

Submitted April 12, 2021

Approved April 14, 2021

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING NO. 6-2021
Wednesday, March 10, 2021**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session
via WebEx at 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, March 10, 2021

PRESENT

Suzan Pitman - Chair

Anne Goodman	Andrea Nunez
Sarah Miller	Sam Pearson
	John Tyner II

Absent: Charles Littlefield

Present: Nicholas Dumais, Assistant City Attorney
Jim Wasilak, Zoning and Development Manager
David Levy, Assistant Director
Andrea Gilles, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Clark Larson, Principal Planner
Manisha Tewari, Principal Planner

Chair Pitman opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m., noting that the meeting is being conducted virtually by WebEx due to the coronavirus pandemic. Rockville City Hall is closed until further notice to reduce the spread of the virus, based on guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC). She further noted that the agenda had been modified, and that the Project Plan for Falls Grove shown on tonight's agenda would be on the April 14 Commission meeting. She also welcomed Acting Deputy City Manager Tim Chesnutt, who is attending the meeting.

I. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL

A. Discussion and Possible Adoption of Annexation Plan Associated with Annexation Petition ANX2020-00146, a Request to Annex 10.23 Acres of Land at 16200 Frederick Road and a 1.73-Acre Portion of MD 355 Right-Of-Way Adjacent to the Property; Victor, Inc., Petitioners

Manisha Tewari reviewed the approval process for the Annexation Plan, including the public hearing on February 10, 2021. She noted that much of the public testimony received was related to the potential development of the property to be annexed and not to the annexation itself. As a result of the public testimony, staff incorporated several changes into the draft Annexation Plan for consideration.

Ms. Tewari informed the Commission that the Montgomery County Planning Board had recommended approval of the annexation and the proposed zoning to the County Council last week. She noted that this is an important milestone in the process, as the County Council must approve the recommended zoning if the recommended zoning is to be implemented immediately upon annexation. Otherwise, the City would have to wait for five years to implement the City's MXCD zoning on the property, which differs from the current County zoning.

Tim Chesnutt responded to questions related to the King Farm Task Force, including whether the Task Force had considered the use of the property adjacent to the Farmstead. He noted that many of the ideas depended on additional parking, which was discussed with the Aschenbach family who own the property to be annexed. Mr. Levy added that the Task Force report showed parking on the property already on the property already in the City.

Chair Pitman asked if development on the King Buick property adversely affect any of the potential reuses for the King Farm Farmstead. Mr. Chesnutt noted that there would not be a direct conflict for the majority of the proposals, although some might require adequate buffers. Commissioner Miller asked if there have been discussions regarding whether the development could enhance the Farmstead beyond the potential for parking, and the response was yes.

Commissioner Tyner asked if the property could connect to Pleasant Drive and then connect out to Shady Grove Road and not through King Farm. He thought that this is one of the issues for the development of the property, along with traffic, that should be considered when the development plan is considered by the Commission. Mr. Wasilak added that the development plan as it stands right now shows a connection to the former Pleasant Drive, which is not proposed to connect to Shady Grove Road. The connections and traffic impact would be reviewed in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) at the time of development application review. The report is prepared by the applicant's consultant and reviewed by staff and will outline recommendations for traffic mitigation and on-site circulation based on the traffic generated by the development proposal.

Commissioner Goodman expressed reservations about annexation of the property for residential use and thought that the property to be annexed should be supportive of whatever happens on the Farmstead property. Commissioners had concerns about making a recommendation on the annexation separate from any recommendation on the proposed development. Mr. Levy explained that the staff analysis of the annexation and the recommended zoning was made independent of the development proposal, as the property is within the City's adopted maximum expansion limits. The recommended zoning for the property is the same zoning on the property already within the City limits, allowing for the combining of the properties into a single property that would be subject to City approval.

Accordingly, staff has found that it is in the interest of the City to allow for the combined project. Mr. Wasilak noted further that the zoning does not guarantee approval of a particular development plan, as the Mayor and Council would have to make certain findings in making a decision to approve the project plan application.

Mr. Dumais explained the Commission's role in recommending the Annexation Plan, which is to approve the best annexation plan for the land being annexed, not to make a decision on the annexation itself.

Chair Pitman discussed the comments made by the County Planning Board. One of the recommendations is that the development plan adhere to Vision Zero principles regarding pedestrian safety. She recommended that the development plan be reviewed by the pedestrian committee for the benefit of the Commission and Mayor and Council review. She also agreed with Commissioner Goodman's point about enhancing the history of the site and connection to the Farmstead.

Chair Pitman asked what other zones were considered and why they weren't chosen. Ms. Tewari responded that staff did look at other zones but that the other mixed-use zones allow for the same level of development as what is proposed. Staff also thought that a residential zone was not appropriate in this location. Chair Pitman asked if there was a zone that both properties could be zoned that would be better, and Mr. Levy responded that the MXCD Zone is appropriately used in the MD 355 corridor in Rockville for areas not immediately adjacent to a transit station. The lower intensity mixed-use zones would allow the development as proposed, and residential medium density (RMD) zones allows for garden apartments and townhouses that was not appropriate in this location. He also reminded the Commission that the County's updated sector plan recommends a similar zone that allows five more feet of height.

Commissioner Miller stated that she thought that there were things that the Commission could recommend at this stage to make the project better and more compatible with the Farmstead.

Mr. Levy asked if it would be appropriate for the Commission to transmit comments related to the potential development as part of the annexation. Mr. Wasilak responded that the Annexation Plan could be modified if appropriate, or a transmittal memo could include comments that the Commission recommends be considered by the Mayor and Council. Mr. Dumais recommended a memo if such comments were desired.

Chair Pitman offered to draft a transmittal letter. She thought that the memo should include the following topics: traffic impact; pedestrian safety and access; enhancing the history of the adjacent farmstead, encouraging partnerships to allow

for continued preservation and adaptive reuse of the farmstead; and alternate access to the property from the north.

Commissioner Pearson moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, to recommend approval of the Annexation Plan, as proposed. The motion was approved 5-0, with Commissioner Goodman abstaining and Commissioner Littlefield absent.

II. BRIEFING

A. Briefing on the WMATA Rockville Station Visioning and Concept Development Study

Clark Larson presented an overview of the study, which was approved by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation. The scope of work was developed by WMATA and the Mayor and Council. The study will be undertaken by the consultant team contracted by WMATA, including HR&A, Sasaki and VHB, all of whom have led similar studies around the country. The purpose of the study is to examine how to improve access and the interface of the station with the community; how to repair infrastructure and accommodate future service.

The public will provide input on goals for the station, and the team will refine those goals and develop a shared vision for the future of the station, including place-making and upgrading the attractiveness of the station. The client team consists of mostly City and County staff. Chair Pitman asked why there are no members of the public or the Mayor and Council on the Committee, and Mr. Larson responded that this is how WMATA designed the process. He noted that the Mayor and Council will have an opportunity to weigh in on the final report to suggest changes as appropriate, as WMATA views the Mayor and Council as a partner.

The schedule includes a visioning workshop for the public in early April, a vision presentation to the Mayor and Council, a design charrette in June and a concept review workshop before the final report is issued in October. Mr. Larson suggested that the Commission could determine what the important outcomes of the study might be, and what are the challenges and opportunities associated with the station.

Commissioner Tyner reminded the Commission about the previous studies undertaken by WMATA, and that the change in WMATA perspective is evident. Andrea Gilles noted that the 2005 study was used for input into the Stonestreet study. Commissioner Miller expressed enthusiasm for the project, while Commissioner Pearson thought that an emphasis on the appearance of the station would be helpful. Chair Pitman noted that the City's Cultural Arts Commission

had engaged in efforts to install art at the station but had encountered resistance from CSX. Commissioner Nunez asked of the October date for the report was realistic, and Mr. Larson responded that he is hopeful that the tentative dates will hold. Commissioner Goodman was hopeful that the study would improve the appearance of the station as well.

Chair Pitman suggested that the Pedestrian Committee should be consulted as the vision is developed. Commissioner Nunez asked whether there will be a single concept that is the result or a range. Mr. Larson said he thought there would be a preferred option, with variations to consider that reflects the desire of stakeholders. Chair Pitman thanked Mr. Larson for his report and for future reports.

III. COMMISSION ITEMS

A. Staff Liaison Report – Mr. Wasilak reported that there are no agenda items for the March 24 meeting, and the Chair has agreed to not have a meeting. The following meeting will be on April 14, which will include the Project Plan that was to be on this agenda and a site plan for Chase Bank in the Town Center.

B. Old Business – Chair Pitman asked for a summary of what is going to happen at the upcoming Mayor and Council meeting, since the plan has changed. Mr. Levy responded that because of the length of the Mayor and Council’s agenda, the transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan would be limited to 20 minutes in total, with 5 minutes for the Chair to transmit the plan, followed by a few brief staff remarks on how the plan was put together and the process. All current commissioners as well as former commissioners Don Hadley, Rev. Jane Wood and Gail Sherman will be present.

C. New Business – None.

D. Minutes

Meeting No. 4-21, February 10, 2021: Commissioner Tyner moved, seconded by Commissioner Pearson, to approve the minutes for Meeting No. 4-21 as drafted. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Littlefield absent.

Meeting No. 5-21, February 24, 2021: Commissioner Tyner moved, seconded by Commissioner Pearson, to approve the minutes for Meeting No. 5-21, with changes recommended by Commissioner Tyner. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Littlefield absent.

E. FYI/Correspondence – None.

IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Pearson moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:44 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. James Wasilak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct loop at the end of the last name.

Commission Liaison