

Submitted: May 26, 2021

Approved: May 26, 2021

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING NO. 7-2021  
Wednesday, April 14, 2021**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session  
via WebEx at 7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, April 14, 2021

**PRESENT**

Suzan Pitman - Chair

Anne Goodman	Andrea Nunez
Charles Littlefield	Sam Pearson
Sarah Miller	John Tyner II

**Present:** Nicholas Dumais, Assistant City Attorney  
Jim Wasilak, Zoning and Development Manager  
David Levy, Assistant Director  
Andrea Gilles, Comprehensive Planning Manager  
Sheila Bashiri, Principal Planner  
Clark Larson, Principal Planner  
James Lapping, Engineering Supervisor  
Andrew Luetkemeier, Transportation Engineer

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. RECOMMENDATION TO THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

**A. Sectional Map Amendment MAP2021-00121, 203 Forest Avenue - for the Rezoning of a Property at 203 Forest Avenue from R-60 to R-60 (HD, Historic District); Historic District Commission, Applicants**

Sheila Bashiri presented a review of the property and staff report, which recommends approval of the application.

Joseph Richardson and Carolyn Hoch, property owners, expressed their support for being included in the historic district.

Commissioner Goodman noted that she was happy to see the property owners in support of designation, in addition to the Historic District Commission.

Commissioner Tyner moved, seconded by Commissioner Goodman, to recommend approval of Sectional Map Amendment MAP2021-00121, for the

rezoning of property at 203 Forest Avenue from R-60 to R-60 (Historic District) based on the findings listed in the staff report. The motion was approved 6-0, with Commissioner Miller absent for the vote.

**B. Project Plan Application Project Plan PJT2020- 00012, Key West Center at Falls Grove, to Permit Up to 350 Multi-Unit Dwellings at 1800 Research Boulevard in the PD-FG (Planned Development - Falls Grove) Zone; Key West Falls Grove, LLC, C/O Lerner Enterprises, Applicant**

Jim Wasilak presented the staff report, which was for approval of the application. Staff recommended a condition that a small amount of retail be provided in the building. Mr. Wasilak noted that conditional approval of the project plan is recommended, due to inadequate school capacity in the Richard Montgomery cluster. The application meets all other findings for a Project Plan, with the recommended conditions of approval.

Commissioner Pearson asked for more information on the APFS and the type of retail that is recommended, and Commissioner Tyner asked about approved but unbuilt projects in the Richard Montgomery cluster. David Levy noted the nearby Mallory Square development which includes a Dunkin' Donuts, which is the scale of retail activity that is anticipated. Commissioner Nunez asked about bus service along Research Boulevard, and Andrew Luetkemeier responded that County Ride-On does provide service in the corridor. Commissioner Goodman stated that she thought the recommended retail was too small to be of significance and will be isolated. She is not supportive.

Andrea Gilles provided additional context for the retail recommendation, including the Rockville 2040 and ULI study recommendations for this area, which has to do with increasing walkability in areas around the City, including multifamily areas. She thought that the idea was to provide for gathering space for residents and employees in this area. Commissioner Littlefield thought that the idea should be carried forward while looking at the details of the recommendation. He also asked about the amount of units that were initially approved in the Falls Grove, and Mr. Wasilak responded that he thought the amount was based on the proposed design of the project and the type of units proposed. He also noted that the remaining approved but unbuilt units for the Falls Grove development would remain as potential units, although no other land area is designated for residential use.

Chair Pitman asked how staff arrived at the recommendation for 2,000 square feet of retail development, and Ms. Gilles responded that staff looked at comparable development types.

Patricia Harris of Lerch Early & Brewer spoke on behalf of the applicant, Lerner Enterprises, and the entire development team. She noted that the applicant has made changes since the briefing one year ago, including the addition of a play

ground and enhanced onsite circulation. She noted that when the application was filed, there was school capacity but now that there is not due to the postponement of the funding for a new high school at the Crown project in Gaithersburg. She also noted that the applicant agrees with all conditions recommended by staff except for the one requiring retail on the property, as the applicant does not think there is a market for retail uses at this location. Ms. Harris has prepared alternative text for the condition, should the commission be supportive of it.

Nick Aello, architect with Design Collective, described the architecture and site design concepts for the project. Some features will be a pocket park and ten-foot wide shared-use path along Research Boulevard. The design intent was to leave as much of the site undeveloped as possible. Ms. Harris stated that the applicant is fulfilling the Rockville 2040 recommendation for a community node at the intersection by creation of the pocket park at that location.

In response to Commissioner Pearson, Ms. Harris read her alternative language in establishing a time period during which the applicant would market the space for retail use, prior to final approval of the certified site plan. Commissioner Miller supports this alternative text for the condition. Commissioner Littlefield thought that the recommended retail should not replace the other proposed amenities. Commissioner Goodman supported no retail requirement but supports the applicants proposed text to modify the condition. Commissioner Tyner also does not support the retail requirement.

Chair Pitman stated that she thought there could be alternatives to the retail requirements while meeting the staff intent of the recommendation, such as food trucks or other pop-ups that would be a community amenity.

Mr. Wasilak noted for the record that no member of the public provided comment or expressed an interest in speaking.

Chair Pitman asked each commissioner about the retail condition as a straw poll. Three commissioners initially supported removing condition no. 4 related to retail space, while four supported the alternative text for a one-year trial period if the commission agreed. James Policaro of Lerner offered that the applicant is providing the community node recommended in the plan in the form of onsite amenities for the public and residents. Commissioner Pearson supported more flexible language for providing community amenity space. Commissioner Littlefield asked if the Commission could make the recommendation to the Mayor and Council regarding community amenity space rather than including it in a specific condition, and Nick Dumais responded that he thought a recommendation would be more appropriate. Mr. Wasilak reminded the Commission that a recommendation memo could include a recommendation on amenity space. Based on a straw vote, a majority of the Commission voted to remove condition no. 4 regarding provision of retail space.

Commissioner Goodman moved, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to recommend approval of Project Plan PJT2020-00012, and amendment to CPD99-0004 for Fallsgrove, subject to the recommended findings and conditions identified in the staff report, with the exception of condition no. 4. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wasilak will work with the Chair in drafting the recommendation memo.

## **II. COMMISSION ITEMS**

- A. Staff Liaison Report** – Mr. Wasilak reported that the next meeting will be on April 28, with several items on that agenda, including the Map and Text Amendment application related to the recent Stonestreet and Park Road Comprehensive Plan Amendments. This session would be a briefing in anticipation of the Commission’s discussion and recommendation at a later meeting. There are also several plats expected.
- B. Old Business** - Rockville Metro Station Study update: Clark Larson updated the Commission on tentative dates for the Metro visioning workshops, as well as on the Mayor and Council agenda item on this subject on April 26.
- C. New Business** – Joint Work Session with the Mayor and Council on the draft Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan: Chair Pitman relayed her vision for the work session. She understood from the Mayor that the Council wanted to hear the commission’s approach and the rationale behind the recommendations. She suggested that commissioners might want to cover certain topic areas but asked for feedback from commissioners. Commissioners thought that any gaps should be identified, that the Commission attempted to balance competing issues and that staff work has been very thorough. Chair Pitman reminded commissioners may be expected to attend the work sessions. David Levy added that there were many listening sessions and tables that helped the staff work, and about the Commission’s work on developing the draft and taking ownership of it. Chair Pitman agreed to provide the introduction. Commissioner Goodman suggested inviting former commissioners Don Hadley, Jane Wood and Gail Sherman, and offered that there was not total agreement on everything but the Commission operated on consensus.
- D. Minutes**
- Meeting No. 6-21, March 10, 2021: Commissioner Goodman moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, to approve the minutes for Meeting No. 6-21 as drafted. The motion passed 6-0, with Commissioner Littlefield abstaining.
- E. FYI/Correspondence** – None.

**III. ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Littlefield moved, seconded by Commissioner Pearson, that the meeting be adjourned at 9:37 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. James Wasilek". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct capital 'R' and a period after the first name.

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Commission Liaison