

Docket Item #13
Planning Commission Meeting
September 5, 2017

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the public hearing meeting of June 14, 2017.

***** MINUTES *****

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

June 14, 2017

7:00 P.M., Council Chambers

301 King Street, City Hall

Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

Mary Lyman, Chairwoman
Nathan Macek, Vice Chairman
David Brown
Stephen Koenig
Mindy Lyle
Melissa McMahon
Maria Wasowski

Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Karl Moritz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Joanna Anderson	Office of the City Attorney
Nancy Williams	Department of Planning & Zoning
Kristen Walentisch	Department of Planning & Zoning
Alex Dambach	Department of Planning & Zoning
Ann Horowitz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Jeffrey Farner	Department of Planning & Zoning
Carrie Beach	Department of Planning & Zoning
Heba ElGawish	Department of Planning & Zoning
Carrie Sanders	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services

1. Call to Order.

The Planning Commission public hearing was called to order at 7:05 P.M. All members were present.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

2. Vacation #2017-0001

700 South Pitt Street

Public hearing and consideration of a request to vacate the public right-of-way for the installation of a fence to enclose an area that would function as a dwelling's front yard; zoned: RM/Townhouse Zone
Applicant: Thomas J. Campbell, represented by Frederick Taylor, architect

This item was removed from the Consent Calendar.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chairman Macek, seconded by Commissioner Koenig, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Vacation #2017-0001. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

Vice Chairman Macek questioned the assessment value of the vacated land. The Department of Planning & Zoning's (P&Z) Division Chief of Land Use and Regulatory Services, Alex Dambach, responded that staff will follow up with the Department of Real Estate to confirm the assessment and valuation process.

3. Text Amendment #2017-0004

Tattoo Parlors

Public hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to Section 2-111 and Section 2-183 of the Zoning Ordinance to remove tattoo parlors from amusement enterprises and classify them as personal service establishments.
Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning

This item was removed from the Consent Calendar.

P&Z's Division Chief of Land Use and Regulatory Services, Alex Dambach, P&Z, clarified additional edits made to the proposed Text Amendment.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Text Amendment #2017-0004. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0. Additionally, modifications to the text were provided in a staff memorandum and were included in this recommendation.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

Vice Chairman Macek spoke in support of the proposal, stating that it represents an opportunity for enterprising businesses.

4. Text Amendment #2017-0005
Additional Uses in OCM(50) and OCM(100) Zones
(A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; and (B) Public hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to Section 4-900 and Section 4-1000 of the Zoning Ordinance to add permitted uses, administrative special uses, and special uses to the OCM(50) and OCM(100) zones.
Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion made by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Commissioner Wasowski, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Text Amendment #2017-0005. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Commissioner Wasowski, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Text Amendment #2017-0005. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis.

NEW BUSINESS:

5. Master Plan Amendment #2017-0002
Old Town North Small Area Plan Amendment (A) Initiation of a Master Plan Amendment; (B) Public hearing and consideration of an Amendment to the Master Plan to replace the Old Town North Small Area Plan chapter approved in 1992 with an Updated Small Area Plan, including the Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines. Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Planning & Zoning

Jeffrey Farner, Nancy Williams, and Heba ElGawish, from P&Z, and Carrie Sanders, from T&ES, presented and answered questions from the Commission.

Speakers:

Mary Catherine Gibbs, a member of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group and property owner representative for NRG, spoke in support of the Master Plan Amendment. Ms. Gibbs mentioned the robust community engagement effort that occurred over the planning process which resulted in an update to the Old Town North Small Area Plan (SAP) that provides a vibrant vision for Old Town North. Ms. Gibbs highlighted that the SAP follows the Planning Commission's and City Council's recognition that Old Town North includes two distinct areas for planning: the established Old Town North area which is a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood and the power plant site. Ms. Gibbs stressed the importance of having a higher level of planning for the power plant site that looks at the site from a conceptual level with guidelines and principles that will be applied when redevelopment for that site is proposed. Ms. Gibbs added that this higher level of planning also provides flexibility on the power plant site to achieve an economically sustainable framework to ensure that future redevelopment of the site is possible.

Deborah Raouls Dewey, a resident of Old Town North and the President of the Rivergate

Homeowners Association, expressed appreciation for the City's and the Advisory Group's efforts to establish a balance between growth and quality of life for Old Town North residents. Ms. Dewey expressed her endorsement of the SAP on behalf of the Rivergate Association highlighting a number of elements that can be improved upon. Ms. Dewey expressed concern over the recommendation to change the traffic pattern on Montgomery Street from a one-way operation to a two-way operation indicating that it would increase traffic generated by the number of businesses on that street. Ms. Dewey explained that the dead end nature of Montgomery Street at Rivergate Park forces a number of drivers to drive through the private streets within the Rivergate community to get to Madison Street. Additionally, she indicated shuttle buses and loading trucks serving the Canal Center offices double park on Montgomery Street which causes additional congestion. Ms. Dewey recommended that the Planning Commission not approve the conversion of Montgomery Street from one-way to two-way at this time and table this recommendation until the Edens project is operational and the impacts of that development are better understood.

Tom Soapes, a member of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group and President of NOTICE expressed the civic association's support of the SAP with a number of concerns. First, NOTICE expressed concern over the conversion of Montgomery Street from one-way to two-way especially between N. Saint Asaph Street and N. Washington Street where there are loading conflicts because there is currently no designated loading space for the businesses that exist today. Mr. Soapes also expressed concern over the bicycle facility that is recommended on Madison Street. Mr. Soapes believes that the street is too narrow to include a bicycle lane. Mr. Soapes also mentioned that the intersection of Slaters Lane at the George Washington Memorial Parkway is problematic and the community is concerned that the redevelopment of the former power plant site would exacerbate this situation. Mr. Soapes said that the overall draft SAP reflects the findings of the survey that NOTICE conducted in 2014 and the community's priority for Old Town North to become a vibrant mixed-use community. Finally, Mr. Soapes stressed the importance of implementation and that design will be a key factor as development comes forward.

Kenneth Wire of Mcguire Woods spoke on behalf of Carr City Centers and Austin Flasjer who is a member of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group. Mr. Wire expressed Carr's support of the SAP, as is currently drafted, indicating that the SAP reflects community interests. Mr. Wire expressed Carr's support of the Montgomery Street conversion from one-way to two-way which he indicated would allow more access in the plan area and would contribute to the viability and success of retail.

Engin Artemel, a resident of Rivergate and a member of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group, commended the staff and Commissioner Wasowski in creating the land use and design guidelines. Mr. Artemel expressed support for the SAP; however, he also expressed concern over the conversion of Montgomery Street. Mr. Artemel suggested reevaluating the conversion of Montgomery Street after the Edens project is completed. Mr. Artemel also suggested that if the street is to be converted to two-way that the City should explore adding a third lane at the intersection of Montgomery Street and N. Washington Street to improve the turning movements at that intersection.

Jeff Strup is a member of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group and represents the American Real Estate Partners (AREP), owners of the Canal Center office buildings. Mr. Strup expressed his support of the SAP including the conversion of Montgomery Street from one-way to two-way. Mr. Strup explained that it is currently very difficult for office tenants and employees to access the Canal Center site given the one-way nature of Montgomery Street. Mr. Strup stressed that accessibility to Canal Center is critical to the success of the four office buildings and that converting Montgomery Street to two-way is important for the long-term viability of these office buildings.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Wasowski, seconded by Commissioner McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Master Plan Amendment #2017-0002. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

On a motion by Commissioner Wasowski, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to adopt the resolution and recommend approval of Master Plan Amendment #2017-0002 and the Old Town North Urban Design Standards and Guidelines with the following amendments:

- 1) Add the following sentence to Chapter 2, Section 2.3.I (P.34) and as a footnote under Figures 2.08 and 2.09 on P.36 and P.37):
“The FAR and height recommendations shown in Figures 2.08 and 2.09 do not include any FAR and/or height bonuses that the site may be awarded through the development review process.”
- 2) Modify Figure 2.07 site #10 on P.35 to include the entire city block located at 901/909/919 N. Washington Street.
- 3) Incorporate the staff proposed changes as outlined in the Memorandum to the Planning Commission dated June 8, 2017, which include the following:
 - a. **Add new recommendation to Section 2.5 VI. Zoning and Land Use**
As part of the Coordinated Development District (CDD) Concept plan(s) for the former power plant site and associated special use permit process, more specific height limitations will be established for each block consistent with the intent of the Old Town North Small Area Plan.
 - b. **Revise recommendation #2 in Section 3.4 Housing Recommendations**
Encourage mixed-income housing and maximize affordability throughout the plan area by implementing an increase in the density bonus provision from 20% to 30% pursuant to Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance. The provision of the arts and cultural incentives as outlined in the Plan will not preclude the potential use of Section 7-700.
 - c. **Revise recommendation #17 in Section 5.9**
Convert Montgomery Street from one-way to a two-way street with parking generally on each side of the street between North Henry Street and North Fairfax Street. As part of the conversion of the street from a one-way street to a

two-way street, loading for existing businesses and future development will be evaluated and addressed.

- d. **Revise recommendation #21 in Section 5.9**
As part of the Coordinated Development District(CDD) approvals for the former power plant site, specific requirements for phasing and sequencing of streets and infrastructure will be established, which will be tied to the amount of development. The site will also be responsible for all off-site infrastructure improvements generated by the planned development.
- e. **Revise recommendation #12 in Section 6.3, III Energy and Green Building, A. District-Wide Sustainability Measures – Former Power Plant Site**
The redevelopment of the former power plant site should strive to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040, and strive to achieve carbon neutral buildings by 2030.
- f. **Add new recommendation to Section 6.3, III Energy and Green Building, A. District-Wide Sustainability Measures – Former Power Plant Site**
Explore the development of district energy systems for heating and cooling on the former power plant site that take advantage of local renewable energy sources, including, but not limited to, geothermal energy, sewage heat, anaerobic digestion, and waste heat from buildings.
- g. **Replace recommendation #13 in Section 6.3, III Energy and Green Building, B. Energy Use**
*~~Encourage the use of alternative energy sources including, but not limited to, solar and wind power throughout the plan area.~~
Encourage onsite generation and storage of renewable electricity from solar photovoltaic (PV) and other available renewable resources.*
- h. **Add new recommendation to Section 6.3, III Energy and Green Building, B. Energy Use**
Strive to achieve carbon neutral buildings by 2030.
- i. **Revise Urban Design Standards and Guidelines #1 Chapter 4, Section 4.3 E**
All development and redevelopment sites ~~should~~ will include some form of historic interpretation whether as a site-specific installation or part of a broad thematic approach.

The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Discussion:

Commissioner Wasowski who is the Chair of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Advisory Group praised the Advisory Group and staff on their effort to engage the community in the planning process which generated a lot of input and ideas. The Commissioner recommended approval of the draft SAP to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Brown asked whether the regulatory incentive for Arts and Cultural Anchors outlined on P.30 of the SAP would preclude the use of affordable housing

density bonus under section 7-700. Staff responded that the provision of the arts and cultural incentives as outlined in the SAP will not preclude the potential use of Section 7-700.

Commissioner Brown recommended adding the following language to Section 2.3.I on P.34 and as a footnote under Figures 2.08 and 2.09 on P.36 and P.37:

“The FAR and height recommendations shown in Figures 2.08 and 2.09 do not include any FAR and/or height bonuses that the site may be awarded through the development review process.”

The Planning Commission expressed their agreement to add Commissioner Brown’s suggested language to the SAP.

Commissioner Lyman asked staff to elaborate more on the conversion of Montgomery Street from one-way to two-way given the community’s concern about the changing traffic pattern. Staff stated that the Montgomery Street conversion is critical to the success of retail along that corridor. Staff explained that the conversion of Montgomery Street would include a number of improvements, especially at the intersection of N. Washington Street such as left turn lanes at that intersection and modifying the intersection of Powhatan and N. Washington Street to become right-in/right-out only. Staff stated that with the proposed improvements, the traffic study showed that Montgomery Street would continue to operate at an acceptable Level of Service.

Commissioner Wasowski pointed out that the curb to curb width of Montgomery Street is the same as King Street which has a lot of businesses. Commissioner Wasowski also acknowledged that there are issues on Montgomery Street that are problematic now that can be solved regardless of the street conversion.

The Commissioners discussed the June 8, 2017 staff memorandum from P&Z Director Karl Moritz in response to a number of letters and correspondences that staff and the Planning Commission have received. Commissioner Wasowski and staff explained that a number of comments made have either been already addressed in the SAP or are elements that staff believe will be addressed through the Development Special Use Permit process; therefore, staff did not recommend changes based on those comments. The Planning Commission recommended that the proposed amendments, outlined in the Memorandum dated June 8, 2017 from Director Moritz, be incorporated into the SAP.

The Planning Commission discussed the letter from the Armed Forces Benefit Association (AFBA) dated June 5, 2017. The Commission recommended revising Site #10 shown in Figure 2.07 to depict the entire block as a potential redevelopment site.

Commissioner Koenig praised the excellent quality of the SAP and the distinctive level of planning between the established portion of Old Town North and the conceptual framework for the former power plant site. Commissioner Koenig stated that the ideas for open space along the rail corridor and the former power plant site have a big chance of being successful. Another creative aspect that Commissioner Koenig pointed out is the illustrated connection between Second Street and Tidelock Park through Transpotomac Plaza.

Commissioner Lyle stressed the importance of flexibility for the former power plant site and the Design Standards and Guidelines.

Commissioner McMahon concurred that it was evident how inclusive the community process was to create a SAP with the necessary details to weave together the existing neighborhood with its sense of place and the former power plant site -- a place that does not exist today--, into a whole cloth. Commissioner McMahon agreed that the SAP goes beyond the design of spaces by highlighting elements such as the community's identity around the arts and creative spaces for users.

Commissioner Lyman added that the SAP is a result of a high level of community engagement and collaboration. Commissioner Lyman stated that the SAP furthers the organic growth and the progress that Old Town North has made under the 1992 Plan. Commissioner Lyman also stated that the SAP strikes a good balance between preserving the Old Town nature of the plan area while encouraging appropriate future growth. Finally, Commissioner Lyman expressed her excitement for the prospect of an Arts District.

OTHER BUSINESS:

6. Commissioners' Reports, Comments and Questions

Planning Director Karl Moritz mentioned the Planning Commission Retreat that is scheduled for August 18, 2017. The Planning Commissioners discussed potential topics for the upcoming retreat.

7. Adjournment

The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:40 P.M.