

Submitted May 15, 2019

Approved May 22, 2019

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING NO. 12-2019  
Wednesday, April 24, 2019**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session in the Mayor and Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, April 24, 2019

**PRESENT**

Gail Sherman – Chair

Don Hadley                      Sarah Miller  
Charles Littlefield              John Tyner II

**Absent:** Anne Goodman  
Rev. Jane Wood

**Present:** Eliot Schaefer, Assistant City Attorney  
Ricky Barker, Director of Planning and Development Services  
Jim Wasilak, Chief of Zoning  
Deane Mellander, Zoning Administrator

**I. REVIEW AND ACTION**

- A. Final Record Plat PLT2019-00583, for the Resubdivision of Three Townhouse Lots Known as Lots 1, 2 and 3, Block G of the Reserve at Tower Oaks Subdivision, in the PD-TO (Planned Development – Tower Oaks) Zone on Preserve Parkway.**

Commissioner Tyner moved, seconded by Commissioner Hadley, to approve Final Record Plat PLT2019-00583, subject to the conditions as recommended in the staff report. The motion passed 5-0, with Commissioners Goodman and Wood absent.

**II. RECOMMENDATION TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

- A. Zoning Text Amendment TXT2019-00250, Comprehensive Sign Code Revisions; Mayor and Council of Rockville, Applicants.**

Deane Mellander presented an overview of the discussion topics from the April 10 meeting. These included the purpose of zoning and sign regulations; elimination of the Sign Review Board and use of the Board of Appeals to approve sign variances; elimination of pole signs and possible alternatives; the process for allowing temporary signs; and how to address new technology.

Jim Wasilak reviewed some of the purposes of the City Zoning Ordinance and sign regulation. Eliot Schaefer presented the legal underpinnings of sign regulations as well as the results of his

research of other jurisdictions in Maryland that require sign variances. He also provided commentary on the option to utilize the appeals process to the Board of Appeals.

After discussion, the Commission took straw votes on the topics of discussion. A majority of the Commission supported the use of the Board of Appeals for considering sign modification applications. The choices are the administrative appeal process, currently in the code, or the variance process. If the administrative appeal process is to be used, there should be some specific criteria added specifically applicable to sign modifications.

The Commission did not support the elimination of pole signs. Commissioners Littlefield and Miller suggested that elimination of pole signs should only apply to certain major commercial areas such as Rockville Pike and Town Center. Other corridors, such as Gude Drive and Shady Grove Road, could retain pole signs. Commissioner Sherman noted that the areas on the east side of Hungerford Drive north of the North Washington Street intersection are small individual sites that really have no other visibility. Commissioner Tyner stated that making pole signs nonconforming could discourage new businesses.

The Commission noted general support for the new optional sign package. However, several members felt that the area limitations on where this process could be used was too limiting. The Mayor and Council should consider allowing the use of this process in existing shopping centers as well.

The Commission supported allowing small temporary signs that advertise community events. However, staff noted that with the content-neutral policy inherent in this amendment, discriminating between neighborhood activity signs and other commercial signs is not possible. Staff also noted the existing prohibition on signs in the public rights-of-way which carries forward in the amendment. Commissioner Hadley suggested one approach might be to have the signs posted on individual properties, with the homeowner's agreement. The Commission recommended to the Mayor and Council that they consider some way to allow these temporary neighborhood event signs to be posted.

The Commission also noted that if the sign modifications are to be heard by the Board of Appeals, that the fee schedule be revised so as not to create a financial burden on applicants.

With these comments included, on a motion by Commissioner Tyner, seconded by Commissioner Hadley, with Commissioners Tyner, Hadley, Sherman, and Miller voting in favor of the motion, Commissioner Littlefield abstaining, and with Commissioner Wood and Goodman absent, the Commission recommends approval of Text Amendment TXT2019-00250 by a vote of 4-0-1, with the additional recommendations as discussed.

### III. COMMISSION ITEMS

- A. Staff Liaison Report – Jim Wasilak reported that the next meeting would be on May 8. There will be several items proposed for the agenda, including a Text Amendment for recommendation addressing uses in the MXE Zone and discussion of the draft state planning

document, A Better Maryland. He also noted the May 15 public hearing for the Master Plan, as well as upcoming information sessions in advance of the Master Plan hearings, on April 30 and May 11. He also noted that there will be upcoming information sessions for accessory dwelling units and accessory buildings at the end of May.

- B. Old Business – None.
- C. New Business – Commissioner Tyner reported he will not be present at the last meeting in June.
- D. Minutes – None.
- E. FYI Correspondence – None.

#### IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Hadley moved, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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Commission Liaison

