

Docket Item #9
Planning Commission Meeting
March 1, 2016

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the public hearing meeting of February 4, 2016.

***** MINUTES *****

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 4, 2016

7:00 P.M., Council Chambers

301 King Street, City Hall

Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

Mary Lyman, Chair
Stewart Dunn, Vice Chair
Maria Wasowski
Nathan Macek
Mindy Lyle
David Brown
Stephen Koenig

Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

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|-----------------|---|
| Karl Moritz | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Alex Dambach | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Kendra Jacobs | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Robert Kearns | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Dirk Geratz | Department of Planning & Zoning |
| Helen McIlvaine | Office of Housing |
| Eric Keeler | Office of Housing |
| Lisa Jaatinen | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services |
| Joanna Anderson | City Attorney |

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1. Call to Order.

The Planning Commission public hearing was called to order at 7:00 P.M. All members were present.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

2. Development Site Plan #2015-0028

Vacation #2015-0001

305 Franklin Street

Public hearing and consideration of requests for: (A) a Development Site Plan with modifications and a parking waiver to construct a second floor accessory apartment; and (B) a request to vacate approximately 376 square feet of Franklin Street public right-of-way; zoned CL/Commercial Low. Applicant: Margaret Robinson, represented by John Savage, Architect

Dirk Geratz (P&Z) gave a presentation and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers: John Savage, Architect and agent for the proposal. He made a brief statement about the project and offered to answer any questions.

Chairwoman Lyman closed the public hearing.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Macek, seconded by Vice Chairman Dunn, the Planning Commission voted to approve Development Site Plan #2015-0028 with modifications and waiver finding that the proposal met the various zoning requirements as outlined in the staff report. Vice Chairman Dunn noted that the original approval of the subdivision creating this situation had not been a good decision by the Planning Commission. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

On a motion by Commissioner Macek, seconded by Vice Chairman Dunn, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Vacation #2015-0001. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

NEW BUSINESS:

3. Master Plan Amendment #2015-0003

Rezoning #2015-0003

Development Special Use Permit #2014-0035

Transportation Management Plan SUP #2015-0081

699 North Patrick Street - ARHA Ramsey Homes

Public hearing and consideration of requests for: (A) Master Plan Amendment to the Braddock East Master Plan within the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan to amend the land use designation and density tables from RB to CRMU-M; (B) amendment to the

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official zoning map for 699 N. Patrick Street from RB (townhouse zone) to CRMU-M (mixed-use zone); (C) Development Special Use Permit and Site Plan with modifications to construct 53 multi-family residential units in two buildings, including a special use permit for an increase in FAR to 2.0; (D) Special Use Permit for a transportation management plan; zoned RB/Townhouse. Applicant: Virginia Housing Development, LLC represented by Duncan Blair, Attorney

Dirk Geratz (P&Z), Robert Kerns (P&Z), Eric Keeler (Housing), Helen McIlvaine (Housing) and Lisa Jaatinen (T&ES) gave a presentation and answered questions of the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

Duncan Blair - legal counsel for the ARHA, provided an overview of the project noting how the project advances the goals of various City policies regarding affordable housing. He noted that the demolition of the buildings had been approved by City Council and that they would not be removed until all legal challenges are resolved. He also noted that ARHA did review various alternatives that included saving one or all the buildings but that these alternatives were not found to be competitive for tax credits or financially feasible.

Roy Priest – ARHA Director, presented a power point presentation noting how their proposal took into account the various City plans that relate to the location and cited several goals from these plans as they relate to the proposal. He noted ARHA needed 38 additional units on-site to make the tax credits work and to financially support the reconstruction of the existing 15 units. He also described how the tax credits work noted that if the proposal did not successfully complete for tax credits this year, ARHA would likely apply again in 2017. Mr. Priest also played a video featuring a Ramsey Homes resident, Marion Mealing.

Elliott Bell-Krasner – 5812 Merton Court, recommended that the Planning Commission defer consideration until more information was provided and the project's compliance with the Section 106 Review was addressed. He stated that historic preservation issues should be given the same weight as preservation issues.

H. Talmage Day – 113 N. Fairfax Street, noted he is a supporter of preservation and made five arguments for the retention of the Ramsey buildings. He stated that the existing buildings are of sound construction and that the new buildings are too large.

David Lawrence – 907 Pendleton Street, is a nearby neighbor who opposes the proposal, as he believes the project is out of scale with the neighborhood, but he would support smaller project.

Gail Rothrock – 209 Duke Street, HAF Board member and HARC member stated that preservation should be an integral part of the project.

Joe Valenti – 1200 Braddock Place #406, Chair of the Economic Opportunities Commission, stated his support for the project.

Paul Hamilton – 910 Montgomery Street, Old Town Commons resident, noted that he likes living in his mixed-income neighborhood but opposes the loss of so much open space. He also stated that the Banjo Park at Old Town Commons is over-used because the children have no place else to go and maintenance of park is not keeping up with the heavy use.

Ninette Sadusky – Pendleton Street, a Parker Gray resident, stated that the zoning map is very clear and residents expect that the zoning in adopted plans will not change. .

Heidi Ford – 1022 Oronoco Street, President of the West Old Town Civic Association, noted she and her association were active participants in the Braddock Road and Braddock East plans and that this project is violating and deviating from the plans. She expressed support for the two options studied by City staff.

Mykhaylo Panarin - 909 Pendleton Street, an abutting property owner, expressed concerns about the narrow width of the public alley that he shares with Ramsey. He is concerned about his retaining wall and fence being hit by vehicles exiting the new below-grade garage. *Note: staff clarified that the new retaining wall and fence was approved by the City in 2014 and that T&ES has also noted their concern about the potential damage to his property by existing vehicles. Two conditions relating to this concern are recommended by staff.*

Elsie Mosqueda – 900 Pendleton Street, voiced her opposition to the project and noted ARHA's lack of maintenance of their properties.

Townley McElhiney – 3453 S. Wakefield Street, HAF Board member, voiced her opposition, noting her belief that the project should comply with the Section 106 review prior to approval of the zoning and DSUP.

Elaine Johnston – 831 S. Fairfax Street, HAF Board member, stated that the legal case against the City should be resolved before obtaining any zoning approvals.

Andrea Tracey – 712 Wolfe Street, noted that both affordable housing and preservation are important goals and stated that the Ramsey proposal violates the Historic Preservation chapter of the City's Master Plan. She recommended a deferral.

McArthur Myers – 3610 Valley Drive, Alexandria Society for Black History, expressed support for preserving one of more of the buildings and recommended option 2 (retention of one building). He also recommended deferral until the details can be worked out. He also noted his support of affordable housing but would like to see one of the buildings incorporated into the Black History museum.

Tobin Tracey – 712 Wolfe Street, Old Presbyterian Meeting House, recommended deferral until the Section 106 review is completed.

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Lila Lee – 920 Pendleton Street, recommended deferral for more time to study alternatives and she commented on the lack of open space.

Glen Roe – 920 Pendleton Street, noted his support for preservation and for sensitive redevelopment of the Ramsey Homes. However, he is concerned about the density of the proposal, as it is in excess of the 30 units recommended in the Small Area Plan

Marion Mealing – 625 N. Patrick Street, has lived in the neighborhood a long time – even before the Parker Gray district was created. She understands the value of Ramsey Homes but noted that the City approved the demolition of the Parker Gray School for market rate housing and should therefore approve the demolition of Ramsey Homes for the purpose of creating new affordable housing.

Salena Zellers – 1122 Madison Street, ARHA Board member, noted that ARHA did evaluate many options including saving all four buildings but found that these options were not competitive for tax credits or financially feasible.

Shanelle Gayden – 234 Stevenson Square, ARHA Residential Association, expressed her support for the project to enhance the quality of life for residents.

Boyd Walker – 1307 King Street, expressed support for the preservation of Ramsey and asked for a deferral.

Charkenita Walker – 619 N. Patrick Street, Ramsey resident, stated she supports the qualities gained by building new housing and suggested greater transparency is needed.

Hal Hardaway – 311 S. Union Street, noted military and black history of the site. He expressed his concern about the density of the proposal and the overall pace of development in the City.

Judy Noritake – 1119 Wythe Street, expressed her strong support for the 53 unit proposal. She noted that she recognized the competing interests. She also noted that she has been a leader for many years on the issue of open space and explained her support for the open space elements of the proposal.

Yvonne Weight Callahan – 735 S. Lee Street, recommended deferral. She noted that City Council had requested alternatives to address issues concerning preservation, open space, and mass and scale. She also noted that all of the speakers opposing the project have agreed that some buildings could be removed.

Chairwoman Lyman closed the public hearing.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

The Planning Commission had extensive discussions concerning this case. The Commission divided the discussion onto three areas: consistency and appropriateness of the plan amendments and rezoning to the intent of the Master Plan; appropriateness of the

proposed development site plan (DSUP); and their options with regard to voting on the various requests.

Commissioners stated that they were in complete support of the affordable housing but noted that the goal of affordable housing was competing with the goals of historic preservation. The Commission concluded that the master plan amendments and rezoning are consistent with the intent of the Braddock East Master Plan, since the Plan recommends greater density both in regard to the number of units per acre as well as the floor area ratio (FAR). Several Commissioners noted that the requested FAR (1.72) is not significantly different than the 1.68 FAR that would be achievable under the current plan, which calls for a 1.4 FAR, since the applicant would be eligible for a 20 percent density bonus for affordable housing. Commissioners also recognized that the Plan anticipated a rezoning of the Ramsey property and recommended that the appropriate new zone be determined as part of a future development proposal.

However, the Commission was divided over the issue of the DSUP and whether the proposal before them was the best solution. Several Commissioners expressed opposition to the site plan, indicating their belief that a proposal that saves one building would be a better fit into the character of the neighborhood and would also achieve preservation of a historic resource. They noted that a more complete review of design alternatives had not been fully vetted with City staff and the community. Without this collaboration having taken place, several Commissioners felt uncomfortable supporting the site plan. Several noted that one or two of the existing buildings could be integrated into the proposal for a better overall solution.

Without objection the Commissioners supported an amendment to condition #7 and added a new condition #7a concerning the design and operation of the rooftop amenity space as recommended by Commissioner Wasowski.

Commissioner Koenig made a motion to adopt the Resolution of the Master Plan Amendment for reasons stated in the staff report and during Planning Commission deliberations. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 6 in support and with one abstention. Commissioner Dunn noted that he abstained as he felt the site plan was not approvable and he believes the Planning Commission should not be voting on the rezoning until the Commission has before them a DSUP that the majority can support.

Commissioner Koenig made a motion to recommend approval of the Map Amendment (rezoning) for reasons stated in the staff report and during Planning Commission deliberations. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed on a vote of 6 in support and one abstention. Commissioner Dunn abstained as he did not support a rezoning without an approvable site plan.

Commissioner Wasowski made a motion to recommend approval of the Development Special Use Permit with amendments to condition #7 and new condition #7a. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Macek. The motion failed on a vote of 3 in favor and 4 opposed.

Commissioner Lyle made a motion for denial of the Development Special Use Permit for reasons as discussed during deliberations. Specifically, the reasons for denial included the following general points:

- The feasibility and potential advantages of an adaptive reuse of the northern existing building as an integral part of the new housing complex has not been comprehensively explored.
- From a planning point of view, the modest scale and associated open space of preserving an existing building would conserve an important aspect of the neighborhood's character; in addition, juxtaposing the smaller existing building against the larger new one would be an inherently less monotonous form for the whole project.

Commissioners further noted:

- Their respect for the history of this particular place and their wholehearted support for continuing public housing on this site.
- Their strong support for an increase in density to facilitate its redevelopment as a mixed income residential project.
- Their support for a creative and pragmatic solution that would address to the extent possible the City's affordable housing goals, while respecting the historic district and the scale of the neighborhood.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Koenig. The motion for denial passed on a vote of 4 in favor and 3 opposed.

OTHER BUSINESS:

No other business was discussed.

4. Commissioner's Reports, Comments & Questions

There were no reports.

9. Adjournment

The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 12:00am.