

Submitted: February 5, 2020
Approved: February 12, 2020

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING NO. 1-2020
Wednesday, January 8, 2020**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session in the Mayor and Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, January 8, 2020

PRESENT

Charles Littlefield - Chair

Anne Goodman
Don Hadley

Sarah Miller
John Tyner II
Rev. Jane Wood

Absent: Suzan Pitman

Present: David Levy, Assistant Director
Nicholas Dumais, Assistant City Attorney
Jim Wasilak, Chief of Zoning
Andrea Gilles, Principal Planner
Larissa Klevan, Principal Planner
Clark Larson, Senior Planner

Chair Littlefield opened the meeting, introducing himself as the chair for 2020. He also encouraged those present to sign the speakers list.

I. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Final Record Plat PLT2020-00585**, for the combining of Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Block N in the Croydon Park subdivision into two record lots in the R-60 Zone at 200 Woodland Road; Yan Wang, applicant.

Commissioner Goodman moved, seconded by Commissioner Hadley, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Pitman absent.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

- A. Park Road and North/South Stonestreet Avenue Area Comprehensive Master Plan Amendment**

Andrea Gilles presented a brief overview of the plan amendment and associated review schedule. She clarified that the plan amendment applies to the area in the vicinity of Park Road only, and that the zoning changes will occur via a separate process once the plan amendment is adopted. A work session on the plan amendment is tentatively scheduled for the meeting on February 12.

Commissioner Hadley moved, seconded by Commissioner Wood, that the public hearing record for testimony will close at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 15. The motion passed unanimously.

The following persons testified at the public hearing:

1. John Skroski of 204 Reading Terrace stated that he was speaking on behalf of several neighbors, and was granted an exception to the time limits by the Chair. He expressed concerns about the transparency of the process, and that apartments and duplexes do not fit in the area near Reading Terrace. This area should be subject to the East Rockville Design Guidelines now being developed.
2. Anastios Vassilas, owner of 100 and 200 North Stonestreet Avenue, stated his opposition to the recommended restriction on residential use on his properties, and supported retaining present zoning so that he could redevelop the property.
3. Estofios Vassilas, representing 100 and 200 North Stonestreet Avenue, also stated his opposition to the restriction on residential use, and supported flexibility.
4. Richard Kapilow, of 207 Reading Terrace, stated that he felt the plans as proposed were never discussed.
5. Matt Hassink of 206 Reading Terrace expressed concerns about the potential for stormwater runoff from new development in this area, which is a low point in terms of elevation.
6. Nancy Kapilow of 207 Reading Terrace, expressed concerns about parking impacts and retaining neighborhood character.
7. Ray Hizadi, owner of 205 Park Road, stated that medium-size development in this area would be beneficial as a transition and gateway to East Rockville.
8. Brian Senfelici of 210 Reading Terrace supported earlier testimony.
9. Dean Bockstresser of 206 Crabb Avenue expressed his support for adoption of the plan amendment as recommended, and noted concerns regarding sidewalk access along North Stonestreet Avenue.
10. Don Masters of 307 Seth Place recommended that the Commission look at the 2006 Stonestreet Avenue Redevelopment and Implementation plan for guidance, and that the City should address “zombie” properties.
11. Robin Decklebaum of 7428 Westmore Avenue noted that her business owns 422 and 424 North Stonestreet Avenue, and that the business is struggling due to zoning restrictions.
12. Alexandra Dace Denito, president of Lincoln Park Civic Association, expressed support for the recommended plan as well as improvements to pedestrian safety. She thanked staff for their efforts.

In response to a question from the audience, Andrea Gilles explained the Stonestreet Avenue Study process and what outreach had been undertaken as part of the process and in advance of the public hearing.

Jim Wasilak explained that the Planning Commission briefing materials are available one week in advance of the meeting. The planning commission email address (planning.commission@rockvillemd.gov) is sent to all commissioners individually. Ms. Gilles stated that the plan amendment has been posted online for 60 days as required, and the results of the study are available on the City's web page as well.

Chair Littlefield closed testimony for the public hearing, and reminded the audience that the public record will close at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 15.

III. DISCUSSION

A. **Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan Update – Planning Areas Initial Staff Draft: Review of Planning Areas 1 (Town Center), 7 (Montgomery College area), 9 (Rockville Pike) and 11 (Woodmont)**

Commissioner Tyner noted that some members of the public might not understand that the land use recommendations are not the same as zoning changes, and that existing development may be permitted in the new zones. Commissioner Goodman suggested that the plan include a definitive statement for how each existing plan will be addressed by the new document, such as what policies have been superseded within each plan document that remains in effect. Staff will look at how to incorporate this so that it is clear.

The Planning Commission made the following changes to the staff draft:

Planning Area 1: Town Center

The Commission agreed with the draft document that recommends the OR (Office Retail) designation on the short-term Metro parking lot on MD 355 at Park Road, which is currently designated as Public Park. Commissioner Tyner suggested that development of the air rights over the Rockville Metro station should be included in the plan.

The majority of the Commission also agreed that the properties in the block surrounded by East Jefferson Street, Monroe Street and Fleet Street be designated for potential Public Park. A discussion followed on the status of private properties in the time period before the City might acquire the property for use as a public park, as well as the designation as “preferred park” versus “park”. The Commission agreed to leave the park designation as shown in the draft plan.

The Commission agreed to keep the ORRM land use designation and recommend zoning change to the MXCD Zone on the west side of North and South Washington Street, between Jefferson Street and Martins Lane. Commissioner Hadley would like to see a layback slope graphic for South/North Washington Street if heights are to be increased to 75 feet. This would show how the increased height with layback applied would impact residential properties to the west. He would like to have this for the work sessions.

The Commission agreed to change all three recommended land use changes proposed by staff: change the R (retail) land use designation for the area between North Washington Street and MD 355 at the top of the triangle area and the properties on the east side of MD 355, north of The Fitz condominium to OR (Office and/or Retail); changes the designation for the west side of the Rockville Metro station and two properties on the south side of Church Street from O (Office) to ORRM (Office Residential Retail Mix); and add a Potential Park designation to property along the Maryland Avenue extension.

The Commission requested data on the office market in Town Center as compared to other areas, including vacancy rates, effective rents, etc. Commissioner Miller offered to assist with obtaining this information for the work sessions.

Commissioner Goodman noted issues with parking in Town Square, including lack of signage, costs, and confusion about garages. The Commission agreed to add a separate Parking category after Transportation on p. 15 of the draft plan, with bullets on technology, coordination of the different garages, wayfinding, dealing with perceptions, and making structured parking easier to use.

Planning Area 7: Montgomery College Area

Clark Larson explained the creation of this new planning area.

The Commission discussed the Carver High School historic district and viewshed. David Levy offered that there may be a better way to respect the history of the Carver building while still allowing appropriate development to happen in front of the building, instead of the existing parking lot.

Commissioner Hadley suggested that the term “enhancement” be added to the bullet regarding preservation of the building. The Commission agreed that staff should add text reflecting the Commission’s discussion to encourage better use of the historic district area as well as enhance the historic significance of the building

Commissioner Tyner stated that there should be more on integrating Montgomery College with both Town Center and College Plaza, which could also be an integral place for Montgomery College users.

Planning Area 9: Rockville Pike

Clark Larson explained that there are minimal changes proposed, given that the Rockville Pike Plan was adopted fairly recently and is recommended to be adopted by reference. The Commission agreed to change the land use designation from R (Retail) to OR (Office and/or Retail) on the narrow portion east of MD 355, adjacent to the railroad tracks between Veirs Mill Road and across from Templeton Place.

The Commission supports placing an asterisk to indicate the desire for a future park west of MD 355 in the South Pike area, and replacing the Park designation on property south of the Twinbrook Metro station to ORRM (Office Retail Residential Mix) with a “Potential Park” asterisk.

Planning Area 11: Woodmont

The Commission agreed to include text about a connection between the North Farm and Montrose neighborhoods, if any development occurs on the Woodmont Country Club property edge between the two.

Commissioner Tyner wondered whether there should be a statement about the intersection of proposed East Jefferson Street and Wootton Parkway, and the Commission discussed the extension of East Jefferson Street, which is contingent on new development on the Woodmont Country Club property.

Clark Larson reviewed the upcoming schedule for the review of the planning area document. The next meetings will be January 15, January 22 and February 12, and potentially February 5 if needed. Commissioner Miller noted that she will not be at the January 15 meeting due to a conflict.

IV. COMMISSION ITEMS

- A. Staff Liaison Report** – Jim Wasilak stated that there are no other agenda items for the next two meetings other than continuing with the planning areas draft.
- B. Old Business** – Commissioner Goodman asked how the Commission should react to the Mayor and Council’s decision to not act on the Commission’s request for outside counsel to review the violations of the Open Meetings Act. Commissioner Tyner noted that he watched the session, and was surprised that the Commission’s request had been referred to the Mayor and Council with no action taken. Commissioner Hadley stated that he felt that the Commission should move ahead and make changes to the Rules of Procedure as necessary. Commissioner Tyner offered that when the City Attorney’s office offers advice, it is still up to the Commission to act. He further noted that the Rules should address the procedure for reporting out of a Closed Session, which is currently lacking. Commissioner Goodman supports the initial Commission request for an outside body to review the violations. Jim Wasilak reminded the Commission that the Mayor and Council decided to hold a Closed Session to discuss those items which could not be discussed in Open Session, and that the timeline for outside counsel may be extended but it is still possible. Chair Littlefield suggested that this topic could be an Old Business item at upcoming meetings.

Mr. Wasilak reminded commissioners that the City Clerk requires each commissioner to have taken the Open Meetings Act training, and to provide the certificates of completion.

Commissioner Tyner noted that some testimony was heard at the Mayor and Council that the Commission has not been applying the Historic District overlay correctly, and that staff should

report to the Commission on this issue in the future. Nick Dumais responded that staff can look into the situation when a development application is proposed in the historic district, and what is the proper order of Historic District Commission (HDC) and Planning Commission review.

C. New Business

1. Discussion of items of interest to the Planning Commission – Commissioner Goodman initiated discussion of plans and other documents of an environmental nature that would be of interest to the Commission, such as plans for Redgate Golf Course, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plan and changes to the Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance (FTPO). The Commission supported the idea.

Commission Goodman moved, seconded by Commissioner Hadley, to request the Mayor and Council to instruct staff for review and comment environmental policy documents that influence the Commission’s work so that the Commission may make appropriate recommendations. The motion passed 6-0. Commissioner Goodman agreed to draft the letter and circulate it to commissioners for review at the next meeting. The Commission agreed that the Chair would make the request to the Mayor and Council at community forum.

D. Minutes

1. December 11, 2019 – Commissioner Goodman moved, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to approve the December 11, 2019 minutes, as amended by Commissioner Goodman. The motion passed 5-0-1, with Commissioner Wood abstaining and Commissioner Pitman absent.

E. FYI/Correspondence – none

V. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Wood moved, seconded by Commissioner Goodman, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:33 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Commission Liaison