.

Chair McMahon acknowledged that staff is being as practical and strategic as possible with CIP since, some of the City's larger projects are requiring large sums of money, yet it does not seem like we are sacrificing anything. She added that she is glad that the \$200,000 earmarked for the recreation center in AlexWest is included.

Vice Chair Koenig agreed and said he too is glad to see the funding for the AlexWest recreation center. He also complimented staff indicating that the CIP is well organized with a huge amount of very important data for community.

In terms of the Waterfront, Vice Chair Koenig mentioned concerns about the amount of money on flood mitigation and how important it is to ensure the other aspects related to open space are fulfilled.

Commissioner Ramirez stated that this is a very intricate process. She said she found it interesting to see how the CIP is tied to the projects, and projects are tied to infrastructure indicating we often don't appreciate infrastructure systems until there is a failure. e.g., stormwater system or roads. She referenced

that in the North Potomac Yard Plan Area, the City has partnered with the VA Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) to deploy Smart Mobility pilots and to lay the groundwork for future innovation in this area. Under that effort, the City is working with VTTI through the newly formed Smart Mobility Lab, funded by a federal grant that was awarded to the City, to host a data exchange and develop a platform for monitoring and managing traffic through data. The City was awarded FY 2028 funding to deploy connected vehicle infrastructure that will provide valuable insights as we determine how to better manage our transportation system. In FY 2026, the City will begin the process to deploy smart signals along the Route 1 corridor as part of the Traffic Adaptive Signal Project (\$7.68 million of SMART SCALE funding budgeted in a previous CIP).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Dubé, the Planning Commission voted to find the FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program consistent with the City's Master Plan. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

#6

Rezoning #2024-00004

Development Special Use Permit #2024-10017

Encroachment #2024-00008

802 and 808 N. Washington Street - The Whitley Phase 2

Public Hearing and consideration of requests for (A) amendment to the official Zoning Map to change the zoning designation for the site from CD-X/Commercial Downtown zone (Old Town North) to CRMU-X/Commercial Residential Mixed Use (Old Town North) zone; (B) a Development Special Use Permit with a Site Plan and modifications to construct a multi-unit dwelling, including Special Use Permits to increase the floor area ratio to 2.5 in the CRMU-X zone, for the utilization of Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance for bonus density for the provision of affordable housing, and a parking reduction; and (C) an Encroachment into the public right-of-way for a portion of the front façade of the existing building at 802 N Washington St. and balconies along North Washington Street; zoned CD-X/Commercial Downtown (Old Town North).

Applicant: 808 Washington LLC by Kenneth W. Wire & Megan C. Rappolt, Attorneys

Speakers

Melissa Kuennen, speaking as a neighbor in Old Town North, expressed concern that the design of the building does not reflect the character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Board of Architectural Review's (BAR) Washington Street Guidelines. She also said that any public art contribution should go towards celebrating the Old Town North Arts and Cultural District.

Ryan Whitaker, President of the Old Town North Alliance, requested that the public art contribution be used in Old Town North to support the Old Town North Arts and Cultural District. He also noted that his organization would have welcomed a meeting with the applicant to discuss the project.

Ken Wire, attorney for the applicant, spoke in support of the project and discussed how the applicant is considering providing public art on-site, but if that becomes infeasible a contribution would be made. He argued that the applicant feels strongly that gas stoves should be permitted because the lack of gas ranges will limit the number of potential buyers. He noted that the stove area will be plumbed for both gas and electricity, and buyers could select either range type. Because the area will be plumbed for both energy sources, owners could relatively easily change the range type.

Discussion

Commissioner Manor asked if gas would be installed in all units and asked what type of range would be installed in units without a buyer. Mr. Wire explained that for the units that were unsold when the building was complete, the applicant would select the range type, but future owners could install whatever range type they desire. He also asked about the temperature that it must be to trigger the gas-powered Dedicated Outdoor Air System (DOAS). Mr. Wire explained that as the temperature lowers below freezing the unit begins to power on.

Commissioner Dubé asked if there were any other gas appliances in the project, and Mr. Wire explained that the backup generator and the DOAS unit would be gas powered. He also asked about the width of the alley and suggested that the applicant carefully review the site lines in each garage so there is adequate visibility. He asked if any of the units in Whitley 1 had been sold yet, and the applicant answered in the affirmative.

Vice Chair Koenig engaged with the applicant on several Green Building related questions and comments, including the carbon fueled elements of the project (DOAS and the Emergency Generator) and the installation of solar on the roof. He also asked the Office of Climate Action (OCA) staff for explanations about previously approved gas-powered elements at other projects and questioned if allowing for gas powered DOAS units was a productive approach. Ryan Freed, Director of OCA, explained that today gas is more effective, but the City will continue to push for conditions leading to full electrification. Vice Chair Koenig also asked why the 2024 standard condition was modified for this project and Dustin Smith, OCA, said that OCA works with all applicants to understand the specifics of each project and has allowed carve-outs for DOAS and Emergency Generators. Vice Chair Koenig said that he did not support gas stoves and Mr. Smith explained that there were viable electric options widely available and concurred that City staff also did not support gas stoves. He said that most projects in the last couple of years have not included gas stoves. Vice Chair Koenig also noted that he supports the projects and the design refinements that BAR reviewed at concept. He said BAR would ensure that the design guidelines were met and asked that the north wall have some articulation as it would be highly visible when traveling south on Washington Street. Mr. Wire said that there would be brick articulation like that provided on the north elevation of the Whitley 1. He also asked for an explanation of how the public art process worked, and staff described how an artist is selected and noted that a contribution was also permitted per the condition.

Chair McMahon commended the applicant for taking on the challenge of a paused construction site. She said she was in support of the staff recommendation and did not support an allowance for gas ranges. She noted that an allowance for either gas or electric ranges was a creative solution, but she did not have a lot of confidence in owners choosing electric if gas was available.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of REZ #2024-00004. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of DSUP #2024-10017. The motion carried on a vote

of 7-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of ENC #2024-00008. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

#7

Development Special Use Permit #2024-10011

Encroachment #2024-00007

1900 N. Beauregard Street - Adams Neighborhood

Public Hearing and consideration of requests for (A) a Development Special Use Permit with a Site Plan and modifications to construct a multi-unit dwelling, including a Special Use Permit request for a parking reduction, and (B) a request for an Encroachment into the public right-of-way for a portion of a wall; zoned CDD #21/Coordinated Development District #21.

Applicant: 1900 Beauregard Property Owner, LLC, represented by Ken Wire

Staff made a presentation and answered questions from the Commission

Speakers

Bud Jackson, abutting neighbor and Beauregard Design Advisory Committee (BDAC) Vice Chair, spoke virtually. He said he was part of the minority vote and noted the 4 - 3 BDAC vote for the project reflected the robust community discussion. The community members felt that 2000 N Beauregard has had a negative impact on residents. He said the proposal didn't comply with the Beauregard Small Area Plan (SAP) as it did not take into account the topography of the site and is going to clear-cut hundreds of trees. Approval of The Blake did not mean that buildings should be replicated over and over, but that is what is happening. He said the proposal does not encourage a diversity of housing that the SAP calls for. The neighborhood has 1500 units coming on-line and the neighbors are not unwelcoming to new projects, but said this is too much. There were also concerns with the Mark Center Drive entrance location, which he said the applicant could speak more about. Overall, he said the community is not happy with the project and not one community member spoke in support of the project. He said they were seeing spill over from The Blake of people parking in the neighborhood instead of in the garage.

Jen Gaines, a neighbor, spoke virtually. She said that while she is happy that the balconies have been removed, and doesn't mind the bike/ped path, she is concerned that the building is too tall and will impede privacy and enjoyment of property as their townhomes are half the height. She said the removal of the trees and the construction will impact migratory birds. She is concerned about construction noise and noise from residents after construction and is concerned about traffic on Seminary. She said she moved there because the area had a peaceful neighborhood feel.

Richard Jones, Seminary Heights Condominium Association President, spoke in person. He said his kitchen window is about 20 feet from the property line, and one of about 20 units that will be impacted. He said the BDAC vote was due to concerns about size, noise and morale. The apartment building proposed to replace the office building is twice as tall as what is there now, and will have 24-hour activity, unlike the office building. The neighborhood is losing sight of the sky, and residents fear noise, partly based on what they've encountered at The Blake. He said the 50-year-old community has lost some residents as people have moved because they are overwhelmed by the changes that are occurring.

Ken Wire, attorney for the applicant, spoke on behalf of his client. He said he represented Duke Realty in the Beauregard SAP, when the area was supposed to all be office. He said the office

market has continued to deteriorate and his applicant coordinated with the City's AlexWest SAP process. They removed the balconies, increased the buffer/reduced the height from what was proposed with The Blake. Due to the change in grade along N Beauregard, they were unable to change the location of the garage and loading dock but worked with staff and BDAC to mitigate it through design and screening.

Discussion

Commissioner Brown walked the site and noted that the corners of the buildings had been staked. He asked staff to elaborate on the open water area on the site and what would happen to the pond after construction. Maya Contreras, P&Z, said it was a decorative pond that is not serving as stormwater treatment as it was built prior to any City stormwater regulations. It will be removed. Vice Chair Koenig asked staff to expand on parking in the neighborhood. Maggie Cooper, P&Z, noted there are public and private streets within the neighborhood behind 1900 N Beauregard. On all the private streets, the Homeowners Association can have cars towed. There are also City public streets and a pedestrian connection at Stevens, and there is a possibility that people could try to park there. Vice Chair Koenig asked staff about noise and whether it has been a problem. Ms. Cooper said the City has not received many noise complaints, but the neighbors have said there are noise issues.

Chair McMahon followed up to ask about the removal of balconies at The Blake and 1900 N Beauregard. Ms. Contreras said the applicant originally proposed rear balconies at The Blake, but all were removed from the plans prior to City Council approval.

Commissioner Brown said that staff evaluated open space under the Beauregard SAP, which required 15 percent instead of 25 percent. He asked if this was a discretionary call or were staff statutorily required to use the smaller number. Chief of Development Planning Robert Kerns said that applicants are required to follow the zoning requirements in place at the time they submit for preliminary review. Commissioner Brown said the plan was being evaluated under Master Plan standards that changed in the process of reviewing the project, which was why new plans are typically not reviewed during an update to a Master Plan. Mr. Kerns said the practice is to have projects wait until the SAP process is completed to update the vision for the neighborhood. But, as the applicant stated, because of the timing of this project and the extended review time that City Council added to the SAP, staff were trying to keep the applicant progressing according to their rights while also respecting the SAP process. This led to staff having to make several decisions to balance different interests, which meant reviewing the plan under the Beauregard Design Guidelines and open space, while also trying to look forward to embody the spirit of the new SAP.

Commissioner Brown said that the citizens' concerns are legitimate. He noted the setback is larger at 1900 than at The Blake, but that the townhouses abutting The Blake are farther back and at an angle, so 1900 will have a larger impact on their adjacent townhouses. He said he does not like the fact that interior open space counts as it is not public. He said he understands why citizens are disappointed and have concerns about privacy but also finds that the project complies with the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

Chair McMahon said she finds the project highly consistent with the SAP. She noted the BDAC minority report was concerned about a lack of consistency due to not providing a variety of housing types, but it makes sense to have apartments along the transit corridor. She acknowledged the change to the neighborhood and that it's an adjustment and said that the concerns about privacy, light/air, noise, construction impacts, and parking are valid, and stressed the importance

of communication and good management. She also noted there will be new amenities being provided in the future due to the density of the proposed buildings. Chair McMahon also spoke about the issues around parking. She said abundant free parking does not guarantee high quality neighborhoods. The vision for the corridor is to have transit alternatives, and while it can be hard to see when it's in process, regional data has shown that this area can support the increased density. She recommended that the City work with residents on public streets to help mitigate impacts, including residential parking permits.

Vice Chair Koenig said he finds the project consistent with AlexWest SAP, the design is thoughtful and creative, given the complex issues and the constraints imposed by the site and the community. He recognized the change that is coming and concurred with the Chair's discussion on the future of parking and mobility at the site. He noted the change in review between the Beauregard and AlexWest SAPs, and the applicant's need to have a predictable review process. Lastly, he acknowledged that the proposed number of affordable housing units was significant.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of DSUP #2024-10011. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of ENC #2024-00007. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Other Business

#8 Commissioners' Reports, Comments & Questions

Vice Chair Koenig mentioned an interest in weighing in on the Green Building Policy and how that might happen as by the full Planning Commission. Ryan Freed, OCA Director, indicated there is time to do so as the public comment period will kick off this Friday for a 30-day period and input is welcomed.

Chair McMahon indicated that she would like to explore a coordinated effort with the Environmental Policy Commission to discuss the Green Building Policy together during the public comment period and before it comes to our Public Hearing and to the City Council's Public Hearing. She also mentioned that she was not aware until tonight that Solar Panel on roofs may need an exception to a height limit on buildings. She indicated that she would like to see the Green Building Policy include a provision to remove that hurdle. Staff indicated that a solution for that is in the works.

MINUTES

#9 Consideration of the minutes from the March 4, 2025 Planning Commission meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Dubé, the Planning

Commission voted to approve the minutes of March 4, 2025. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

#10 **Adjournment**

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On a motion by Commissioner Ramirez, seconded by Commissioner Dubé, the Planning Commission voted to adjourn. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 11:22 p.m.