

[EXTERNAL]Zoning Text Amendment #2019-00007

Katy Matthews <matthews.katy@gmail.com>

Thu 8/27/2020 9:39 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I write in support of the Staff's recommendations regarding the Increased Density for Public School Sites. With the increase of school enrollment and the city's dated and dilapidated school buildings, this permit is needed for our city to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration,

Katy Matthews 707 N Paxton St, Alexandria, VA 22304

--

Katy G. Matthews

matthews.katy@gmail.com

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[EXTERNAL]Zoning Text Amendment no. 2019-0007 - Comments of the Rosemont Citizens Association

Jol A.Silversmith <jol@thirdamendment.com>

Fri 8/28/2020 7:53 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Karl Moritz <Karl.Moritz@alexandriava.gov>; Robert Kerns <robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov>; Dirk Geratz <Dirk.Geratz@alexandriava.gov>



August 29, 2020

To the Planning Commission:

I write on behalf of the Board of the Rosemont Citizens Association (RCA). We understand that the Planning Commission at its September 1 meeting will consider an amendment (no. 2019-0007, to section 7-2100 of the zoning ordinance) that would allow greater density on school sites throughout Alexandria, under some circumstances without even a special use permit.

The RCA recognizes that to balance the demand for additional school capacity and the lack of space for new schools in Alexandria, in some cases increased density may be necessary. But this amendment would allow significant projects to proceed without public input - nor does it provide any assurance that the extra density would not be used for non-core purposes, such as housing. There is simply no justification for authorizing ACPS projects to proceed in the shadows; the current ordinance should remain as-is, to ensure that they can be fully scrutinized by neighborhood and other stakeholders.

The RCA understands that other civic organizations, such as the North Ridge Citizens Association, also have submitted or will submit comments to similar effect.

Additionally, the RCA is compelled to note that the staff report is deficient in that it does not include sufficient information needed to evaluate its findings and recommendations. The report notes that certain school modernization/capacity plans are anticipated in the next decade, including for Matthew Maury Elementary School in Rosemont. But there is no mention of which, if any, of these projects is actually expected to require extra density. Moreover, the staff report states that the amendment would apply to 12 of 18 existing ACPS properties, but fails to identify them. Simply put, the Planning Commission cannot do its job, and citizens cannot adequately evaluate and provide input on proposed changes to ordinances, if staff reports lack basic and important information. Apart from the policy issues discussed above, the current proposal also should be rejected because there is not an adequate record for review.

Best regards,

Jol Silversmith
President, RCA

[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

carol taylor <rcdt-va@msn.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 11:11 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

Carol Taylor

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Cari Hearn <Chearn@aba.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 1:26 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Hello –

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to **deny** the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

Cari & Patrick Hearn
3103 Old Dominion Blvd

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Geoff Chester <gchester@comcast.net>

Mon 8/31/2020 10:46 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

Geoff Chester
2417 Taylor Avenue
Alexandria VA 22302

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Judy M. <mcjude@hotmail.com>

Sun 8/30/2020 1:07 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Laurie Rackas <lrackas1@gmail.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 12:54 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Meghan Rainey <raineymeghan@gmail.com>

Sun 8/30/2020 12:11 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

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August 30, 2020

ATTN: Alexandria Planning Commission
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Docket Item #9 (September 1, 2020) - Zoning Text Amendment #2019-00007

Dear Chair Macek and Members of the Planning Commission:

We urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (docket item #9) on September 1st. We support the analysis and conclusions supplied by the North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA). Additionally, we concur with the Rosemont Civic Association commentary that the staff report is largely deficient, and does not adequately support the proper evaluation of many of the claims and objectives that it references.

No one can argue that we don't need more school capacity in Alexandria. Larger schools stacked higher and wider may be a necessary long-term approach given the lack of surplus ACPS property and our growing school population, but we should retain our case-by-case review process, which ensures that significant increases in building size meet the character and needs of the neighborhoods they serve.

If approved, this proposal would give the city automatic allowance to build new schools with a FAR of .60 "by right," without a public hearing – even though such buildings could be more than double the size of any surrounding structures in low-density residential neighborhoods. For example, in an R20 zone that currently limits FAR to .25, this would allow for more than double the bulk.

A city council member indicated to us that the proposal would assist new school building projects in high-density areas, such as Landmark, Eisenhower and Potomac Yard. Yet as drafted, this change would also impact ACPS sites in single-family housing areas – where low-density zoning restrictions under the city's own Master Plan have served to protect and preserve what little remains of dwindling community open and green space areas.

There is simply no justification for doing away with a maximum limit for school building FAR, nor do we understand why schools would be altogether exempt from the same zoning rules that apply to other surrounding buildings.

In reviewing city approval applications for recent school building projects, the city has routinely approved school designs that satisfied “by right” zoning requirements. In practical terms, if the City moves ahead with this proposal, citizens will have little recourse to prevent the allowable doubling of school size.

There is also no assurance that the city wouldn’t take advantage of its expanded authority to seek potentially controversial uses for school buildings that go beyond the core educational mission of ACPS, such as the collocation of housing with schools.

We need to think creatively about ways to maximize space and services for our schools. As Alexandria continues to grow within its confined boundaries, it is more important than ever to involve residents in school zoning decisions and to maintain the process protections that exist for neighborhoods.

If the city is truly seeking a zoning change to help build bigger schools in higher-density areas of the city, why not seek a less sweeping modification of the zoning code to apply more narrowly to such projects?

In summary, the Commission should reject the proposed text Amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100 and retain the important constraints and limits that exist regarding school building design and approval. ACPS modernization projects can still be achieved with more reasonable and moderate changes to code.

Sincerely,
Mr. John Fehrenbach, NRCA Vice President
Mr. Lyn Gubser, Past President, NRCA
Ms. Meghan Rainey, Past President, NRCA
Ms. Kay Stimson, Past President, NRCA

[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Ronnie Yoder <ryhonron862@gmail.com>

Sun 8/30/2020 1:11 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: ryhonron862@gmail.com <ryhonron862@gmail.com>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you. Ronnie A. Yoder

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Sarah Esser <sarahesser01@icloud.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 11:12 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association.

Sarah Esser
Norris Place.

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Suzanne Hellmann <snhellmann63@gmail.com>

Sun 8/30/2020 7:12 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

Suzanne Hellmann
3310 Old Dominion Blvd.

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**[EXTERNAL]Objection to Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density -
Docket Item #9**

William J. Friedman <pedlarfarm@gmail.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 10:18 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a homeowner and resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. I also believe the procedural practices of the City administration and the substantive outcome sought are in conflict with controlling Virginia law. Thank you.

William J. Friedman

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[EXTERNAL]Reject the proposed text Amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100 - Let's protect open and green space - Let's work towards a reasonable process for contemplating larger schools

Laura Humphrey <lauraphumphrey@gmail.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 4:55 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Stephen Humphrey <shumphrey@cameronllp.com>; Laura Humphrey <lauraphumphrey@gmail.com>

Good afternoon,

Let's be sure our city protects and preserves what remains of dwindling community open space and green space for the benefit of all residents of Alexandria.

We strongly urge you to reject the text amendment to Zoning Code Section 7-2100. Instead, let's find a reasonable approach for the consideration of larger schools.

Below is the statement submitted by Kay Stimson, Meghan Rainey, and Lyn Gubser on behalf of our neighbors and supporting the North Ridge Citizens' Association recommendation to reject the changes that would fast-track zoning approvals.

We strongly agree with the position stated below.

Please reject this proposed text Amendment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Laura and Stephen Humphrey, 321 Mansion Drive, Alexandria VA 22302

City Should Deny Proposed Amendment for School Zoning Decisions

The Alexandria Planning Commission will consider a proposal on September 1 to fast-track zoning approvals for larger new school buildings, while eroding major protections that normally come with such projects. We support the North Ridge Citizens' Association recommendation to deny these changes.

No one can argue that we don't need more school capacity in Alexandria. Larger schools stacked higher and wider may be a necessary long-term approach given the lack of surplus ACPS property and our growing school population, but we should retain our case-by-case review process, which ensures that significant increases in building size meet the character and needs of the neighborhoods they serve.

If approved, the latest proposal would give the city automatic allowance to build new schools with a FAR of .60 "by right," without a public hearing – even though such buildings could be more than double the size of any surrounding structures in low-density residential neighborhoods. For example, in an R20 zone that currently limits FAR to .25, this would allow for more than double the bulk.

A city council member indicated to us that the proposal would assist new school building projects in high-density areas, such as Landmark, Eisenhower and Potomac Yard. Yet as drafted, this change would also impact ACPS sites in single-family housing areas – where low-density zoning restrictions under the city's own Master Plan have served to protect and preserve what little remains of dwindling community open and green space areas.

There is simply no justification for doing away with a maximum limit for school building FAR, nor do we understand why schools would be altogether exempt from the same zoning rules that apply to other surrounding buildings.

In reviewing city approval applications for recent school building projects, the city has routinely approved school designs that satisfied "by right" zoning requirements. In practical terms, if the City moves ahead with this proposal, citizens will have little recourse to prevent the allowable doubling of school size.

There is also no assurance that the city wouldn't take advantage of its expanded authority to seek potentially controversial uses for school buildings that go beyond the core educational mission of ACPS, such as the collocation of housing with schools.

We need to think creatively about ways to maximize space and services for our schools. As Alexandria continues to grow within its confined boundaries, it is more important than ever to involve residents in school zoning decisions and to maintain the process protections that exist for neighborhoods.

If the city is truly seeking a zoning change to help build bigger schools in higher-density areas of the city, why not seek a less sweeping modification of the zoning code to apply more narrowly to such projects?

We urge other concerned residents to contact City Council and use Alexandria 311 to urge the Planning Commission to reject the proposed text Amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100. Instead, let's work towards a proposal that includes a more reasonable process for contemplating larger schools, with a clear limit on school density and existing protections for residential zones.

Kay Stimson, Meghan Rainey & Lyn Gubser are former presidents of the North Ridge Citizens' Association.

--

Laura Humphrey
lauraphumphrey@gmail.com

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Customer Comments:

I oppose repealing FAR requirements for school construction because it sets a dangerous precedent whose logic could lead to eliminating FAR for other public projects and ultimately private developments as well. If the city deems FAR unworthy of regulation for schools, it will be more difficult to defend its salience for other kinds of developments. Retaining FAR restrictions, which a DSUP could waive, but only after assessing and addressing their impact on nearby properties, is more appropriate. This initiative may be driven by the school board's design for MacArthur School exceeding current zoning. Because the MacArthur School redesign clearly enjoys public support, the existing ordinance should only be "tweaked" to allow a FAR equivalent to that proposed for MacArthur School w/ DSUP.

Staff Comments:

Please view the complete case history and details in the Alex311 console and take the appropriate actions to complete this request by the estimated resolution date. **Use the Alex311 Console to contact the customer. Do not forward this email to the customer, or to any City staff who are Alex311 users.**

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Cindy Elkins <cindyelkins98@gmail.com>

Sun 8/30/2020 3:39 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

andymimisaunders@verizon.net <andymimisaunders@verizon.net>

Mon 8/31/2020 9:17 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Dear Alexandria Planning Commission and City Council officials,

We STRONGLY oppose the proposed text Amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100 that is on the Planning Commission docket for September 1st. We believe the current case-by-case review process, which ensures that significant increases in building size meet the character and needs of the neighborhoods they serve, works well and allows input from all concerned citizens. We URGE you to vote against this proposal. We are long-time City of Alexandria residents who have lived in our current Jefferson Park house for 19 years (and previously lived in Beverley Hills for 7 years), have raised 3 children here, and are involved in many aspects of our wonderful, beautiful community. Please listen to our voices, and the voices of our neighbors.

Thank you,
Andrew and Mimi Saunders
2511 Clay St.

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August 31, 2020

Planning Commission
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Re: Zoning Text Amendment #2019-00007/Increased Density for Public School Sites

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposal to fast-track zoning approvals for larger new school buildings. I also thank you for your service on the Planning Commission and to our community.

In 2017, the city adopted a strategic plan for FY 2017 to FY 2022. The vision adopted in the plan embodies the elements which have made Alexandria a special place to live and in which to raise a family:

Alexandria's VISION

In 2022, Alexandria is a historic, inclusive city of kindness, with distinct, vibrant and safe neighborhoods, a well-managed government, flourishing arts, culture, and recreation, a strong economy, thriving children and youth, active and secure older adults, environmental sustainability, healthy residents of all ages, and multimodal transportation.

Perhaps no commission in our city government carries more responsibility in seeing this vision realized than the Planning Commission. The impact of the decisions you make will be felt long after the 2022 target date. As we have seen in other jurisdictions, transformational zoning decisions are often irreversible, and bring with them unintended consequences. How to manage the need to accommodate our city's growing student population could be one such decision.

The strategic plan sets forth a vision and specific goals for our neighborhoods:

Distinctive and Vibrant Neighborhoods

In 2022, Alexandria values its history, honors its diverse communities, and respects its distinct, vibrant and walkable neighborhoods. The city has a small-town feel and is committed to sustaining a high quality of life in its urban, suburban and commercial areas. . . Alexandria has complementary and varied architecture and a beautifully built environment, and the City ensures that new development and

infill are compatible with the character of Alexandria's neighborhoods, natural environment, and historic resources.

The Zoning Amendment before the Commission is inconsistent with these visions for our city and our neighborhoods, and will make achieving the benchmarks for public support set forth in the strategic plan less likely, if not impossible.

1. Impact on Neighborhoods

Despite the mandate that the city “ensures that new development and infill are compatible with the character of Alexandria’s neighborhoods, natural environment, and historic resources,” the amendment would permit massive expansion in schools located in single-family housing areas – where low-density zoning restrictions under the city’s own master plan have served to protect and preserve what few open and green space areas remain.

Specifically, the amendment would allow the construction of new schools with a FAR of .60. This represents a significant increase over the FAR in an R20 zone, which is currently limited to .25. The result could be buildings more than double the size of any surrounding structures in such zones, changing the character of neighborhoods and bringing with it traffic and congestion on roads unable to accommodate them.

2. Process

One of the factors that makes Alexandria unique is our community. We are diverse. We are giving. We care about our neighbors. Maintaining that sense of community is not easy. Our city government has traditionally done its part by engaging citizens in the process of government, allowing for, and respecting, the impact of civic associations, and seeking to govern through consensus.

Yet, the Amendment would give the city automatic allowance to build new schools with a FAR of .60 “by right,” and without a public hearing. Residents will have little, if any, ability to prevent permanent changes to their neighborhoods. Conceivably, the City could use this new, expanded authority to implement highly controversial proposals such as the ones that surfaced earlier this year to build housing on top of MacArthur school, and eliminate environmentally sensitive greenspace behind George Mason school.

3. Community Support

Under the goals set forth in its strategic plan, the city government is compelled to seek, maintain and build community support. Specifically, when it comes to neighborhoods, its goals include maintaining “the percentage of residents with a positive view of the overall quality of new development in Alexandria at or above 2016’s 64%,” and “the percentage of residents with a positive view of their neighborhood as a place to live at or above 2016’s 83%.”

The proposed amendment, by giving the city carte blanche to permanently and “by right” alter the character of neighborhoods, and do so without community involvement, will make it less likely, if not impossible for the city to meet these benchmarks for community support.

Conclusion

The proposed amendment has far-reaching and likely permanent implications. It has the potential to impact the lives of Alexandria residents and do so perpetually. It runs counter to the strategic plan’s requirement the city respect its “distinct” neighborhoods and be “committed to sustaining a high quality of life in its urban, suburban and commercial areas.”

A change of this potential magnitude should not be pushed through in the midst of a pandemic where residents are unable to petition the board in person in a public session. Rather, efforts should be undertaken to work with the community to develop a consensus approach to the issues raised by our increasing student population. That is a better way to preserve the sense of community which has for decades defined our city, and to meet the goals set forth in the strategic plan.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Regards,

Darryl Nirenberg
Alexandria, Virginia

[EXTERNAL]Vote no to zoning ammendment

Beth Clark <bethbclark@gmail.com>

Tue 9/1/2020 12:08 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Dear Alexandria Planning Commission and City Council officials,

I strongly oppose the proposed text Amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100 that is on the Planning Commission docket for September 1st. The current case-by-case review process, which ensures that significant increases in building size meet the character and needs of the neighborhoods they serve, works well and allows input from all concerned citizens. I URGE you to vote against this proposal.

The people need a say and each case needs careful review. This process works.

Elizabeth Clark
Alexandria va 22302

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I am a resident of North Ridge.

I urge that the Planning Commission deny the proposed zoning text amendment included on Docket Item 9, unless it is amended.

The amendment should put an overall cap on the total density that can be approved a public school located in a residential, which could not be exceeded even with a special use permit.

There is no other instance in our City's zoning code where an SUP can establish an unlimited density for any use. This would be the first of its kind. It is being proposed for uses where such an unlimited threshold would be most undesirable. School sites are important elements of neighborhoods and should not be allowed to have unlimited densities.

The Planning Commission should therefore amend the proposal to establish some reasonable cap on the overall density standards for school sites. If need be, the proposal should be tabled until such a reasonable cap is evaluated with the ACP and proposed to the public for evaluation.

In addition, the language as proposed would effectively allow the City to permit high density residential development on school sites, and allow that development to be unburdened from any of the density that would otherwise be contributed by the school structures on the site because the school structures would benefit from unlimited density. The language of the Section 72100 should therefore be revised to make clear that a public school located in a residential zone should be reserved solely to public school and other public service amenities not incompatible with the use as a public school. The language should also expressly prohibit development of residential units on public school sites.

Jeffrey M. Reid
810 North Overlook Drive
Alexandria VA

[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

John Biechman <jcbikeman@aol.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 9:34 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: John Biechman <jcbikeman@aol.com>

August 31, 2020

To Members of the City of Alexandria Planning Commission:

I have been a resident of North Ridge for 29 years; prior to moving to Alexandria, I lived in Morgan Hill, Santa Clara County, California where I served on the City Council and the County Transportation Commission for four years, as well as serving on the school district affirmative action committee.

I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association.

Thank you.

John Biechman
1121 Allison St
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-501-1314

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Nancy Kelly <nanza13@msn.com>

Mon 8/31/2020 6:05 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

You're most likely aware that many of us have observed and learned to distrust the City of Alexandria's laughable "public input" regime. First, get mayor and staff and maybe council to write vague and over-reaching policy. Second, ask for public comment. Third, tell the public it's too late for their comment to have any genuine meaning.

In other locales, larger and smaller, there is actual genuine cooperation between citizens and government. Maybe the old "plantation South" lives on here with the belief that truly, you all know best and just have to lead along your little folks to understand that. How about, instead, working together from the get-go on city issues?

Respectfully,

Nancy Kelly
2402 Cameron Mills Rd
Alexandria 22302

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FW: Proposed Amendment of Zoning Code Section 7-2100

David Vaughan <davaughan1@comcast.net>

Tue 9/1/2020 10:44 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From:

Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 10:26 AM

To: karl.moritz@alexandriava.gov; robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov; dirk.geratz@alexandriava.gov; PlanComm@alexandriava.gov;

Amendment to Zoning Code Section 7-2100

September 1, 2020

For: Alexandria Planning Commission & Alexandria City Council

We have been active citizens and voters of Alexandria for more than 52 years. During that time, we have enjoyed access with our governmental representatives on many issues. We have found them to willing to listen and exchange views with us and thought that they enjoyed sharing views and learning from one another. We have believed that you volunteered to participate in public life because you also believe in making sure that our voices are considered before taking actions that may adversely affect us.

Reluctantly, we are increasingly concerned that our elected representatives and city officials are less and less receptive to public participation in government decision making—perhaps because you consider it a waste of time or that it complicates your decision making. Thus, we see increasing efforts to remove issues from public discussion or to backdoor them in ways that remove them from public view and discussion.

Our concerns have been recently highlighted by efforts to repurpose the use of our public schools and parks beyond their tradition core missions and to do it without public participation—making our local government less of a participatory democracy and more authoritarian.

The proposed amendments of Section 7-2100 would also result in removing another important issue from future public input. We recognize that the City and ACPS would hold various meetings with the public to discuss the design of school buildings if the amendments were adopted. But, that process is fundamentally different than the public process under the existing version of Section 7-2100, which only allows large increases in the mass of new schools contingent upon a public hearing and finding—subject to judicial review—that the increased density will not be injurious to neighboring properties. These are important protections for the public and there is no good reason why the City and ACPS cannot continue to build schools subject to the same procedures and public input that worked for decades.

For these reasons, we ask you to reject the proposed amendment and continue our democratic tradition of inclusive citizen participation in our local government.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our views,

Patricia and David Vaughan
Davaughan1@comcast.net

[EXTERNAL]Written Comments for Sept. 1 Hearing

Moira <thebuzbys@comcast.net>

Mon 8/31/2020 7:04 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Moira Buzby <thebuzbys@comcast.net>; Timothy Buzby <tim_buzby@comcast.net>

August 31, 2020

City of Alexandria Planning Commission
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Members of the Alexandria Planning Commission,

We are writing today in opposition to a proposed amendment to the city's zoning laws designed to allow increased density on school property. We urge you to reject the text amendment to Section 7-2100 that will be under review at the Planning Commission Meeting on September 1.

We are not legislative, zoning, or legal experts. We are simply homeowners who have lived in the city of Alexandria for the past 26 years. Recently, we have become increasingly concerned — not only with the city's attempts to increase density in single-family neighborhoods — but also with the city's attempts to accomplish this objective at all costs.

This year alone, we have commented on feasibility studies to co-locate housing on school property, recommendations to allow Accessory Dwelling Units, and now zoning amendments to permit construction of new, large-scale school buildings without the protections of a Special Use Permit hearing process. All of these new initiatives would significantly impact quality of life issues in our neighborhood, resulting in less open space, fewer recreational areas, a reduction of the tree canopy, and decreased permeable land for groundwater flow — while violating objectives designed to protect the density and scale in our neighborhoods as outlined in Alexandria's Master Plan.

Please leave the current zoning framework in place so that neighborhood residents can work collaboratively with city leaders, school board members, and parents to determine the best land-use for school properties on a case-by-case basis.

Sincerely,

Timothy and Moira Buzby
308 Mansion Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302
thebuzbys@comcast.net

CC: Alexandria City Council Members

[EXTERNAL]Reject the Proposed Text Amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100

Jane Frazer <JaneZFrazer@hotmail.com>

Tue 9/1/2020 1:16 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I urge you to reject the proposed text amendment for Zoning Code Section 7-2100.

For years, I've watched various city managers, city council members, and school board members wring their hands over the appalling conditions of our schools. Yet, year after year, these same city officials ignore the problem and choose to delay building maintenance.

I've seen the dangerous conditions myself. Earlier this year, the former principal at George Mason Elementary School gave me on a tour of the school—including the basement and attic. What I saw was appalling and a clear safety concern for the students and ACPS staff. I saw electrical panels in standing water, fire hazards. I also noted a lack of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, which is a particular danger in a wood frame building. I was also told the school's sewage tank regularly overflows, leaving open sewer on the floor of the basement.

Alexandria needs safe, clean, and larger schools to accommodate a growing population. But this text amendment is not the way to go about filling that desperate need.

There are several troubling issues with this text amendment, including but not limited to: fast tracking school buildings with potentially unlimited proportions without public hearings, which is in violation of Section 7-2100. The amendment also deviates from the city's zoning rules and conflicts with the city's own Master Plan. It also adds to the city's problems of citizens having limited recreational and open space.

This is why we need to have public hearings.

In addition, the Planning Commission needs to be honest with citizens and explain why the text amendment was originally listed on the docket as old business. A public statement on how and why this occurred would go a long way to re-establish the commission's credibility. **ACPS leadership, the city council, and city manager operate at a significant trust deficit in Alexandria. Please don't allow yourselves to join them.**

The current zoning standard is not only adequate for building safe, clean and larger schools, it also includes public hearings as part of the process. It is simply wrong to attempt to remove residents as part of the process.

The current SUP process offers protections to preserve the character of Alexandria's neighborhoods and natural environment, all the while allowing for schools to be rebuilt and/or renovated.

Reject this text amendment.

Jane Frazer

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[EXTERNAL]Changes to City's zoning code to add density to school buildings

Sue Gallagher <suegallagher.va@gmail.com>

Tue 9/1/2020 3:42 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Dear Planning Committee,

I have been a citizen of the City of Alexandria for 20+ years.

I am writing this email to state that I am NOT in support of adding density to Alexandria school buildings.

I understand that ACPS needs to enlarge and modernize school buildings but these needs can be effectively accommodated under the current zoning framework.

I request that the Planning Commission rejects this proposal amendment.

V/R,

Susan Gallagher
1000 Virginia Ave
Alexandria VA

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[EXTERNAL]Proposed Zoning Text Amendment for School Density - Docket Item #9

Patricia Bowman <pat.bowman5554@gmail.com>

Tue 9/1/2020 3:44 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

I am a resident of North Ridge and I urge the Planning Commission to deny the proposed zoning text amendment for school density (Docket Item #9). I support the position and analysis of the North Ridge Citizens' Association. Thank you.

Patricia Bowman
2415

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[EXTERNAL]Zoning Text Amendment #2019-00007 (Increased Density at Public School Sites)

Jesse O'Connell <oconnellj@gmail.com>

Tue 9/1/2020 5:25 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Nathan Macek <natemacek@hotmail.com>; Maria Wasowski <mariawasowski@comcast.net>

Chair Macek, Vice-Chair Wasowski, and Members of the Planning Commission,

I write tonight to encourage you to support Zoning Text Amendment #2019-00007, which would modify the allowable density for public schools located in residential or mixed-use zone.

In the mayor's newsletter this morning he shared the statistic that the 2019-20 school year was the thirteenth straight year of Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) enrollment growth; which represents an addition of 5,000 students during that period. It is impossible to deny that Alexandria is grappling with a school capacity crisis, and more classroom space is needed to serve the students in our public schools.

As a parent of an ACPS student, I experience this need firsthand when I enter the aging building and overcrowded classrooms of our (wonderful and beloved) neighborhood school. It is clear to me that we are managing an untenable situation through community support and determination to persevere; but that is not a sustainable long-term solution. We cannot paint and remodel our way out of this problem.

It is the plain truth that there are often limited options to site new school buildings other than on the site of existing schools. This limitation is a big part of why we have been slow to address our capacity crisis. It is hard (near impossible) to find a large enough parcel of land or an existing building suitable for conversion; let alone either one of those things that doesn't additionally provoke the opinions and ire of residents living nearby. Adding flexibility through changes to our zoning ordinance will empower us to build adequately sized schools at existing school sites, which will have the dual effect of addressing capacity needs while continuing to ensure that students can go to their neighborhood school.

As we deal with the fallout of the financial impact from the coronavirus public health crisis, which has caused and will cause the City to pause and revisit many capital improvement projects, we need as many tools at our disposal as possible. The more flexibility we can empower our City and Schools planners with, the more likely we are to see projects started and completed on a timeline that serves the urgent needs of our students and families.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge you to support Text Amendment #2019-00007.

Warm regards,

Jesse O'Connell

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jmiles42@comcast.net

From: Justin M. Wilson <justin@justin.net>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 9:22 AM
To: jmiles42@comcast.net
Cc: mmacva@aol.com; mollywilkinson@yahoo.com; BeverleyHills@groups.io
Subject: Re: [BeverleyHills] NRCA Alert: Proposed Zoning Amendment for School Density & More News

Technically true, but functionally not correct.

The provision retains the 60 foot height maximum on these sites, so while conceivably with an SUP you could go above 0.60 FAR, given the 60 foot max, it would be pretty hard to do that.

Once you meet setback requirements, open space requirements, etc, you would be hard pressed to design a school that gets a lot denser without hitting the 60-foot height max.

When you layer state rules about how tall elementary schools can be (to facilitate ingress/egress in an emergency) it makes it impossible.

The staff proposed this language to facilitate denser schools in some of the more urban areas of the City (particularly Potomac Yard where we are actively pursuing an "urban" school design, likely as a component of the ACPS High School plan).

As a practical matter, we have not built a school without going through the SUP process in decades, and that is unlikely to change, even with this language.

The specific text change proposed is shown below:

Sec. 7-2100 Increased density and height for public elementary and second schools.

Notwithstanding any contrary provision of this ordinance, a public elementary or secondary school, located in a residential or mixed use zone, may be constructed, or reconstructed to a size which exceeds the density and height otherwise permitted by regulations in such zone; ~~provided, that a special use permit is approved, and, further, that no increase in floor area ratio is no greater than .60, and no in height greater than 60 feet, shall be approved.~~ With approval of a special use permit, the floor area ratio may be increased above .60 and the height may be increased above 60 feet.

Justin M. Wilson
justin@justin.net

On Sep 1, 2020, at 8:51 AM, jmiles42@comcast.net wrote:

What the Mayor failed to state is that the amendment doesn't just end the requirement for a separate Special Use Permit to go to a 0.60 FAR.

It also allows unlimited FAR with a Special Use Permit on school sites.

No other provision of the Zoning Code allows an SUP to override all density restriction on a site.