

Submitted: February 22, 2022

Approved: February 23, 2022

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING NO. 2-2022  
Wednesday, January 26, 2022**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session  
via WebEx at 7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, January 26, 2022

**PRESENT**

Suzan Pitman - Chair

Andrea Nuñez                      Sam Pearson  
John Tyner, II

**Present:** Nicholas Dumais, Senior Assistant City Attorney  
Jim Wasilak, Chief of Zoning  
John Foreman, Development Services Manager  
Sachin Kalbag, Principal Planner  
Faramarz Mokhtari, Senior Transportation 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) and state and local officials.

**I. REVIEW AND ACTION**

**A. Level 2 Site Plan Application STP2022-00433, for the Construction of Approximately 252 Townhomes and 118 Two-Over-Two Stacked Condominium Multi-Family Units in the MXCD (Mixed Use Corridor District) at 16200 Frederick Road; EYA Development, LLC Applicant**

Mr. Wasilak gave a brief introduction on the subject application, noting that this project had been reviewed by the Commission previously as part of an annexation petition and again as a project plan application, both of which were approved by the Mayor and Council.

Mr. Kalbag further presented the subject application, detailing the proposed residential development which would include approximately 370 dwelling units, including 252 townhouses and 118 two-over-two stacked condominium units. He continued by noting community concerns previously voiced over allowable density, open space, provision of trees and cut-through traffic had been addressed by the applicant. Mr. Kalbag also detailed the applicant's requests for approval of a waiver for the trees per lot planting requirement, which the applicant had requested at the project plan stage and provided justification as part of this application. He explained that the request met the standards established for the granting of a waiver, pursuant to Section 25.21.07.b of the

Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Kalbag concluded with staff's determination that the subject application was compliant with the previously-approved Project Plan PJT2021-00013 and other applicable regulations of the City's code for a Level 2 site plan application. He recommended approval of the Level 2 site plan along with the requested tree lot waiver, based on the findings and conditions contained in the staff report.

Commissioner Tyner inquired about traffic conditions in the new development and how certain "choke points" where the road narrows could accommodate larger SUV vehicles, which may be common among the residents. Mr. Mokhtari responded that all of the proposed roads within the development would be constructed per the standards of the City code and the proposed "choke points" were provided to protect pedestrians and on-street parking, but such features would not limit the size of the travel lanes.

Jason Sereno of EYA Development then presented the project to the Commission on behalf of the development team. Mr. Sereno detailed that the project was thoughtfully designed to comply with the City's adopted plans and regulations including how the project advanced numerous goals of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Sereno also detailed issues which the applicant had resolved regarding safety improvements to crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety in and out of the development as well as providing increased open space enhancements. He also summarized how the project would mitigate projected traffic conditions by numerous transportation improvements, including traffic signaling at the MD 355 entrance as well as implementing several pedestrian-related improvements along and within the site. Mr. Sereno concluded with a summary of the development's proposed tree plantings, noting that while a waiver was being requested from the required amount of trees per residential lot, the overall development would provide more than double the amount of trees required for the entire development. He added that the waiver was also needed in order to accommodate required infrastructure associated with the development such as storm water management facilities and utilities. Mr. Sereno concluded by noting that the architectural design of the development would be contemporary in styling with the use of traditional materials used in surrounding development.

Commissioner Nuñez commented that she was satisfied with improvements made regarding the provision of trees on the site. She further inquired about a pedestrian crosswalk exhibit presented by Mr. Sereno and if it accurately represented the precise configuration of the future crosswalk along Piccard and Pleasant Drives. Mr. Sereno responded that the exhibit was more schematic in nature and that the final engineered drawing would be developed in accordance with the City's standards for roadway design at a later time. Commissioner Nuñez further requested that the design of the crosswalk aprons and ramps direct pedestrian traffic directly across streets rather than orient traffic into the middle of an intersection. Mr. Sereno responded that the development team would work with staff during final design to address and implement these pedestrian safety measures.

Chair Pitman then called on members of the public to offer their testimony on the subject application.

Gina Moses, a King Farm resident, expressed her concerns over the density of the proposed development as well as traffic conditions which would result, and inquired as to why the

development would need a connection with Pleasant Drive which did not seem necessary. Mr. Mokhtari responded that after analysis of the proposed development, staff determined that the size of the subdivision warranted an additional access point beyond just the main entrance proposed at MD 355, particularly to provide alternate ingress and egress points in emergency situations if the MD 355 entrance became inaccessible. He added that the traffic study completed for the site analyzed traffic with the MD 355 entrance being the primary access point and the Pleasant Drive access point being secondary, with such secondary access not anticipated to be a relief of traffic for the development. He concluded that in staff's judgement, access to the development via Pleasant Drive would be minimal.

Commissioner Tyner commented that previous reviews of this project by the Commission recommended that there be no direct connection between MD 355 and the internal street network of the adjacent King Farm development so as to deter cut-through traffic. He added that the revisions by the applicant have improved the traffic situation to create a circuitous route through the proposed development to deter such cut-through traffic.

Steve Laake, a King Farm resident, also expressed concerns about the proposed development's density and the rear access to Pleasant Drive. He commented that, in his experience of living in King Farm, he has witnessed traffic circumventing MD 355 by travelling through his neighborhood and posited that this development would add to traffic on King Farm's streets. He inquired as to why future residents of the proposed development would consider the Pleasant Drive access as secondary rather than primary. Mr. Mokhtari responded that the MD 355 entrance would be signalized, thus allowing an orderly and efficient ingress and egress to the development. He added that the applicant did complete a traffic comparison analysis for both access points, and it was found that in multiple situations, the MD 355 access point would provide shorter travel time in and out of the development rather than the Pleasant Drive access point. Mr. Laake opined that from his experience, the Pleasant Drive access point would be favorable to residents.

Thomas Gibney, a King Farm resident, questioned the results of the traffic study and posited that because of the frequency of signals along MD 355 and the already heavy traffic conditions in the area, access to the proposed development via the Pleasant Drive entrance would be favorable for the future residents, thus adding to traffic in the King Farm neighborhood. He requested that an independent traffic study be conducted with the behaviors of motorists entering and existing developments analyzed.

Mr. William Rogenbrodt, a King Farm resident, concurred with the testimony of Mr. Gibney and other residents to the potentially adverse impact of additional traffic which the proposed development would produce onto Pleasant Drive and through the King Farm neighborhood. He expressed concerns with the traffic study properly analyzing the traffic circulation from the development. Mr. Mokhtari responded that the traffic study was completed in accordance with the City's established Comprehensive Traffic Review, which provides standards for estimating traffic conditions. He added that the completed traffic study could be provided for access by the public. He concluded that the traffic analysis showed that only 11 AM and 6 PM peak hour trips would be utilizing the proposed Pleasant Drive access point.

Mark Personias, a King Farm resident, also inquired about possible remedies if the development was approved and additional traffic began to occur via the Pleasant Drive access point into the King Farm neighborhood. Mr. Mokhtari responded that the City staff constantly monitors traffic conditions throughout the area and if such traffic problems were identified, mitigation measures would be taken to improve traffic conditions in the neighborhood. Regarding the multiple access points on MD 355, Mr. Mokhtari added that city, county, and state officials had concurred in consolidating access points along MD 355 to improve traffic flow and conditions along major arterials. Thus only one major access point along MD 355 was recommended by staff and agreed upon by the applicant.

Commissioner Tyner inquired about the types of trees proposed on the individual lots and what steps might be taken to ensure their extended presence and health in the development. Mr. Sereno responded that the applicant went through further design analysis to determine where trees could possibly be placed on the residential lots while respecting other design features. He added that the “columnar dwarf” tree type would be used, as its dimensions and features would allow for planting on the lots without disturbing other building elements. He added that maintenance of such planting would be binding on the homeowners as requirements of the homeowners association. Commissioner Tyner also inquired about the trees proposed along the entrance of the adjacent King Farm Farmstead property and whether such trees would be ceremonial in nature. Mr. Sereno responded that the improvements to the farmstead site would be a collaboration between the applicant and the City and that implementation of ceremonial trees would be considered as the project developed and final planting choices were determined. Commissioner Tyner further commented that, in regards to traffic, the Planning Commission might want to work with the City’s Traffic and Transportation Commission to identify components of how traffic studies are completed to identify if there are areas where improvements can be made.

Chair Pitman welcomed the provision of additional trees for the development and requested that the trees be native in species to the extent possible. She additionally inquired about school capacity and whether the proposed development would cause capacity issues for Gaithersburg High School. Barbara Spears and Phillip Hummel with the law firm of Miles and Stockbridge, attorneys for the applicant, confirmed that school capacity numbers were analyzed at the time of the project plan review for the development, where it was determined that the project would not cause any overcrowding in any of the area schools serving this development. Mr. Sereno added that with the analysis of the additional students generated from this development, adequate school facilities would be available to serve the proposed development.

Not hearing any objection to proposed project, Chair Pitman called for a motion on the subject application. Commissioner Pearson made a motion to approve Level 2 Site Plan Application STP2022-00433, subject to the findings and conditions contained within the staff report, and as further amended by Commissioner Tyner to adjust the MPDU unit counts for 40 townhouses instead of 39 and 18 condominiums instead of 16, as noted by staff in their presentation. Commissioner Tyner seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 4-0. Commissioner Tyner then made a motion to approve a request for approval of the waivers of the required number of trees per lot and the required number of street trees. Commissioner Pearson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 4-0.

## II. COMMISSION ITEMS

**A. Staff Liaison Report** – Mr. Wasilak reported that the next meeting would be on February 9, in which the Commission would receive a briefing for a project plan amendment to the Twinbrook Commons Planned Development to facilitate a mixed-use project along Chapman Avenue. Mr. Wasilak also added that future meetings of the Commission would continue as virtual meetings for the foreseeable future but added that there were plans for a hybrid approach for in-person and virtual meetings. Mr. Wasilak also reported that staff had received instruction on a possible text amendment for the dedication of public parkland, and staff would be further developing the text amendment before bringing it forward for the Planning Commission’s consideration.

**B. Old Business** – None.

**C. New Business** – Commissioner Tyner inquired if staff would continue to use Cisco’s WebEx platform to conduct the Commission’s ongoing virtual meetings and if so, would there be any updates that the Commissioners would need to attain to continue to use the platform. Mr. Wasilak responded that he would investigate and reach out to the Commissioners on any technical updates needed for the Commissioners to continue to participate in the virtual meetings.

### **D. Minutes Approval**

Chair Pitman asked if there were any changes needed to the minutes of the Commission’s January 12, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Tyner made the motion to approve the January 12, 2022 minutes as drafted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nuñez was approved unanimously by a vote of 4-0.

**E. FYI/Correspondence** –Mr. Wasilak noted that there was no correspondence to report to the Commission.

## III. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Pearson moved, seconded by Commissioner Nuñez, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:45 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Commission Liaison