

Docket Item #12
Planning Commission Public Hearing
May 2, 2023

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of May 2, 2023.

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 2, 2023

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

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

May 2, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Council Chamber

Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

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

Members Excused:

Melissa McMahan, Vice Chair

Staff Present:

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
Sam Shelby	Department of Planning & Zoning
Mavis Stanfield	Department of Planning & Zoning
Rachel Drescher	Department of Planning & Zoning
Bill Cook	Department of Planning & Zoning
Maya Contreras	Department of Planning & Zoning
Catherine Miliaras	Department of Planning & Zoning
Dustin Smith	Office of Climate Action
Brian Dofflemyer	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Lalit Sharma	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Ryan Knight	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Megan Oleynik	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Carson Lucarelli	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 2, 2023

1. **Call to Order.**

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. with Vice Chair McMahon excused. 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 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 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.”

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Chair Macek inquired as to whether there were any changes to tonight’s Docket. Staff responded that there were no changes to the Docket.

2. Special Use Permit #2023-00020
114 North Patrick Street
Public Hearing and consideration for a parking reduction Special Use Permit with

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 2, 2023

open space, lot frontage and side yard modifications; zoned: CD/Commercial Downtown.
Applicant: Jorge and Lorie Nevares

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

On a motion by Planning Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Planning Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Special Use Permit #2023-00020. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 on the Consent Calendar, with Vice Chair McMahan excused.

3. Special Use Permit #2023-00023

1033 West Glebe Road

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: CG/Commercial General.

Applicant: 1033 W Glebe Road ALX LLC

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

On a motion by Planning Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Planning Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Special Use Permit #2023-00023. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 on the Consent Calendar, with Vice Chair McMahan excused.

4. Vacation #2023-00003

5165 and 5173 Seminary Road, 5118 and 5129 Fairbanks Avenue, 2641, 2648, and 2658 Foster Avenue - Upland Park Foster Avenue

Public Hearing and consideration of a request to vacate a portion of public right of way abutting multiple addresses in order to construct improvements shown pursuant to approved Development Special Use Permit #2019-00017; zoned: CDD #21/Coordinated Development District #21 (Beauregard).

Applicant: Alexandria Development Associates, LLC, represented by Kenneth W. Wire, attorney

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

On a motion by Planning Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Planning Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Vacation #2023-00003. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 on the Consent Calendar, with Vice Chair McMahan excused.

NEW BUSINESS:

5. Discussion Item: Text Amendment to Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance regarding regulations for signs.

Staff: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

Rachel Drescher, Department of Planning & Zoning (P&Z), gave a brief presentation outlining the topics planned to be considered for the Sign Ordinance update. This included making the ordinance more user friendly, consideration of currently prohibited signage (digital signs, A-frame signs, pole signs, roof signs on parapets, and illuminated signs over 35 feet in height), and consideration of other administrative sign approvals.

Discussion:

Chair Macek provided some history and context on the last Sign Ordinance update. A-frames used to be located on corners, which caused issues with sidewalk accessibility. An Ad-Hoc Sign Ordinance group (Ad-Hoc group) created a standardized approach with City sponsored monument signs located on the sidewalk at intersections along King Street. A-frames were allowed on private property only. In parts of Del Ray, particularly along Mount Vernon Avenue, private property overlaps with the sidewalk, allowing suitable locations for A-frame signs that do not interfere with sidewalk accessibility. Chair Macek stated there has been more flexibility with outdoor dining and other uses in the right of way. If A-frame signage were to be permitted in the right of way, there should be standards to ensure the signs are directly adjacent to businesses and maintain adequate sidewalk accessibility for pedestrians.

For digital signs, Chair Macek stated there have been cases where they have been permitted by Special Use Permit. If digital signs are to be allowed, there needs to be clear performance standards addressing brightness, pixelation and animation because these signs can be distracting. These signs need to be no more impactful than illuminated signs.

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 2, 2023

For nonconforming pole signs, Chair Macek suggested allowing existing pole signs to remain unless the use changes. There are communities that have switched to only monument signs, which creates a more pleasing streetscape. For roof signs not above parapet height, careful consideration should be taken to be sure we are not allowing unreasonably tall parapet heights to allow for larger signs.

In regard to administrative approval for exceptional signs, Chair Macek explained he would need to see how the term exceptional was defined and what the standards would be for reviewing these signs. He also encouraged staff to look at signs that we routinely prohibit through architectural design standards, such as neon signs, that might be attractive.

Chair Macek stated that the Ad-Hoc group recommended creating design guidelines and visual examples for by-right signs, specifically in historic districts where Board of Architectural Review is required. He asked staff whether this had been created. Staff explained a brochure was created some years ago but that it may need updating.

Planning Commissioner Lyle stated that City Council opened the door on digital signs when they approved Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging station signs. She urged staff to consider the school perspective, where digital signs are easier to change and help keep parents informed. She indicated A-frames are currently not enforced. The businesses all use them and serve the businesses well and are not blocking the footpath. Pole signs will go away eventually when sites are redeveloped.

Planning Commissioner Manor agreed with Planning Commissioner Lyle on A-frame signs. They provide a way for independent retailers to advertise creatively. Planning Commissioner Manor asked what the enforcement of A-frame signage was prior to the pandemic and if the businesses were fined. Planning Director Karl Moritz explained A-frames were prioritized at the time to keep clearance in the sidewalk and warnings were issued prior to any fines.

Planning Commissioner Ramirez asked whether staff has considered a signage map which could show where different types of signage were most appropriate considering the context of specific areas. She gave the examples of A-frame signs, which can become a hazard if a storm comes through and blows them into public spaces and digital signs in residential areas where they may not be appropriate. Sam Shelby, Department of Planning & Zoning, explained there is not currently a distinction in the existing sign

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 2, 2023

regulations, but that staff has discussed basing the sign regulations, in part, on whether an area has more pedestrian traffic or more vehicular traffic.

6. 1300 North Royal Street

Consideration of an endorsement for the Coordinated Sustainability Strategy for the Potomac River Generating Station pursuant to the conditions of approval for CDD#2021-00004.

Applicant: HRP Potomac, LLC, represented by Mary Catherine Gibbs, attorney

Dustin Smith (Office of Climate Action) presented the Docket Item and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Discussion: The Planning Commission recognized the applicant’s commitment to remediate the site, to pursue environmental sustainability targets identified in the Coordinated Development District (CDD) and Coordinated Sustainability Strategy (CSS) and to work towards achieving the goals of the Old Town North Small Area Plan. Planning Commissioner Koenig and Chair Macek appreciated the applicant’s efforts to provide additional analysis in the CSS. He asked about the role of the endorsement and how the CSS would relate to future Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) applications. Planning Director Karl Moritz, Deputy City Attorney Brown and Principal Planner Miliaras responded that the endorsement of the CSS by City Council prior to approval of the Infrastructure Development Site Plan is a required condition in the CDD and that all future DSUPs must be in conformance with the endorsed CSS.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Planning Commissioner Koenig, seconded by Planning Commissioner Brown, the Planning Commission voted to recommend endorsement of the Coordinated Sustainability Strategy for the Potomac River Generating Station. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0, with Vice Chair McMahan excused.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff recommendation

OTHER BUSINESS:

7. Planning Commissioners’ Reports, Comments & Questions

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 2, 2023

Planning Commissioner Koenig reminded the Planning Commission about the opening of the Potomac Yard Metro Station on May 19 and the event scheduled for that day. Staff confirmed that they would follow up with the event details.

Planning Commissioner Koenig also requested an update related to the Environmental Planning Commission-Planning Commission joint letter that was sent to City Council. Staff confirmed that there were no current updates.

Planning Commissioner Brown updated the Planning Commission related to the Open Space Steering Committee. The group had their last meeting and has contributed language that will be included in the Open Space Master Plan and added to the Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Macek stated that the Waterfront Commission received an update from the Department of Project Implementation. There will be an upcoming review and Public Hearings related to the procurement approach for the Waterfront flood mitigation activities.

MINUTES:

8. Consideration of the minutes from the March 30, 2023 Planning Commission meeting.

On a motion by Planning Commissioner Lyle, seconded by Planning Commissioner Manor, the Planning Commission voted to defer consideration of the minutes of March 30, 2023. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0, with Vice Chair McMahon excused.

ADJOURNMENT

9. The Planning Commission Public Hearing was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.