

Minutes of the Seven Corners Transportation and Land Use Task Force Meeting September 23, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:06 PM
Mason District Government Center

Attendance:

Task Force: John Thillmann, Mary Ellen Ward, Patrick Hoar, Vince Burke, Steve Tillman, Karl Moritz, Dick Knapp, Martin Faga, Blake Smith, Jim Edmondson, Mark Silverwood and Iqbal Khaiy

Staff: Elizabeth Hagg (OCR), JoAnne Fiebe (OCR), Hyojung Garland (OCR), Kim Rybold (DPZ), Kris Morley-Nikfar (DOT), and Marianne Gardner (DPZ)

Administrative Items

Minutes from the September 9, 2014, meeting were reviewed. Mark Silverwood requested that the Minutes reflect that he was in attendance at the meeting. Mary Ellen Ward made a motion to approve the Minutes with the addition of Mr. Silverwood's name, and Mark Silverwood seconded the motion. The Minutes as corrected were approved unanimously.

John Thillmann began the meeting by reading a letter from Supervisor Penny Gross addressed to Mason District residents. The letter summarizes the work of the Seven Corners Task Force over the past two years and that it is about to conclude its work and offer recommendations for possible Comp. Plan amendments. The letter states that Supervisor Gross has authorized additional study of the Sear's site to be performed by community representatives and county staff. The special committee will spend the next three months reviewing the Task Force work on the Sears site, and make its own recommendations that can be incorporate into the Task Force report. The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors public hearing dates for the Comp. Plan amendment have been deferred until 2015.

Update on VDOT Response and Process

Kris Morley-Nikfar, with FCDOT, gave a brief update on the Virginia Department of Transportation's 870 review process of the proposed Comp. Plan amendment for Seven Corners. The submittal package was sent to VDOT in late June. FCDOT recently received comments on the Plan amendment. In general, the comments are editorial in nature, with some clarifications requested regarding the study's assumptions. John Thillmann asked if VDOT's comments are typical and part of the normal review process. Mr. Morley-Nikfar explained that, yes, they were standard types of questions. He said there were no surprises in the comments because FCDOT had met with VDOT staff previously to discuss the proposed network. Once the comment responses are finalized and submitted to VDOT, they will be posted on the Seven Corners website.

Presentation of Draft Follow-On Motions (FOMs) for Transportation Implementation

JoAnne Fiebe, with OCR, distributed a list of comments that were submitted by Task Force members pertaining to implementation of the draft Comprehensive Plan. The comments were grouped together in three topic areas: proffers and phasing implementation, affordable housing, and transportation. She provided a brief overview of each of the main comments and explained that it will be further discussed at the October 1, 2014, Task Force meeting. Some of the comments on transportation will be further addressed with a series of FOMs.

Kris Morley-Nikfar distributed a draft list of FOMs and discussed the purpose of the FOMs. FOMs are issued by the Board of Supervisors and direct staff to perform additional work necessary to implement a Comprehensive Plan amendment. They are common in large Plan amendments such as Seven Corners and will accompany the Plan amendment when considered by the Board of Supervisors. The distributed FOMs are only a draft and the Task Force may propose additional FOMs for consideration. Kris Morley-Nikfar read, and briefly explained, each of the proposed FOMs. Two FOMs direct staff to form two types of working groups with the City of Falls Church. The third FOM asks staff to work with Falls Church on transitioning the roadway network as it enters the city. The fourth FOM addresses the need for cost estimates for the transportation network. A consultant has already been retained by FCDOT to develop these cost estimates. The fifth directs staff to coordinate with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission on the completion of the Route 7 transit study. FOMs 6, 7, and 8 focus on implementation, funding, and phasing of the proposed Seven Corners transportation network. Iqbal Khaiy agreed that it is critical to understand the phasing and would like more information on how Fairfax County determines the order of improvements. Pat Hoar explained that the transportation consultant did a high level analysis of phasing earlier this year. Kris Morley-Nikfar explained that a more detailed and comprehensive phasing plan will be prepared.

Affordable Housing Programs

Marianne Gardner, with the Department of Planning and Zoning, distributed a list prepared by the Department of Housing and Community Development, on affordable housing funding programs available to developers in Fairfax County. She brought the information to address Task Force questions about income tiers and possible displacement of residents in existing affordable housing due to redevelopment. She explained that the income tiers listed on page 12 of the draft Seven Corners Comprehensive Plan are based on the county-wide affordable housing policy adopted by the Board of Supervisors. To provide flexibility in the Seven Corners Plan, the text includes “incomes up to” the specified tiers, so that additional housing at lower thresholds could be accommodated. Both Mark Silverwood and Jim Edmonson stated that the majority of renters in their two complexes fall below the 60% Area Median Income. Ms. Gardner described the various programs listed in the handout, and that funding can come from a variety of federal, state, and local sources. Some of the programs are non-competitive, while others are competitive. Mr. Edmonson asserted that this planning study is an opportunity for the Task Force to ask the Board of Supervisors to reconsider its county-wide affordable housing policy. It was recommended that Mr. Edmonson direct his suggestions to the county’s Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

Presentation of On-Going Planning Process

Co-Chairman John Thillmann recapped the Task Force process over the past two years. The Task Force has spent the last two years developing a revitalization and transportation plan for the Seven Corners CBC that has a 20 to 40 year time horizon. The process included 30 formal Task Force meetings, 30+ meetings by staff and the chairman, Task Force member meetings with community groups, a number of field trips, and two Charrettes. This effort included a process of educating the Task Force, using outside experts and county staff experts, which covered a wealth of topics including:

- Current Comprehensive Plan, and allowable density in the Comp Plan
- Current Zoning and allowable density
- Historic development patterns—housing, retail, roadways
- Inventory of public facilities
- School profiles
- Environmental and recreational uses
- Demographic profile of the area—population and economic
- Multi-family development, how it is developed, financed and market focused

- Affordable housing and how it is developed, financed and targeted (Private funding, VHDA financing, HUD support) Fairfax County's programs
- Basic transportation briefing, existing conditions—levels of service, Comprehensive Plan recommendations, business attractors
- Transportation demand management programs and how they function
- Mass transit and how it plays into single occupancy vehicles issues
- Bus transfer stations, express buses, BRT, and light rail
- Mixed use development—how it functions, how it is developed and integrated into existing and developed uses through assembling properties and redevelopment
- Creating “destinations” and a sense of place. Creating a Metro-focused development pattern
- Determining if there was a market for employment other than retail—such as office.
- Looking at the future of retail and how retail plays into a mixed use concept. How does destination retail work?
- Activating street fronts
- Creating a “Vibrant Streets” Plan for the area
- Sub-committee presentations on Connectivity and Quality of life
- Falls Church Eastern Gateway concepts
- NVTC studies on the future possibilities for Route 7 and looping to the East Falls Church Metro

Then after all of the above issues were presented and discussed during nine months of intensive education, the Task Force held a design charrette. This included the addition of some community members and staff members from Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. The charrette required an intensive all-day process. A land design charrette was later followed by a transportation charrette. The charrettes were extremely successful. Each charrette team developed similar concepts for the overall plan, the three opportunity areas, and for transportation fixes.

At the last Task Force meeting, Mr. Thillmann said that consensus was lacking so he decided to not move forward a vote on Land Unit C (Sears's site). Supervisor Gross has requested that the Task Force move forward on the Comp Plan language for everything except the Sears site. She has also directed staff to work with a newly formed committee of residents, some members of which are now on this Task Force, and chaired by Martin Faga, to continue to discuss options for the Sears site. After the special committee develops their recommendations any new language for site C will be added to the Comprehensive Plan recommended by the Task Force. Only then will the draft Plan go to Public Hearing—probably early next spring. The Follow-On Motions discussed earlier tonight will also be considered at the Public Hearing.

Task Force Action

Mr. Thillmann stated that he would like to conclude the Task Force's action on the Plan by determining if there is consensus to move it forward and await the recommendation of the special committee regarding Land Unit C.

Mr. Thillmann asked to confirm that there is consensus for this revised draft Plan. He explained consensus does not mean total agreement with everything in the Plan or that Task Force members will all be equally enthusiastic about everything in it. It does mean that we Task Force members can live with the Plan and recognize that it is a solution to some of the concerns facing the Seven Corners area.

Mr. Thillmann polled each Task Force member. He asked if they can recommend that this Plan Opportunity Areas A and B (with the option of adding Opportunity Area C in the future) be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration and action:

Mr. Thillmann stated that he was in favor of the Plan. Other Task Force members were queried with their responses as follows:

Blake Smith - yes
Steve Tillman - yes
Patrick Hoar - yes
Martin Faga - yes
Mary-Ellen Ward - yes
Karl Moritz - yes
Mark Silverwood - yes
Vincent Burke - yes
Jim Edmondson - yes
Dick Knapp - yes
Iqbal Khaiy - yes

Mr. Thillmann thanked the Task Force members for their service as well as staff for their work on this study. Mark Silverwood made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Karl Moritz. The Task Force adjourned at 8:25 pm.

The next Task Force Meeting will be **Wednesday October 1, 2014.**

By: 

Date: 