

MCLEAN PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Monthly Meeting, June 19, 2019
7:00 PM

McLean Community Center

Call to Order Winnie Pizzano

Approval of minutes Ruthanne Smith
Approved

Treasurer's Report Francesca Gutowski
No Update

Supervisor's Report Ben Wiles
Not present

MRC Report Roshan Carter

MRC Study

- George Mason students presented the results of their project – analyzing the McLean CBC development
 - Took 33 parcels and presented a development plan
 - Used current Comp Plan which allowed 5-6 stories of retail with residential on top
- Conclusion: On current development plan, no developer will do anything
 - There's potential for residential versus commercial
- Brian Berry worked with the students in a separate class and offered the following observations:
 - Though they did not think that office use was practical or feasible, they planned for it – use was medical
 - They used office rents \$34-\$43/foot – the better rents in that range are on Elm Street, or places like the Old Northwest Building on Old Dominion (by the Staybridge hotel) and those rents are pushing low \$40s
 - To the extent you build large, high spaces, window, people would pay for it– however, the students conclude high-end office space is not marketable in McLean
- Ed Murn observations:
 - Big takeaway – land cost to assembly anything of any size - is too great with the amount of density allowed in the current Comp Plan
 - If we don't fight for higher densities in Task Force, nothing will be developed for years

New MRC President
Dan Duvall

Old Business

Task Force Update

- Discussion of what would happen with schools – still crowded
- The model used to calculate potential students in CBC doesn't jibe with reality
 - Model indicated more students because it was based on having the entire CBC built out

Form Based Planning Discussion

- Vote tied (6-6) the Task Force is not advising to go ahead with any planning effort
 - County has not done a good job of articulating the reasons for using form-based planning and addressing questions about it
 - While the County is discussing/proposing form-based concepts, they have already been introduced into the planning
 - the things that Street Sense recommended were somewhat form-based

Zoning/Comp Plan Mismatch

- In cities where it works, form-based code has been adopted as a zoning code, not just a design methodology
- This is a comprehensive plan rewrite, McLean is not adopting form-based as a zoning approach – unless zoning is also considered, the development process still won't be simplified
- Every property in the county is zoned, the comp plan and zoning don't match so developers would still have to deal with comp plan and zoning variances
 - For example, form-based approval for Annandale required multiple variances
 - Can't address every site for every parcel, so variances still necessary and doesn't simplify the process
- The county has said nothing about changing the underlying zoning to get rid of the amendment process
- What happens to community involvement when form-based zoning and design are introduced together? (note this is not the current approach for McLean)
 - In theory, when the code is developed, the community is involved at that point in time. After that, the developer can just develop to plan
 - However, while this should simplify development approvals, in many cases, the community still wants to be involved
 - Vienna's corridor not an example of how NOT to handle a Master Plan – recently, most pro-MAC development officers were voted out
 - Citizens were in favor of the approach but then decided they wanted input on development
 - Difficult to strike a balance between developers wanting certainty and citizens wanting input

Density / Spurring Development

- There will be no development without more density – have to increase density somewhere – the center of the CBC may be the place to do that
 - Maybe we have to think about changing the edge zone to have more 2.0 developments in the center
 - Intensifying the density into a smaller area would be a way to work within the cap; shift the density around but keep the total the same
 - Note that there’s been no formal declaration that a cap exists. However, the discussions indicate there’s a total “pot” of FAR that essentially caps FAR
- Zoning approach – can’t give the whole center zone a 2.0 FAR because the theoretical development that results would exceed infrastructure
 - This is why the high-density area floats – once the high-density project(s) is approved, it has “used up” a large portion of the total FAR capacity, so other, future projects would have to build at a lower FAR – you can’t keep building at the high density
- From a CLA MPC member perspective on development; I have to be incentivized to make a change to my building as do other developers
 - When you look at every parcel – the circumstances, or motivating factors, will differ for each developer and will differ for each based on a point in time
 - There may be no standard “incentive” that works to motivate development
 - Owners/developers aren’t going to be in unison
 - A “first come, first served” or early incentive or bonus (whatever the motivating approach) may be a positive inducement to spur development
 - Keep in mind that even if we decided to develop the Madison Building today – it would take 10 years to bring the project to fruition
 - Some of the vacant buildings are left vacant – to allow for possibility of developing without having to deal with vacating tenants (white building on corner of Dolley Madison)
- JBG is not a good example to extend to all development prospects in the CBC – the numbers won’t work for all development
- Without density, the zoning favors condos; need density to bring into residential, rental development
 - This becomes an overall strategic issue
 - If you want to activate the downtown area, rentals, not condos, are needed – it’s what drive retail businesses

TASK FORCE NEXT STEPS

- There is a July Task Force Meeting and it is anticipated that the county will push through form-based planning
- What will the MPC do?

ACTION:

- MPC form a committee to formulate a position from the MPC to the Task Force with respect to the use of form-based design including issues related to using this design approach without addressing underlying zoning

- Committee puts together positions that are then made to the Task Force as MPC formal recommendations
- Know that we can't make a recommendation in time for July vote but we can keep making recommendations
- Possible: Winnie, Maya, Ken, & ??

Sunrise Report

- No update
- Meeting again in July
- Maya distributed info presented at last meeting

New Business

Traffic meeting report (see attached report)

- Meeting to clean up crowded turn lanes on 123
- 70-75 attendees
- Good start from county
 - Collected a lot of data – to understand traffic
 - Worse in PM than in morning
- Potential– additional westbound lane on 123
 - Two roads that cross between Old Dominion and Great Falls can no longer cross over
- All the alternatives – won't matter – won't have a huge impact on the traffic situation – still a failing score
 - Did not address whether the traffic continues to degrade even further without the modifications
 - There's no gradation within F – “once it's an F, you don't know how F'd it is” 😊
- Nobody addressed the 123 – talked about adding a third lane and improving intersections at Balls Hill and Great Falls and then turning Old Dominion into a right only – and then someone asked what else are you doing?
 - They replied, “we'll wait until it gets worse and see what happens”

Election of New Officers

- Ann Seaman, CC, President
- Marilee Pierce, MCA, Vice President
- Charlie Bunn, SC, Treasurer
- TBDe, CLA, Secretary

Motion

All nominated individuals assume the respective Officer roles as designated above.

Approved Unanimously

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned

Directors Attending (in Bold):

MCA

Maya Huber
Francesca Gutowski
Rich Salopek
Marilee Pierce

SCA

Andrew Serafin
Winnie Pizzano
Craig Bennett
Charlie Bunn

GMCC

Nicole Morrill
Ruthann Smith
Ann Seaman
Ken Wiseman

CLA

Ed Murn
Chelsea Rao
R Bishop
Hans Schmidt

Alternates

Roshan Carter
Connie Fan

Mari Pierce
Kathleen Wysocki
Brian Berry

Molly Peacock
Marshal Hyman
Alan Edward