

McLean Planning Committee

Minutes of Regular Meeting

January 19, 2011

Present:

- Rich Salopek
- Maya Huber
- Jim Peoples
- Doug Potts
- Mary Baker
- Ghassan Abukurah
- Ann Seaman
- Steve Keller

Guests: Ben Wiles, Bridget Hill, Craig Bennett (McLean House), Liz Miller (McLean Patch).

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 7:40pm by Rich Salopek, President.

President's Report (by Rich Salopek):

- Board Vacancies: The position of Secretary has not yet been filled by a representative from the Commercial Land Owners group. Maya Huber volunteered to assume the duties of the Secretary for this meeting. Simone Romano, representing the Chamber, has resigned. He was a valued member who made many positive contributions to the work of the MPC during his tenure. The Chamber representatives are asked to recruit a new representative.
- Meeting Minutes: The November 2010 MPC Meeting Minutes were approved, with Mr. Peoples abstaining from the vote.

Treasurer's Report (by Ann Seaman):

- Ms. Seaman reported cash on hand of \$5,616.76.

Supervisor's Report (by Ben Wiles):

- CapitalOne Signage and Lighting: Ben Wiles reported that Capital One has requested relief from a Development Condition that specified the color red for signage on their new building. This reflected Chevy Chase practice but does not meet Capital One specifications. This request, along with MPC's earlier criticism of overall brightness, set off an inquiry by County staff into whether signage and light level conformed to County's dark sky ordinance and size limitations. Staff investigation is ongoing. Capital One is now turning off its signs during night hours. On the extent of signage: Capital One is limited to one sign on each building-side, for a total of 124 sq. ft. Signs which can be read from the nearest street or from 100 ft. away qualify as signage. With its three large ATM signs clearly readable from Dolley Madison Blvd, Capital One currently exceeds the County's allowable sign limit. A reduction in the size of these signs could bring the building into conformance. No input is necessary from MPC at this time. Rich Salopek reiterates that MPC focus is on eliminating unnecessary proliferation of signs and of resulting glare in the CBC. Rich notes that Capital One's other branch (on Chain Bridge Road) has put up new signs that are far more aggressive and bright than the previous Chevy Chase signage. We should examine whether there are existing Development Conditions which apply.
- 6862 Elm Street: EYA (the developer) has submitted a Rezoning request and preliminary site plan to the County with the understanding that changes will be forthcoming, but no revisions have been submitted to-date. Mr. Wiles is not aware of any pending revisions other than the addition of retail on the street level of the parking structure. Site Plan still shows townhouses. EYA should be reporting back to MPC at next month's meeting. Staff has concerns that include circulation, open space, and density among others.

MRC Report (by Jim Peoples):

- Undergrounding project: All but one of the utility easements have now been acquired. The remaining easement is in final negotiations. Design of utilities is estimated to take approx. 2 years. VDOT approval is then needed before construction can begin. Money will be very tight. Undergrounding will extend between Jeff Lukens Photography to Capital One Bank on Chain Bridge Road and from Center Street to past the Shell Gas station along Old Dominion.

- **Pedestrian Enhancements:** Doug Potts reported on the Pedestrian project which is now part of MRC. A grant request has gone to VDOT for \$200,000 (as continuation of the Transportation Enhancement grants received in years past by McLean) for the design of a pedestrian friendly, state of the art center intersection at Chain Bridge and Old Dominion. We should hear by May/June of this year. Also the Pedestrian Task Force is applying for a grant from the Hotlane People (Fluor) for \$5,000 for the design of signs which will welcome drivers to the McLean Central Business and urge courteous, pedestrian-friendly driving. A matching grant for \$5,000 will be requested from the McLean Citizens Foundation . The cost of designing these signs is estimated at \$10,000.

Subcommittee Reports:

- **6862 Elm Street** (by Jim Peoples, subcommittee chair): The Subcommittee (Jim Peoples, Jim Turner, Ron Jerro, Ghassan Abukurah) and Craig Bennett (for McLean House) would prefer that the project encourage more business, result in more residents, some affordable housing, more open space, and better architecture and believes that townhouses in this location constitute a poor use of valuable land. They suggest that an out-of-turn Plan Amendment could be attractive to the land owner (greater land values) and allow greater density more in keeping with our Revitalization goals. Mr. Salopek commented that if the present proposal finds favor with County staff, the MPC will have to base its evaluation on the present Comprehensive Plan and other relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance.

New Business:

- **New CBC Recycling Concept:** Mr. Abukurah reported on “Green McLean”, a group being formed to promote better environmental practices in McLean through educational forums, programs, and outreach to businesses. Recycling is currently not required by Fairfax County in office buildings. Green McLean is developing a plan to provide recycling receptacles (donated by businesses) throughout the Park system and the Business District. Mr. Abukurah presented descriptive information on the proposed collection receptacle. Solar panels on the receptacles would provide LED light to illuminate advertising signs located on the bins. This would in turn generate funds for maintenance. Mr. Abukurah asked for feedback from MPC members regarding the overall plan and the design/aesthetic qualities of the receptacle, especially with to the ads: will the ads constitute signage and thus become a major hurdle for the project? Responses: Wouldn't it be more efficient to lobby Fairfax County for a change in the recycling ordinance? We agree with the aim of this effort, but suggest that community messages, school-generated art, etc., would make the bins less objectionable. County staff should be contacted to find out at which point these commercial messages are regulated by the sign ordinance. Of course, if they are placed inside buildings this objection would disappear, but so would the solar aspect. The idea of encouraging recycling is excellent, but esthetic concerns remain.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted, Maya Huber (January Meeting Secretary)