

9
1-30-16

Jackie Henderson

From: Poul Hertel <poulh@erols.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 2:41 PM
To: Jackie Henderson
Subject: City Council Public hearing Item 9
Attachments: 800 N Wash St material.pdf

Dear Mrs. Henderson

I would be ever so grateful if you could forward this message to the Mayor and members of the City Council

Sincerely
Poul Hertel

RE: Item 9

*Development Special Use Permit #2015-0004 Transportation Management Plan SUP #2015- 0124
802 and 808 North Washington Street - The Towne Motel*

Madam Mayor and Members of the City Council;

I trust that you have reviewed the material that I provided previously concerning the proposed development on 802 and 808 North Washington Street that is contained in the City Staff report and the attachment provided. Although the architect has broken up the building, it does not meet the Washington Street Standards, since it is still too voluminous and overwhelming for it to meet the original intent and purpose of the George Washington Memorial Highway.

In 1924, the Federal Government began in earnest to discuss the creation of a roadway from Washington DC to Mount Vernon as part of a "pious pilgrimage" to pay respect to George Washington, the "Father of the Country." At that time, the City of Alexandria argued that this roadway should pass through Alexandria, because the historic buildings along Washington Street would enhance the traveler's experience by providing a sense of history while driving to Mount Vernon. As a proffer for getting this route, Washington Street was to be maintained with this historic intent.

Eventually, a Historic District was created to protect the intent and integrity of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, followed by the creation of the Washington Street Standards. These standards specifically state that newer developments should be similar to the character (particularly with respect to the mass, scale and design) and compatible with historic buildings of architectural merit found on Washington Street, and that these newer developments should not detract or overwhelm. It is therefore important to not only consider the frontal appearance of buildings, but also how they will be viewed while driving down the street.

Therefore, the mass and scale of the new building (although it is broken up) is far too much for the adjacent historic building to bear, which is minimized to the point of exclusion. Merely breaking up the new building is a necessary (but is still an insufficient) condition for this project to meet the Washington Street Standards and purpose of the George Washington Memorial Highway. An even worse line of thinking is that design is the only criteria that matters, thereby devolving the historic preservation process into an arts commission, and abrogating the original intent of maintaining the historic character of Washington Street as part of the way to Mount Vernon. Alexandria has a choice here- it can remind (and entice) travelers concerning its historic past and ties to George Washington, or it can become just a pass-through suburb on the way to Mount Vernon. Considering that nearly all travelers to Mount Vernon must drive through

Alexandria, Alexandria should continue to enforce the Washington Street Standards as an opportunity to be part of the greater picture that helped place it in the consciousness of the world.

Sincerely

Poul Hertel

3716 Carriage House Court

22309, Alexandria (Fairfax County)

Madam Chair and Members of the Planning Commission.

Let me start by underlying the genesis of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The Parkway was not a jobs creation program as some would have it, but a truly national and cultural undertaking that started in earnest in 1924 in order to commemorate George Washington's Bicentennial.

The significance lies in understanding the importance the first president exhibited as a unifying force in the nation's history. Historians described that "anyone visiting Washington had to undertake the pious pilgrimage to his home at Mount Vernon. " Newspapers across the nation would even write about who had visited the estate.

Alexandria lobbied hard for the road to pass through Alexandria by way of Washington Street and the federal government agreed, since it gave an opportunity for the passersby to experience the historic buildings on the street on the way to Mount Vernon. In return, the City promised to keep the historic integrity of the street and even created the Historic District to protect the integrity and purpose of the George Washington Memorial Parkway along Washington Street.

So it suffices not merely to look at the front of buildings, but one needs to think how it is experienced while driving down the street. The mass and scale of the new building, although beautifully broken up, and Mr. Rust deserves accolades for what he has been able to do, is far too much for the historic building to bear. It is minimized to the point of exclusion.

Every dignitary who visits Washington DC passes through Alexandria as they make their "Pious Pilgrimage" to pay homage to the Father of the Nation. The George Washington Memorial Parkway experience is a truly magnificent, beautiful and unique cultural icon that must be preserved for future generations.

The City, at the urging of the ad Hoc Washington Street Committee, adopted a comprehensive street scape plan for Washington Street, which is not mentioned in the staff report. This plan strongly discourages curb cuts and the drive-through as proposed here. I urge you do the same.

Poul Hertel

RE: Item 8

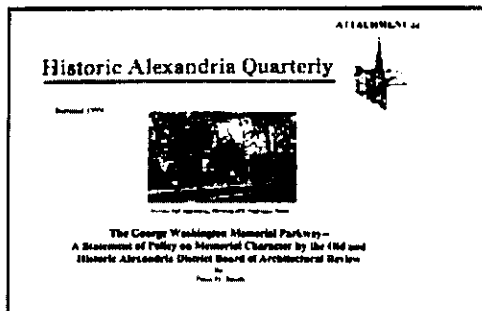
Development Special Use Permit #2015-0004, Transportation Management Plan SUP #2015-0124 802 and 808 North Washington Street - The Towne Motel

Dear Chairman Mary Lyman and members of the Planning Commission:

Please find enclosed the attachment that hopefully will give a better understanding of what the Standards are all about. The points were taken from then-City Manager Phil Sunderland's memo, which was forwarded to the City Council. For reference purposes;

In the 1929 *Memorandum of Agreement* between the City and the Federal Government routing the George Washington Memorial Parkway through Alexandria, the City agreed to restrict Washington Street to "residential and business development of such character and of such types of building as will be in keeping with the dignity, purpose and memorial character of said highway."

And the Historic District was created in 1946 to protect the George Washington Memorial Parkway as described by Peter Smith;



Furthermore, the National Park Service considered condemning property along Washington Street that did not meet the desired memorial nature of the Parkway. Either one of these proposals would have been disruptive to the city and would have seriously affected the economic base of Alexandria. In response to these proposals, Alexandria's City Council enacted the third local historic district ordinance in the nation in 1946.⁵ One of its chief purposes was "the preservation of the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Highway"

Some have implied that there is wiggle room in the Washington Street Standards, since it was really only intended to cover the core and not the northern end of Washington Street. Not only is this not true, but as the Sunderland Memo points out on page 4, the Task Force was specifically created as a result of buildings that were either built or proposed for the northern end.

The Task Force concluded that the controversy generated by recent proposals for the Parkway Center at the Old Colony site and the Saul Center at the Mastercraft site indicates that the Standards and Guidelines do not adequately mandate what interested civic organizations and the public consider appropriate building and site design on Washington Street.

Others claim that existing buildings in the adjacent area would not meet the standards today, such as Potomac Crossing. Although it is true that they would not meet the standards, there is no proposal to hold the new developments to the densities of older developments. The Task Force tried dealing with new and bigger development and recognized the tradeoff, but they believed it was necessary in order to prevent monolithic-looking buildings looming over the Parkway.

Sincerely

Poul Hertel
3716 Carriage House Court, 22309 Alexandria (Fairfax County)
(703) 780-1909

TO ALL

Hopefully, this brief will provide a sense of why and how the current Washington Street Standards, came to be enacted in the year 2000. After some rather unpleasant conflicts regarding development on Washington Street, (which afflicted the northern end in particular), the City Council created a task Force that would convey a clarification on interpreting the 1929 agreement between the City and the Federal Government for protection of the George Washington Memorial Parkway as it transverses the City. The Task Force came up with specific recommendations that the City Council subsequently adopted in the form of the ordinance known as the Washington Street Standards.

These are best understood as being derived from a task force request that the City Attorney incorporate elements from a paper submitted by the National Park Services (*included*). The revisions to the ordinance that were adopted can be summarized as follows:

- New construction shall be compatible with the character of historically significant buildings on Washington Street (instead of within the Old and Historic Alexandria District in general).
- Design elements must be consistent with historically significant buildings on Washington Street.
- New buildings shall be complementary to and shall not detract from/overwhelm/intrude upon historically significant buildings on Washington Street.
- Massing of new buildings/additions must closely reflect and be proportional to adjacent historic buildings.
- New construction larger than historic buildings on the street must be designed to not look more massive than the historic buildings. From the public right of way, buildings should appear to have a footprint no larger than 100 feet by 80 feet. It is desirable that large projects preserve or replicate mid-block alleys.
- Applications for projects larger than 3000 square feet or within 66 feet of residential use/zoning must include a massing study covering a minimum of six blocks.
- Massing and proportions of new buildings designed in a given historic architectural style must be consistent with the massing and proportions of that style.
- New or untried design approaches that have no historical basis in Alexandria or that are not consistent with the scale, massing and detailing of an historic style are not appropriate.
- Traditional fenestration patterns and solid/void relationships must be used on all facades visible from any public right of way, including the first floor.
- An applicant for a special use permit for an increase in density must bear the burden of proving that the proposed building/addition clearly benefits the historic nature and pedestrian-friendly environment of Washington Street.

Poul Hertel

11/15/2015

ATTACHMENT 8

What is the "Memorial Character" of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?

The George Washington Memorial Parkway serves as a memorial to our nation's first president. While the National Park Service has not attempted to precisely define the term, several guiding principles should be considered in evaluating what "memorial character" means. The principles outlined below represent those which have a desirable application to Washington Street in Alexandria:

- Inconsistent existing developments notwithstanding, and recognizing that the parkway has different "looks" depending upon where you are (north of the airport, through the city, south to Mt. Vernon, for example), there should be a public impression that Washington Street is connected in some way (physically, thematically, or in some other positive way) with the parkway.
- Use of streetscapes is a desirable connecting link with the natural characteristics of the parkway.
- There should be an emphasis on those elements of structural design which are consistent with historic buildings which remain on the street.
- New buildings should not, by their style, size, location or other characteristics, detract from, overwhelm, or otherwise intrude upon historic buildings which remain on the street.
- New buildings should be complementary to the historic structures in their design.
- It is desirable that buildings be designed to look separate and not give the impression of collectively being one massive unit. This can be accomplished through differing architectural designs, facades, setbacks and stylings.

Additional miscellaneous factors for consideration are:

- The Washington Street Guidelines are workable as long as the structures aren't spread out over too large an area or distance. The Guidelines also may not be appropriate when applied to larger buildings.

Facades of a building generally shall express the 20- to 40-foot bay width typically found on early 19th century commercial buildings characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Techniques to express such typical bay width shall include changes in materials; articulation of the wall surfaces; changes in fenestration patterns; varying roof heights; and physical breaks, vertical as well as horizontal, within the massing. (Page 5 of Guidelines at sec. (2) under "Additional requirements for approval of a certificate of appropriateness.")

- A gateway into the city exists when entering from the north (memorial circle area in front of the Colony Inn) but there is nothing similar when approaching from the south. Perhaps such a concept is worthy of consideration though it is recognized that this may be complicated due to plans for the new Wilson Bridge.
- Some historic communities in Washington, D.C. (Woodley Park and/or Cleveland Park) have had an "overlay zone" created which reduces the maximum allowable FAR and imposes other restrictions for a specified distance (100' ?) on either side of impacted streets. [Specific details not currently available].

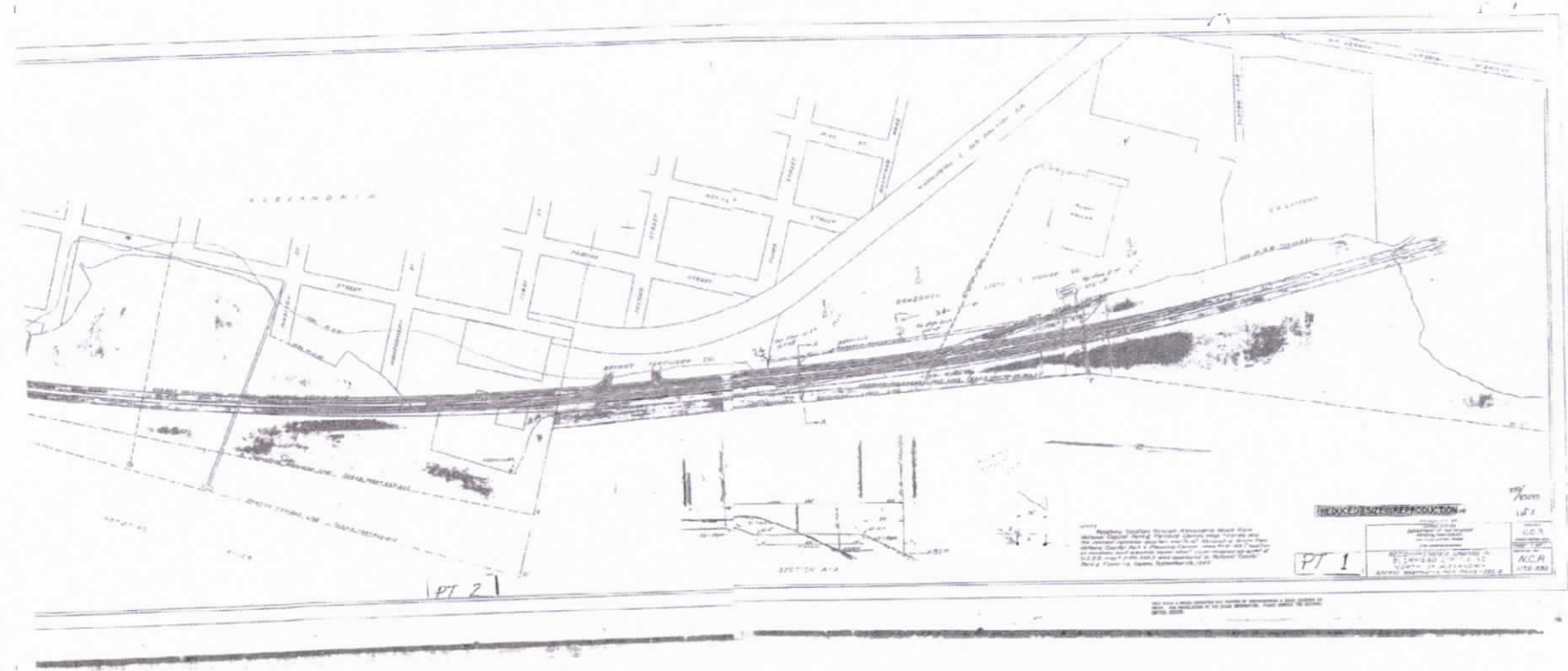
Michael D. Wilson
Assistant Superintendent
George Washington Memorial Parkway

1-30-16

Poul Herteel

Proposed relocation of George Washington Memorial Parkway

1946



Jackie Henderson

9
1-30-16

From: Agnès Artemel <aartemel@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 1:57 PM
To: Allison Silberberg; Justin Wilson; John Chapman; Paul C. Smedberg; Tim Lovain; delpepper@aol.com; Willie Bailey
Cc: Jackie Henderson; Robert Kerns
Subject: January 30, 2016 docket item #9 Towne Motel

Madam Mayor and Members of City Council:

I am writing in support of the application for a Development Special Use Permit and related permits and modifications for the replacement of the existing Towne Motel on North Washington Street with a new hotel and below-grade parking.

I am a resident of Old Town North for the past 20 years and a past president of the Old Town North Community Partnership. I like this neighborhood because of its mixed-use character, and am delighted that there is an opportunity to continue a hotel use in a much more attractive form than the current building.

The proposed new development appeals to me because:

- 1) It allows the existing attractive but unused townhouse to be rehabilitated and come to life; I commend the applicant on moving the townhouse and proposing to reuse it
- 2) It provides an opportunity to create major improvements to the streetscape along Madison and Washington Streets. Many people walk to the Braddock Metro Station along Madison Street, and improved paving, street trees, and landscaping will make the walk easier. The addition of street trees along Washington Street will improve the appeal of that street also.
- 3) The use is appropriate. The current hotel has been a good neighbor, but no longer meets the expectations of most travelers. Although we have three major hotels in the neighborhood, they are occasionally all full, so additional rooms are welcome. The proposed hotel is compatible with the commercial character of the surrounding sites.
- 4) As a resident, I feel that the height, design, lot coverage, and detailing of the new buildings are appropriate for the location. Unfortunately this block of North Washington Street has been unattractive for some time, and this proposal is an opportunity to restore stateliness and beauty to what has been a mediocre block not properly commemorative of George Washington, whom the street and parkway are named after.

I am delighted the property owners have chosen to improve their property with a compatible use, and that they have received the endorsement of the Old and Historic District Board of Architectural Review. I hope that the Alexandria City Council will approve this application.

Sincerely yours,

Agnès Artemel

120 Madison Place

Alexandria VA 22314

Jackie Henderson

From: website <webmaster@alexandriava.gov>
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2016 3:04 PM
To: Jackie Henderson; Gloria Sitton
Subject: City Council speaker's form submission received

Meeting Date: 01/30/2016
Docket Item# 9

Speaker's Name: Mary Catherine Gibbs
Phone #: 703-836-5757
Email: mcg.hcgk@verizon.net
Address: 307 N. Washington St.

Representing self? No
If representing other: the Applicant

Position on the item: For

Nature of interest: Attorney

Are you being compensated? Yes