

Docket Item #17
Planning Commission Meeting
June 5, 2018

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of May 1, 2018.

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MAY 1, 2018

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

ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION

May 1, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers
Alexandria, Virginia

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Karl W. Moritz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Christina Zechman-Brown	Office of the City Attorney
Nancy Williams	Department of Planning & Zoning
Anh Vu	Department of Planning & Zoning
Joanna Anderson	Office of the City Attorney
Katherine Carraway	Department of Planning & Zoning
Carrie Beach	Department of Planning & Zoning
Mary Christesen	Department of Planning & Zoning
Ann Horowitz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Sam Shelby	Department of Planning & Zoning
Robert Kerns	Department of Planning & Zoning
Gary Wagner	Department of Planning & Zoning
Michael Swidrak	Department of Planning & Zoning
Lalit Sharma	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
David Soares	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Karen Pallansch	AlexRenew

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1. Call to Order.

The Planning Commission Public Hearing was called to order at 7:04 p.m. All Members were present.

NEW BUSINESS:

2. Special Use Permit #2018-0017
421 Clifford Avenue - Mother of Light Center
Public Hearing and consideration of a request for a social service use operating as a respite day center that provides training and counseling services; zoned: CSL/Commercial Service Low.
Applicant: Mother of Light Center

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission voted to defer Special Use Permit #2018-0017.

3. Special Use Permit #2018-0020
4800 Brenman Park Drive - Dog Park Lights
Public Hearing and consideration of a request to amend Special Use Permit #2015-0128 to extend the hours of site lighting in the dog park area; zoned: CDD #9/Coordinated Development District #9.
Applicant: City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission voted to defer Special Use Permit #2018-0020.

4. City Charter Section 9.06 Case #2018-0001
Combined Sewer Outfalls
Public Hearing and consideration of a request for Planning Commission to review whether the proposed change of ownership from the City to Alexandria Renew of the City's four Combined Sewer Outfall structures is consistent with the City of Alexandria Master Plan. The structures are located within the City rights-of-way at (1) the intersection of North Union St/Pendleton St, (2) South Royal St at Interstate 95 overpass, (3) from intersection of King St/West St along South Peyton St to the intersection of Daingerfield St/Duke St, and (4) at the Hooff's Run channel south of Duke St; zoned: (1) WPR, (2) WPR, (3) OCH, and (4) OCM(100).
Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

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Katherine Carraway, P&Z, presented the case and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Chair Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

Discussion:

Chair Lyman inquired as to whether the City Council has already approved this plan. Staff indicated that last week the City Council approved the Outfall Transfer Agreement which says it is ok to go forth with the process required to do the Transfer. Staff further indicated the City Council has not yet approved the Transfer itself; that will be done by Ordinance which will be introduced on May 8th to the City Council. Staff explained that this Section 9.06 of the City Charter will inform the process that City Council will utilize for consideration of the Ordinance.

Vice Chairman Macek thanked staff for additional detail confirming that what is being transferred as part of this process is underground and is not the right-of-way or any land. That said, he indicated that the intent seems wholly consistent with the Master Plan because it is trying to execute an objective that so many of us are interested in seeing accomplished.

Commissioner Wasowski indicated that a previous idea indicated the tanks would go in the park and this is a much better solution.

Staff indicated that the Development Special Use Permit for the construction of the new Combined Sewer Outfalls will still come to the Planning Commission and at that time the Planning Commission will see what the actual structures will be.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion made by Vice Chairman Macek and seconded by Commissioner Wasowski, the Planning Commission voted to find the City's proposed transfer of ownership of its four Combined Sewer Outfalls and upstream regulator structures to AlexRenew consistent with the City of Alexandria Master Plan pursuant to Section 9.06 of the City Charter. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis that the proposed transfer of ownership is consistent with the Master Plan.

5. Text Amendment #2018-0004
Residential Open Porches and Porticos
A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; and B) Public Hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend sections 2-145, 2-148.1, 2-183.2, 2-205, 2-205.1, 2-205.2, 7-202, 7-2504, and 11-1302 and to add new section 2-183.3 regarding residential open porches and porticos.

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Staff: City of Alexandria Department of Planning & Zoning

Sam Shelby, P&Z, presented the case and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers: There were no public speakers.

Commissioner Koenig encouraged further study of the City's vision clearance requirements. He stated that during his tenure on the Board of Zoning Appeals, many requests for front porches also included requests for variances from the vision clearance requirements. He felt that homeowners should not be required to undergo an onerous review (variance) process for porch requests that only need relief from the vision clearance requirements. Commissioner Koenig also asked how the proposed amendments could affect the evolution of the City's block faces and their potential impact on determination of average front setbacks. He confirmed with staff that the proposed amendments would have minor impacts on these issues and that the front setback requirements would be studied more comprehensively in an upcoming text amendment.

Vice Chairman Macek asked for clarification regarding the Staff Memorandum dated May 1, 2018. He confirmed with staff that the memorandum amended the original proposal that would have established the maximum height for a porch's railings as the minimum height as required by the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC). The Staff Memorandum revised this proposed rule, stating that a porch's railings would be permitted up to three-and-one-half feet in height or the minimum height required by the Virginia USBC, whichever is higher.

Commissioner Koenig expressed concern that the proposed definition of a porch includes a provision regarding evenly spaced balusters which he believes is too prescriptive. He proposed an amendment to delete the word **evenly** from the proposed definition.

Commissioner Wasowski confirmed with staff that the proposed porch definition language regarding railings and balusters would not override or cause conflict with the Virginia USBC requirements.

Chair Lyman asked for clarification about the proposed special exception rules regarding porches that extend beyond the front building façade. Staff indicated that if it extends beyond the façade that extension has to meet the side yard setbacks or the resulting secondary front yard setback. It was stated that the purpose of the special exception is to allow someone with possible noncomplying sidewalls to build a full length front porch with special exception approval rather than with a variance.

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Commissioner Brown commented that three current members of the Planning Commission served on the Residential Infill Task Force and he believes he can speak for all of them by indicating what good work occurred through that effort and, additionally, he said no one thought that work could be refined and improved upon, but this current effort demonstrates that it could be.

Chair Lyman indicated that two current members of the Planning Commission were on the Board of Zoning Appeals at the time the special exception process was being developed. She indicated that she is pleased, because it has worked so well.

Commissioner McMahon indicated she likes how this is an example of how staff has utilized their experience and the experiences of homeowners and the Board of Zoning Appeals to improve how policies are implemented. She added that this process is allowing regulations to better reflect what we want to see in the community. She expressed support of the proposed amendments because they allow design flexibility for homeowners in the community, as families adapt, grow, and change over the years.

Chair Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Text Amendment #2018-0004. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0. On a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner McMahon, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Text Amendment #2018-0004 subject to an amendment to the proposed definition 2-183.2 and the Staff Memorandum dated May 1, 2018. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff recommendation.

6. Development Site Plan #2017-0014
1101 North Washington Street - Abingdon Place
Public Hearing and consideration of a request for a Development Site Plan, with modifications, to construct 19 condominium townhouse units; zoned: CD/Commercial Downtown.
Applicant: Toll Brothers, Inc., represented by M. Catharine Puskar, attorney

Michael Swidrak, P&Z, presented the case and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Vice Chairman Macek asked if there will be any barrier to implementation of the recommended improvements to the area adjacent to the site which falls within the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Staff indicated that the City has had meetings

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with the National Park Service and will continue to meet with them in an effort to coordinate on the proposed improvements, adding that they seem to be amendable to landscape related improvements and the City will continue to meet with them on improvements such as sidewalk replacement and width. Vice Chairman Macek expressed particular support for the mentioned 11Y bus stop improvements. Staff indicated that Planning and Zoning worked with the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services to get the wider bus stop.

Commissioner McMahon indicated that in earlier design iterations she recalled the applicant proposed more landscaping along the alley frontage and for that to have occurred she asked if all the property owners, who abut the alley, would have had to sign off on the change. Staff indicated that all four parties, abutting the alley, would have needed to sign off. Commissioner McMahon asked staff if the addition of a previously proposed 4-foot wide landscape strip adjacent to the sidewalk along the eastern side of the property would remove the need for crown coverage and open space site plan modifications, to which staff answered in the affirmative.

Commissioner Brown asked who determines whether a height of an actual building once built is in alignment with the height that is approved. Staff indicated that Planning and Zoning does field checks and wall checks and, once the building is finished, staff receives surveyed information which it confirms pursuant to Final Site Plans and Certificates of Occupancy. Commissioner Brown noted the floor area calculations for this project indicating that the permitted square footage is 53,432 sf and the applicant is proposing 53,432 sf. Commissioner Brown inquired how realistic is it for the proposed and the allowed to match precisely. Staff indicated the applicant would need to shave or reconfigure something with their design team if there is an overage. It was further noted that the Final Site Plan and Building Permit stages will ensure compliance.

Speakers:

Ken Adami, 1178 North Pitt Street, expressed concerns with the project. He indicated that if you surveyed the residents of Canal Way they would say the project is too tall. He indicated the project is disruptive and not very attractive. He asked Planning Commission if something could be done to soften the side of the project where there are existing residents. He asked that the Planning Commission request the developer to enter into a discussion with the neighbors for a comprehensive plan for the alley for signage, lighting and sidewalk improvements.

M. Catharine Puskar, representing the applicant, recalled the previous proposal which consisted of an expansion of the hotel and indicated that at that time neighbors recommended townhomes as an alternative. She indicated that the hotel was not economically viable, so this proposal will give the neighbors what they requested,

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namely, the townhomes. She said the owner has met with the neighbors six times on this proposal and that the meetings were productive resulting in burying of rooflines on the alley; the architecture has been broken down to be similar to the scale and massing of the townhomes across the alley; and there were discussions about the narrowing of the alley with streetscaping to include trees and lighting but, to do that, all property owners needed to agree. However, she indicated that the renderings for the proposal do show some plantings will be added between the sidewalk and the proposed townhomes on the alley side.

Chair Lyman closed the Public Hearing.

Vice Chairman Macek noted his support for the project and the proposed site improvements, despite his feeling that the previous approval for the hotel expansion was a more appropriate use for the site. He added that since the hotel proposal was not a feasible use for the landowner, he is comfortable with the design that is now proposed. In terms of the alley, he noted there was an opportunity to narrow the alley to put more greenery there, but since that was not achieved with the adjacent landowners, he believes this is the next best solution. He said that the plantings that will be in front of the homes will make that side greener in some ways than the other side where there will be rear ends of parked cars. He appreciates the refinement of the architecture, consideration of the pedestrian passageways, and consistency with the Old Town North Small Area Plan.

Commissioner Brown indicated if the residents voted to keep the alleyway wide rather than improving the aesthetics he does not see a reason to question that. He also inquired with Commissioner Koenig as to his opinion of the west elevation diagram where he indicated the southern townhomes do not seem to have the same symmetry as the northern ones. Commissioner Koenig indicated his personal take is that the design creates a prominent corner townhouse unit which helps differentiate the southern group. He does not think making it perfectly symmetrical would make a better scheme.

Commissioner McMahon said she happily recommends that the applicant work with the neighbors, particularly those in Canal Way, and maybe at some point in the future a different resolution on potential improvements to the alley way will be possible. She said nothing about the approval of this project as it stands today would prevent the addition of a 4-foot landscaped area with trees, etc., given you have the width to reduce the alley. She supports the visitor parking location, though she would be amenable to the conversion of those spaces to green space if they are underutilized in the future

Commissioner Wasowski echoed support for the project. She indicated the height is what is expected on the site. Chair Lyman expressed her approval of the project saying it does a nice job in using a somewhat difficult site and indicated support for the design of the townhomes saying they fit within Old Town North.

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Vice Chairman Macek indicated that for Condition 98 he has some concern over the wording for the disclosure relating to traffic on Washington Street. He indicated that the future increases in traffic are associated with growth in the region as a whole rather than development in Alexandria. He therefore put forth alternative language to which the applicant agreed.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chairman Macek, seconded by Commissioner Wasowski, the Planning Commission voted to approve Development Site Plan #2017-0014 as amended. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis and with the recommended changes to the conditions as shown below:

Condition 98:

Present a disclosure statement to potential buyers disclosing the following to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z, T&ES and the City Attorney:

- a. That Washington Street is a major arterial and ~~that future traffic volumes are is~~ expected to ~~increase significantly as development in the area continues~~ remain high on this regional highway. (T&ES) (PC)

OTHER BUSINESS:

7. Commissioner Reports, Comments & Questions

Commissioner McMahon provided a report on the Route 1 Housing Affordability Strategy process. She indicated that staff is likely to shift the final delivery schedule to September rather than June to allow more time for processing of community feedback. She indicated staff held a meeting with residents of the affordable units in the area with approximately 50 people attending. The most common questions she said were what would relocation look like and would residents of the affordable units have the right to return. She added that City staff covered the resources that would be available throughout the redevelopment process including the right to return.

Commissioner McMahon also described a meeting held on April 26th regarding Alexandria's Community Health Assessment Project, adding it will be a year to a year and a half or a two-year process. She indicated the first meeting focused on what Public Health is and the meeting endeavored to get a sense of what the community believes would be a good vision for a Healthy Community. She indicated there are lots of planning related factors associated with this process, including protection of the environment, investment in infrastructure improvements in an equitable manner, affordable housing, etc. She indicated the next meeting will be in late July with the date to be confirmed.

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Commissioner Koenig reported on the Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group meeting. He indicated that the City Council on April 10th adopted a revised project budget for the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station of \$320 million and authorized the City Manager to sign the amended and restated agreement between WMATA and the City for the funding of the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station project. The timeline anticipates there will be an amendment process for the DSUP in mid- to late-2018 with Council considering the DSUP amendment and initial construction in late 2018. Late 2021 or early 2022 would be the anticipated completion date.

In terms of the Environmental Action Plan (EAP), Commissioner Koenig shared that as of April 23rd there is an updated draft available on the website. The next step is for the Environmental Policy Commission to take the EAP to a City Council Work Session on May 22nd. Staff indicated that there is not a definitive timeline for consideration of the EAP yet, but, it will likely come back through the Planning Commission first.

Commissioner Koenig also indicated that he attended the Getting to Zero National Energy Forum in Pittsburgh a couple weeks ago. He indicated that there is a lot of action at all levels across the country but mostly at the community level, showing that zero net energy performance is reaching the mainstream. He said that he remains convinced that this is an achievable next step in Alexandria. He also mentioned that there were several sessions on the social equity dimension of zero net energy performance and on high quality environmentally performing architecture in general. He said that Pennsylvania has added competitive points under their low-income tax credit program for zero net energy and social equitable architecture.

Chair Lyman reported that the Resolution 830 Work Group had its last meeting on April 26th; she indicated several questions relating to keeping it as is, refining it, or expanding it were asked. She added staff will turn what was discussed in the meetings, including this last meeting, into recommendations. She indicated it may take some time for the draft report to be completed. The ARHA Redevelopment Work Group will meet and be briefed on this work on May 7th. Staff indicated that a proposal for Andrew Adkins will likely not come in June but rather possibly in September.

Commissioner Koenig asked if the Planning Commission will see the Long Range Interdepartmental Work Plan in June and staff confirmed that it will be docketed for then. Commissioner Koenig indicated that he is very interested in the Joint City Schools Facilities Master Plan and the Open Space in New Development Plan.

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MINUTES:

8. Consideration of the minutes from the April 3, 2018 Planning Commission meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: On a motion by Vice Chairman Macek, seconded by Commissioner Brown, the Planning Commission voted to approve the minutes from the April 3, 2018 hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

9. Adjournment

The Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.