

Dulles Suburban Center Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

Sully Government Center, September 20, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

The Dulles Suburban Center Advisory Group (DAG) held its second meeting on September 20, 2016.

Advisory Group members in attendance:

- Michael Frey, Chairman
- Carol Hawn
- Donald Park
- David Metcalf
- Bill Keech
- Karrie Delaney
- Mark McConn
- Lewis Grimm
- Greg White
- Jehanne Arslan
- Karen Campblin

The meeting started at 7:00 p.m. with opening remarks by Chairman Michael Frey.

The Advisory Group agreed to the revisions to the “Roles and Responsibilities” handout, which added the agreement that DAG meetings would follow Open Meeting laws with public notice given and further, members that stand to gain financially from a submission being considered by the group would recuse themselves from voting on the submission.

Advisory Group member Karrie Delaney gave a brief introduction as she was not in attendance for the first advisory group meeting on September 7th.

Ms. Quintero Johnson (County staff member with the Department of Planning and Zoning) delivered a presentation on Airport Noise and Land Use Compatibility:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/dullessuburbancenter/meetings/9-20-2016/airport_noise_land_use_compatibility_presentation.pdf.

- During the presentation, Ms. Quintero Johnson posed the following question to the audience: “How has the Dulles Airport affected land use in the Dulles Suburban Center?” The audience responses included the establishment of a commercial corridor, a lack of residential uses in the area, increased freight traffic, and a lack of efficient transportation to and from the airport. Ms. Quintero Johnson also mentioned limited road access to the west of the Dulles Suburban Center through the airport property, limited building heights, and site design such as no water features to avoid the conflict of airplanes and water fowl.

Noel Kaplan (County staff member with the Department of Planning and Zoning) who was involved with the creation of the Airport Noise policy in the Comprehensive Plan, was introduced.

Michael Cooper, Michael Jeck, and Sandy Hoch from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) were introduced.

A discussion was held regarding why the 60 DNL dBA contour line was chosen as the policy line.

- Noise policies have evolved over time.
- In the 1980s, federal studies examined the correlation of transportation-generated noise and the level of annoyance to human populations. The surveys showed that once sounds approached a decibel level of 65 dBA, a high level of annoyance was reported. Thus, the studies concluded that residential uses are not appropriate to be located within the 65 DNL dBA contour line.
- DNL is a 24-hour average of noise decibel levels, with controls for the night hours, upon which there is typically less noise. The Airport Noise Committee, prior to the crafting of the current County Airport Noise policies in the early 1990s, was concerned about the variability of an average, as well as the possibility that different sources of transportation-generated noise could cause different decibel levels and different levels of annoyance. The Airport Noise Committee decided to take a conservative approach, and recommended to the Planning Commission a 60 DNL dBA contour line instead of the 65 DNL dBA contour line to minimize potential conflict.
- Noise is subjective, and while Reagan National Airport has recently logged a large number of noise complaints, no one lives inside of the 65 DNL dBA contour line for that airport.

Question: Are there other factors aside from noise that are considerations for the location of residential uses near an airport?

-Response:

- Fairfax County's policy is strictly for airport noise, but that doesn't mean there are no other factors.
- Runway protection zones and building heights are also factors. In the case of Dulles Airport, runway protection zones are located wholly on airport property.
- At the time of creating the airport noise policy, the Board of Supervisors was concerned about by-right residential uses near the airport. The Board rezoned a large number of properties near the airport from the R-1 zoning district to an industrial zoning district.

Question regarding a map inside Ms. Quintero Johnson's presentation that depicted an old 65 DNL dBA line with the new 60 DNL dBA line: Why are the two contour lines different in shape?

-Response:

- As the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) phased out older, noisier planes (Stage 2 planes) with newer, quieter planes (Stage 3 planes), the contour lines appeared to shrink significantly. The "lobes" that are shown for the 60 DNL dBA line closely follow the Dulles Airport runways and flight paths.

Question: Why was there a disclosure statement in a 1997 staff report on airport noise?

-Response:

- The Airport Noise Committee and the Planning Commission disagreed on a few items, which is why the disclosure statement was included in the 1997 staff report.

A George Mason University study on Dulles Airport was referenced.

- County staff was not aware of the study, and a member of the Advisory Group stated that she would try to find it and share it with the Advisory Group.

Question: What is the projected use of Dulles Airport in the future? Will the airport start being utilized for other aviation purposes?

-Response:

- There is no knowledge of any other projected uses for the airport, but should a change in use ever occur, new studies and policies would certainly need to be explored.

Question: What is the noise decibel level for the Route 28 / I-66 highway exchange?

-Response:

- It is probably close to 65-75 dBA if one is right next to the highway.

MWAA staff gave a few remarks:

- Nobody in McLean, Georgetown, Alexandria, or anywhere else that is complaining about Reagan National Airport's noise lives within the 65 DNL dBA contour line.
- Fairfax County Board of Supervisors were correct to take a conservative approach.
- Responding to an earlier question, MWAA staff stated that there are some noise complaints coming from the Pleasant Valley area near Dulles Airport.
- Adding residential uses near an airport is going to increase the number of noise complaints, even with disclosure notices.

Question: Are the complaints for Reagan National Airport for helicopters as well, and not just planes?

-Response:

- Almost no helicopters fly out of Reagan National Airport.

Question: when is Dulles Airport buildout likely to occur?

-Response:

- The timeline for full buildout is unknown, but what is known is the ability to project the future capacity of each runway. Dulles Airport is currently at approximately 60% capacity.
- With the existing infrastructure, Dulles Airport could likely double the amount of flight activity it currently has.

Question: Is there a 4th generation version of planes coming out soon?

-Response:

- There was approximately a 10 decibel level decrease in noise from the Stage 1 flights to the Stage 2 flights, and approximately a 2 or 3 decibel level decrease from the Stage 2 flights to the Stage 3 flights. However, plane engines have become so quiet that there is not a substantial difference in airplane noise between the Stage 3 and Stage 4 airplanes.
- It typically takes the commercial airline industry 15-20 years to adopt new airplane technology.

MWAA staff emphasized that Dulles Airport is marketed as a 24/7 international airport, and it has a lot more capacity potential.

Mike Van Atta (County staff member with the Department of Planning and Zoning) gave a presentation regarding parks and recreation in the Dulles Suburban Center:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/dullessuburbancenter/meetings/9-20-2016/parks_recreation_presentation.pdf.

Question: Is the development on Route 50 in Loudoun County being taken into account for Parks planning in Fairfax?

-Response:

- This is certainly something that should be taken into account and there are Loudoun residents who are using Fairfax facilities.

Question: There seems to be a large amount of park acreage serving the southern portion of the Dulles Suburban Center, but not for the northern portion. Does the Park Authority look at the size of parks versus the population it serves?

-Response:

- Ellanor C. Lawrence Park is an extremely large park, and at the scale of the map in the presentation, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park seems to dwarf the other parks on the map.
- The northern portion of the Dulles Suburban Center contains a lot of mixed use development and properties that were rezoned to a “planned” zoning district. While the Park Authority reviews all zoning applications for open space requirements and onsite and offsite recreation opportunities and impacts, the “planned” zoning districts have a higher standard for these spaces. However, because of the more urban nature of the area, these green spaces are smaller.
- Land was cheaper and easier to acquire for the County in the southern portion of the Dulles Suburban Center because of the no-fly zone and lack of residential uses.

Leanna O’Donnell (County staff member with the Department of Planning and Zoning) gave a presentation regarding heritage resources in the Dulles Suburban Center:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/dullessuburbancenter/meetings/9-20-2016/heritage_resources_presentation.pdf.

Mr. Van Atta gave a presentation regarding schools in the Dulles Suburban Center:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/dullessuburbancenter/meetings/9-20-2016/schools_presentation.pdf.

Question: Could private schools also be shown on the schools map to show the large amount of land private schools can occupy in the area?

- The County cannot mitigate development impacts to private schools.
- A DAG member pointed out that private schools and child care centers consume a significant amount of space in the Dulles Suburban Center, and so it would be useful to show these private schools on a map to show that these parcels are not available for new development.

Ms. Quintero Johnson finished the meeting by going over the agenda for the next meeting on October 3, noting that the Advisory Group will hear presentations from staff from Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), and that the Advisory Group will also discuss the first two submissions: DSC-Areawide-1 Bike and Trails, and DSC-Areawide-2-Transit.