

FW: [EXTERNAL]Request to Defer Proposed Text Amendment to CDD Zones

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To: Patrick Silva <Patrick.Silva@alexandriava.gov>

From: Fran Vogel <fran.vogel@verizon.net>**Sent:** Saturday, April 24, 2021 11:58 AM**To:** Justin Wilson <justin.wilson@alexandriava.gov>; Elizabeth Bennett-Parker <elizabeth.bennettparker@alexandriava.gov>; John Chapman <john.taylor.chapman@alexandriava.gov>; Amy Jackson <Amy.Jackson@alexandriava.gov>; Del Pepper <Del.Pepper@alexandriava.gov>; Mo Seifeldein <Mo.Seifeldein@alexandriava.gov>; Canek Aguirre <Canek.Aguirre@alexandriava.gov>**Cc:** Karl Moritz <Karl.Moritz@alexandriava.gov>; Maya Contreras <Maya.Contreras@alexandriava.gov>; Nathan Randall <Nathan.Randall@alexandriava.gov>; 'Alexa Glock' <alexacordelia@gmail.com>; Jennifer Johnson Davis <jjohn6qr@gmail.com>**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Request to Defer Proposed Text Amendment to CDD Zones

Fran Vogel, President
Strawberry Hill Civic Association
41 N. Early Street
Alexandria, VA 22304

Via Email

Mayor Justin Wilson
Members of City Council and the Planning Commission
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Re: Request to Defer Proposed Text Amendment to CDD Zones

Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council and of the Planning Commission:

The Strawberry Hill Association (“SHCA”) is writing this letter to request a deferral of the City making a decision on certain proposed text amendments to allow permitted and administrative uses in CDD Zones.^[1] The deferral is needed to allow for adequate and informed public input.

We understand there has been severe financial impact caused by the pandemic on small businesses in our City. We are also aware that the City has tried to right-size the level of regulation for starting a business while trying to maintain neighborhood quality of life. Notably that the City already changed uses to permitted or administrative uses for small businesses in June 2016^[2], June 24, 2017^[3] and then again in September 2020.^[4] This is the fourth such change to zoning laws for the same purposes in less than five years.

What makes this fourth change to zoning laws unique is the lack of public outreach and the rush to pass these measures without adequate and informed public input. In this regard, the City issued a press release on March 24 to announce a virtual meeting on the proposed text amendments on April 6 (just nine business days later). That press release contained no information about what the proposed text amendments would be nor was such information provided prior to the virtual meeting on April 6. Not surprisingly under such circumstances, the public meeting took about 21 minutes. All that was provided at the meeting was a nine page presentation which the public had inadequate time to digest or comprehend. The presentation provided insufficient specific analysis for

why any of the twelve new proposed permitted uses or the four new administrative uses were needed. In fact, some of the permitted uses like "Radio/TV studio" logically seem to be the type of uses that could potentially adversely affect the quality of life. This presentation also, for the first time, alerted the public to the fact that these proposed text amendments were scheduled for public hearings before the Planning Commission on May 4 (less than one month after the one and only public outreach meeting) and before City Council on May 15 (just five weeks after the April 6 virtual meeting).

The SHCA strongly feels that more public outreach is required. More information also needs to be disseminated by City Staff. At a minimum, it would be helpful to know the reasons why each of the fourteen new permitted uses and each of the four new administrative uses are necessary. Had these permitted uses been in effect four years ago when Taco Bell wanted to open a 24-hour drive-thru restaurant at Duke and N. Gordon Streets (current location of the Enterprise Rental office) our community would not have been able to object. We would have been forced to live with the noise and fumes associated with a drive-thru, congestion and gridlock at an already problematic intersection, and safety risks for pedestrians obligated to cross the drive-thru exit to reach Duke Street.

It would also be helpful to the public and also to members of both the Planning Commission and City Council to know whether or not nearby communities such as Arlington or Fairfax treat the fourteen new permitted uses and four new administrative uses in the same or a similar manner under their zoning ordinances. We have heard repeatedly that one of the main reasons for such changes to our zoning laws is that the City zoning ordinance is more onerous than those in nearby jurisdictions making it tougher for small businesses to do business in Alexandria. Accordingly, this would seem to be highly pertinent information for the public and decision makers to have.

SHCA thereby requests that the public hearings on this matter before both the Planning Commission and City Council be deferred. We further request that City Staff publicly disseminate the information noted directly above and that the City thereafter have additional virtual public meetings in order to get adequate and informed public input. We believe that these actions would result in a fair and equitable accommodation to both local businesses and to Alexandria residents.

If there are any questions concerning these comments, please contact me at president@strawberryhillcivicassociation.org or by phone at 703-517-0759.

Respectfully,

Fran Vogel
President, Strawberry Hill Civic Association

cc: Karl Moritz
Nathan Randall
Maya Contreras

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- [1] Materials on this matter posted by City staff are located at: <<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Development>>.
- [2] On June 18, 2016, City Council approved a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to “allow administrative review of special use permits for certain uses that now require a special use permit; allow uses to be permitted by-right for certain uses that now require a special use permit; update various use categories and definitions to clarify and identify certain uses; amend the criteria for Minor Amendment and Outdoor Dining administrative review of special use permits; and various technical corrections.”
- [3] On June 24, 2017, City Council approved text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to, among other things, “to amend Sections 4-900 and 4-1000 with additional by-right, administrative SUP, and SUP uses.”
- [4] On September 12, 2020, City Council approved a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to “amend commercial use definitions, commercial use conditions and home occupation requirements and to change certain uses from requiring Special Use Permits and Administrative Use Permits to either Administrative Special Use Permits or permitted uses.”

