

*******DRAFT MINUTES*******

Board of Architectural Review
Old & Historic Alexandria District

Wednesday, April 29, 2015
7:30pm, City Council Chambers, City Hall
301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Members Present: Oscar Fitzgerald, Chairman
Chip Carlin
Kelly Finnigan
Margaret Miller
Wayne Neale
Christine Roberts

Member Recused: John von Senden, Vice-Chairman

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, Historic Preservation Manager
Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Oscar Fitzgerald.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

The BAR held a special meeting to review the Draft EIS for the Proposed Potomac Yard Metro station

SPEAKERS

Karl Moritz, Director, Planning & Zoning, introduced the project and explained why Alternative B was recommended by staff as the preferred local alternative. He also requested the BAR's support for B and asked that they provide preservation design guidance to City Council.

Ramond Robinson, Division Chief of Transit Services, Transportation & Environmental Services, explained that the City had been working closely with the National Park Service to explore mitigation for potential effects of the station on the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP). He explained that the City and NPS had developed a framework for a "net benefit agreement," which would improve the present condition of this portion of the Parkway. He noted that NPS does not oppose B as the locally preferred alternative. He noted that the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) was the lead federal agency and responsible for coordinating the Section 106 process.

Nathan Imm, Neighborhood Planner, Planning & Zoning, provided background as to how the proposed Metro would fit with the greater vision for the redevelopment of Potomac Yard. He

also explained the benefits of Alternative B.

Lee Farmer, Project Planner for Potomac Yard Metro, Transportation & Environmental Services, also explained aspects of Alternative B, including the different perceptions between the driving analysis, shown previously, and the static images. She explained that Alternative B would be located in what is currently an easement area.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Ms. Roberts asked about the height of the pedestrian bridges and whether they could be lower. Mr. Imm noted that they were needed to meet programmatic requirements for trains on the CSX track but that the 55' was the maximum height proposed and they were working to reduce that, if possible.

Chairman Fitzgerald noted that the model was misleading because the actual station will be much more transparent once constructed. He also noted that the BAR had two items to discuss: whether or not to support Alternative B and also proposed mitigation.

Mr. Neale noted that it was premature to set a specific height since there was no design yet and depending on location and sight line considerations, the height may not be such a concern. He advised against setting specific limitations without knowing anything about the design. He asked the presenters what impacts the different stations would have on existing or proposed development. Mr. Moritz noted that Alternative A would significantly impact the recently finished Potomac Yard Park and that Alternative B was well-situated near the higher-density development. Mr. Neale then asked why not go with the lowest cost alternative. Ms. Farmer responded that, from the City's perspective, A and B have similar initial costs but B has much greater long term benefit.

Ms. Roberts inquired about the viewshed analysis. Ms. Farmer explained the different viewpoints and where the stations might be visible, noting that the future viewsheds shown in the report do not reflect landscape mitigation that may be done as mitigation.

Chairman Fitzgerald noted that the BAR seemed to have agreement on Alternative B, finding that it would have the least impact on the GWMP. He personally preferred the No Build option, stating that there is a trend toward reducing office space. However, he asked the BAR to offer suggestions to mitigate the impacts of the proposed Metro station. The Chairman also discussed the BAR's involvement in the design review process and cautioned the BAR to make sure the design was detailed and would not be watered down in the future.

Mr. Carlin suggested adding general limitations on the height of the structures and requiring that any design option be high quality.

Mr. Cox explained that the first phase would be a schematic design through the BAR's regular concept review process for a DSUP. After that phase, the station would then go through WMATA's design-build process, likely with a different design team. He emphasized that the BAR would have review over the final design of Alternative B through the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

Mr. Moritz added that the design of the station was very important to the City and needed to be something the City would be proud of.

Ms. Farmer also added that the City had engaged a consultant to assist us with the design and review process to prevent problems.

Ms. Finnigan inquired as to whether there was any historic landscape grading or loss of historic trees that could be threatened by the construction and new station. Ms. Farmer responded that the goal was to avoid any staging or work on the GWMP. Ms. Finnigan requested that historic trees and grading be identified and protected.

Ms. Roberts asked whether there were any mechanisms that could allow the BAR review process to be subverted or thwarted. Mr. Moritz responded that nothing was anticipated that would do this.

Ms. Finnigan asked about WMATA's standards for signage, lighting and the like. Ms. Farmer responded that WMATA did have design standards regarding some of those things. Mr. Moritz clarified that the BAR's purview would primarily include the pedestrian bridges, roof, retaining walls and other structural elements but that technical elements such as the platform design would have to comply with WMATA's standards.

Ms. Roberts recommended that the term "contemporary" be removed from the suggested draft motion. Mr. Neale agreed, believing that it was too early to introduce style and that the designers should have the freedom to design the best station possible.

Chairman Fitzgerald proposed a requirement that the retaining wall facing the GWMP be stone. Mr. Neale cautioned that without a design it was preferable to be open about the materials but to include language that the materials should be appropriate to Alexandria and that the BAR should be looking for good, appropriate architecture without specifying a style.

Ms. Roberts made a motion to support Alternative B as the preferred station alternative, based on its consistency with the relevant Standards listed in Section 10-105 of the zoning ordinance, with the following conditions:

1. If Alternative B is selected, the BAR recommends that any potential impacts of the station design include, at a minimum, the following mitigation:
 - a. Construction access shall not occur from the GWMP.
 - b. The overall station design should use materials that are appropriate to the local Alexandria building traditions and the original GWMP infrastructure construction.
 - c. Particular attention must be paid to the following elements to insure that they are harmonious with the old and historic aspect of the GWMP:
 - i. Landscape berms and retaining wall materials that minimize the apparent height of the overall structure and blend with the natural landscape, using materials already found on the GWMP, such as stone;
 - ii. The roof design and materials of the station;

- iii. The form and materials of the platform roof and the pedestrian bridges must be as visually light as possible;
 - iv. Lighting must be minimal, directed away from the Parkway, and should complement the station design; and
 - v. The height of the structures should be minimized to the maximum extent possible.
2. The BAR will be actively involved in the schematic design of the station, through the BAR Concept Review process, and at each appropriate step in the station design review process until a Certificate of Appropriateness is approved.

Ms. Roberts further moved that, although Alternative B is the only location within the Old and Historic Alexandria District, the BAR is concerned that the viewshed from the GWMP and that the memorial character of the GWMP be protected, including aspects of the cultural landscape such as historic grading, historic trees and historic wetlands, regardless of which station alternative is selected.

Mr. Carlin seconded both motions and these were approved by the BAR by a single vote of 6-0.

The hearing was adjourned at 8:48pm.

Minutes submitted by,

Catherine K. Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner
Board of Architectural Review