

Submitted February 10, 2021

Approved February 10, 2021

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING NO. 1-2021
Thursday, January 7, 2021**

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

PRESENT

Suzan Pitman - Chair

Anne Goodman

Sarah Miller

Don Hadley

John Tyner II

Rev. Jane Wood

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
Larissa Klevan, Principal Planner

Chair Pitman opened the meeting at 7:08 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 state directives. Chair Pitman announced that she will be asking each commissioner for their initial thoughts on topics or sub-topics to make sure every commissioner has an opportunity to be heard.

I. WORK SESSION

A. Work Session 4: Planning Commission's Draft Comprehensive Plan, Volume II: Planning Areas

Clark Larson presented an overview of the Planning Areas Draft, which provides more detailed recommendations for the Planning Areas, and also is related to the draft of the Elements previously discussed. The draft includes recommended land uses, noted focus areas and recommended City projects.

Planning Area 4: West End Woodley Gardens East West

Institutional Uses

The Commission discussed the recommendations for institutional uses in the draft plan. Commissioner Goodman stated that the recommendations should apply city-wide and not just to one neighborhood, while Commissioner Hadley felt that the plan needs to be more open about what West End is, and what it contributes to the

city. Commissioner Miller thought that standards should be addressed in the Zoning Ordinance, with stronger guidance language in the comprehensive plan. Commissioner Tyner supported the use of “will” and “shall” in the plan, and does not have an issue with most of the recommendations made by staff. Commissioner Wood is fine with staff recommendations as long as the issues are identified in the plan. Commissioner Hadley recommends a stronger introduction into the policies section, maybe one that includes an impact statement that points to the integrated or cumulative effects of institutional uses. Commissioner Tyner responded that the plan should be kept open ended so that issues may be addressed later that may not have been considered, especially in the face of COVID. Commissioner Wood: liked the statement “.....to prevent the erosion of the residential character of the neighborhood.”

The Commission gave the following direction to staff: Add more specificity to a preamble to the policies, include language about the cumulative nature of the impacts of institutional uses; add language to, or make sure language already exists in, the land use element that emphasizes that we should move quickly to zoning code amendments once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted.

Historic Structures

Commissioners offered the following comments regarding historic structures. Commissioner Goodman suggested that the text should clarify that we should not be preserving landscapes that are invasive or non-native. Commissioner Miller noted that the Commission must not use the Comprehensive Plan in a way that it was not intended to be used, and to leave the details up to the HDC and to the Zoning Ordinance. Commissioner Wood would like it to be added that the HDC and the community would be involved in updating historic district guidelines. Commissioner Hadley stated that there should be more definition or explanation for what is meant by “residential character.”

The Commission agreed to the following changes to the draft: regarding the expansion of historic structures, that language be added along the lines of ‘Preserve the setting and the residential character of the neighborhood by addressing the massing, scale, parking and levels of impervious cover.....’; add text to include the HDC and community as part of updating historic district guidelines; and note that preserving landscapes should not include invasive or non-native species.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Commissioners Goodman, Miller and Tyner agree with staff recommendation. Commissioner Hadley also agrees that we need more consideration on the matter, but notes that this area may be different than other planning areas in that green spaces and larger yards are special, and people have a fear that it will be lost. Commissioner Miller feels that there are different ways to control the issue so that ADUs do not get out of control in this (PA4) area. Commissioner Wood does not

think ADUs will add to affordable housing. Commissioner Goodman suggests adding a phrase that includes “take into consideration the unique character of different neighborhoods.”

The Commission agreed to the following changes to the draft: adjust the staff recommendation on ADUs to include more specific examples like impervious materials, tree canopy, design, environmental impacts, etc.; add text to Policy 2 in the land use element that recommends ADUs, “taking into consideration the unique character of different neighborhoods;” add a note referencing the survey from Planning Area 4.

Remaining Discussion Topics

Potential Future Park Asterisk - The Commission agreed to change the label from “recommendation” to “needed.” In a straw poll, Commissioners Wood and Tyner were in favor of “recommended” while Commissioners Goodman, Hadley, Miller, and Pitman were in favor of “needed.”

Planning for Bicycle Comfort - No changes were made.

Land Use in East Rockville - Commissioner Miller did not support scaling back the Residential Attached (RA) area next to the Rockville Metro station but all other Commissioners agreed with staff revisions to do so.

Chapman Avenue Extended - All Commissioners agree with staff’s recommendation; staff will make sure to potentially add a caveat so that this language is mirrored in the Rockville Pike Plan.

Addressing COVID-19 in the Comp Plan – The Commission agreed to add mention of checking in with the county as well.

Retail Land Use Designations – The Commission agreed to make sure that the change from retail to commercial does not inadvertently conflict with anything in Planning Area 4. All Commissioners in favor of the land use category changes from the word Retail to Commercial.

Office Land Use Designations - All Commissioners in favor of staff’s recommendation.

Citywide Park Area-to-Pop Ratio - All Commissioners in favor of staff’s recommendation.

New Metro Station at Montgomery College - Commissioner Wood disagrees, but all other Commissioners support the staff recommendation, and agree to add to

the recommendation to study the feasibility "taking into account the impacts of surrounding communities."

Commissioner Tyner asked if Commissioner Hadley would be able to remain on the Commission when it forwards the recommended plan to the Mayor and Council, to which Commissioner Hadley was not positive that he will remain based on the Mayor and Council's appointment schedule.

Mr. Larson noted the remaining schedule for Rockville 2040 review, and Mr. Levy stated his appreciation for the commissioners that have worked on the plan over the years.

II. COMMISSION ITEMS

A. Staff Liaison Report – Jim Wasilak reported that Noreen Bryan and Patrick Woodward expressed their appreciation in being able to attend the meeting this evening. The next meeting will be on January 13, and the Annexation Plan for the King Buick property will be on that meeting agenda but no Rockville 2040 items, as that review was completed this evening. There will be a Special Exception recommendation for an accessory apartment on Goldsborough Drive at the meeting on January 27. He noted that the City Clerk has informed him that Sam Pearson will be nominated for the Planning Commission on January 11. HE noted that staff is conducting outreach regarding accessory building standards and accessory dwelling units in a series of upcoming webexes.

B. Old Business – None.

C. New Business

D. Minutes – Meeting No. 15-20, August 5, 2020: Commissioner Hadley moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, to approve the minutes for Meeting No. 15-20, with the correction noted by Commissioner Wood. The motion passed 7-0.

Meeting No. 20-20, November 18, 2020: Commissioner Tyner moved, seconded by Commissioner Hadley, to approve the minutes for Meeting No. 20-20. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Wood abstaining.

Meeting No. 21-20, December 9, 2020: Commissioner Hadley moved, seconded by Commissioner Wood, to approve the minutes for Meeting No. 21-20 as drafted. The motion passed 7-0.

E. FYI/Correspondence – None.

III. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Wood moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:39 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. James Wasulak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small mark above the letter 'i' in "Wasulak".

Commission Liaison