

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2007**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Walter L. Alcorn, At-Large
Earl L. Flanagan, Mount Vernon District
Janet R. Hall, Mason District
Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District
James R. Hart, At-Large
Kenneth Lawrence, Providence District
Rodney Lusk, Lee District

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District

OTHER PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Frank A. de la Fe, Hunter Mill District
Peter F. Murphy, Jr., Springfield District
Timothy J. Sargeant, At-Large

OTHERS PRESENT:

Phil Yates, Dewberry and Davis

STAFF PRESENT:

Fred Selden, Director, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)
Marianne Gardner, PD, DPZ
Clara Quintero Johnson, PD, DPZ
Anna Bentley, PD, DPZ
S. Robin Hardy, Assistant Director, Planning Commission Office
Barbara J. Lippa, Executive Director, Planning Commission Office
Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk, Planning Commission Office

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Chairman Janet R. Hall called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Board Conference Room at 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia. She noted that the first order of business was approval of minutes.

Commissioner Lawrence MOVED THAT THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 28, 2007 BE APPROVED.

Commissioner Hart seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

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Chairman Hall said that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to examine how the 2004-2006 APR process had been conducted and apply "lessons learned" to the next APR cycle. She noted that Marianne Gardner and Clara Quintero Johnson, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), would lead the discussion. Ms. Gardner introduced Anna Bentley, a new employee of the Planning Division, DPZ, who would also be working on this effort.

Ms. Johnson explained that two major topics had surfaced when staff had conducted focus groups and interviews: one, the need for improved public outreach and two, the broad issue of what types of nominations were suited for the APR process versus alternative ways in which to consider proposed changes to the Plan.

Ms. Johnson said one area of notable improvement during the past APR cycle had been the use of technology which had included the following:

- Comprehensive Plan ListServ had been launched and used to announce each stage of the process;
- Channel 16 programs had been developed to educate the public about the APR process;
- County's website had contained staff reports and Task Force meeting information;
- "My Neighborhood" webpage had become available and showed a marked increase in the use of the Geographic Information Service (GIS) for map making and analysis.
- Internal tracking system, Comprehensive Plan Amendment Tracking System (CPATS), had been developed to improve Planning Commission and DPZ staff coordination; to customize letters of notification for public hearings; and be used as a tool used for Plan monitoring, a critical piece of analysis when considering the cumulative impacts for land use decisions.

Ms. Johnson explained that, as a direct result of lessons learned from earlier APR cycles, the time schedule should allow more time for staff analysis prior to task force meetings and that more specific information should be requested of nominators. For example, she said more information would be required about mixed-use proposals such as specific square footage for each type of use which would make it possible to better evaluate impacts. Ms. Johnson pointed out that during the last cycle, mixed-use nominations made up to 40 percent of those ultimately adopted.

Ms. Johnson reviewed Attachment II of a memorandum from Ms. Gardner to the Planning Commission, dated March 29, 2007, subject: Area Plan Review Retrospective. (A copy of the memorandum is in the date file and attached to these minutes.)

- Figure 1 – 202 nominations submitted, 32 percent had been withdrawn; 27 percent had been adopted; and 27 percent had been deferred;
- Figure 2 – Few of the 55 nominations adopted had proposed single use residential or office; there had been many mixed-use proposals, most with a residential component; and a large number had proposed to change Plan conditions, but not a change in use or intensity;
- Figure 3 – a breakdown of nominations by Planning District;
- Figure 4 – adopted acreage and count by special areas;
- Figure 5 – nominations submitted and adopted within special areas;
- Figure 6 –higher percentage of nominations deferred for special study in the northern part of the County than in the southern part, primarily due to the Tysons Corner nominations which had been deferred for special study;
- Figure 7 – most of the adopted nominations had taken place in the Pohick Planning District, many of which addressed access and Environmental Plan guidance;
- Figure 8 – adopted nominations that changed use or intensity, most of which had taken place in the more developed Planning Districts.

Ms. Johnson said the next topic, how to improve public outreach, had been identified in focus groups and in interviews as needing improvement. She said suggestions had generally involved providing better information earlier in the process. She noted that the following suggestions had been made:

- General planning and APR presentation to civic associations in anticipation of an APR cycle;
- Training sessions for APR participants, including Task Force members, developers, and nominators.
- Technical assistance for nominators before and during the submission period.

Commissioner de la Fe suggested that regardless of the use of technology, the APR "tabloid" should continue to be published.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Murphy, Ms. Johnson said that Cable Programming would take the current APR program off the air beginning in May 2007.

Commissioner Lawrence suggested that a banner announcing the APR process run on the County's website and, if possible, on the "My Neighborhood" site for affected areas.

Commissioner Flanagan commented that citizens in the Mount Vernon District had been satisfied with the process as it had evolved over the last ten years and would probably be concerned about changes to it.

Chairman Hall noted that each District task force handled the APR process differently and explained how it was done in the Mason District.

Commissioner Murphy agreed that APR task force procedures were established by individual District Supervisors and Planning Commissioners and pointed out that the question was how a task force would interact with staff concerning scheduling, presentations, etc.

Commissioner Sargeant pointed out that there were many new citizens in the South County area who were unfamiliar with the process. He suggested that an educational program be made available to this new generation of participants to include an APR "orientation" in which DPZ staff would explain the APR and task force processes to them. He also recommended that task force members be notified of the final decisions made at the completion of the APR process. Commissioner Sargeant further suggested that if members were appointed earlier in the process a more strategic approach to planning could be developed which addressed how a particular community could be affected. Chairman Hall said these were excellent outreach suggestions.

Commissioner Murphy suggested that tapes of the new Channel 16 television program be made available to Supervisors and Planning Commissioners to be used as a primer to kick-off the APR process.

Commissioner Hart said two different training programs should be developed: one for nominators, such as citizens and developers; and the second for task force members. He also suggested that "video-on-demand" on the website be considered as an alternative if attendance at a scheduled meeting was not possible.

Chairman Hall asked Ms. Johnson to address the second item to be considered: Ideas to improve review of APR nominations.

Ms. Johnson asked for comments about earlier screening of nominations to determine which items should be deferred to a special study; establishing thresholds about what could be evaluated within the normal APR timeline; and limiting the ability to change a nomination once it had been accepted.

Commissioner Lawrence commented that in the Providence District, which included developed areas, such as Merrifield and Tysons, it would be helpful if nominations were screened before going to the Task Force to determine if they were appropriate.

Commissioner Sargeant said better protocols should be established to eliminate last minute deferrals of nominations when a task force was ready to make a recommendation that was anticipated to be unfavorable. Commissioner de la Fe said in such a case, the task force had

done its job. Commissioner Flanagan pointed out that a nomination could be reactivated within one year after deferral.

Fred Selden, Director, PD, DPZ, noted that one reason for deferring a nomination that would probably receive an unfavorable recommendation was because if it was withdrawn, it could not be resubmitted within two years. He also said staff often encouraged the withdrawal of a nomination if it was likely that it would not receive favorable recommendation by staff and the task force so that an analysis and staff report would not have to be done. He said in some cases more time was needed by a nominator and pointed out that a nomination could only be deferred by the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Alcorn said he liked the idea of early screening to determine if a nomination was consistent with the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan for future development. He said he thought it was too late in the process to make radical changes, but serious thought should be given to alternatives during the next four years.

Commissioner Hart said he generally agreed with the comments made about the ability of a nominator to change a nomination, but said the process needed flexibility because in some cases it could result in a better proposal.

Referring to Page 4 of Attachment III, Commissioner Lusk said he agreed that rules for revitalization areas should be different from those for other nominations. He explained that during the recent APR cycle for South County, a number of nominations had been made for the historic Richmond Highway Corridor which had not been well thought out. He said there was a need not only for additional time to review nominations in those areas but also a need for nominators to be aware of the vision for revitalization areas.

Chairman Hall said she agreed that nominations should be screened and criteria to evaluate them identified to determine the merit of the nomination. Commissioner Lusk said that he thought nominations for revitalization areas should be given special consideration by staff.

Commissioner Harsel commented that nominations often did not provide adequate justification.

Commissioner Murphy said it was important not to make the process too inflexible. Chairman Hall agreed, noting that in some cases a mediocre proposal could turn into an excellent one but pointed out that bargaining should not be part of the process.

Commissioner Alcorn stated that the prescreening process could have a category for nominations that were either inappropriate or could be improved that did not require a lot of staff time for an initial review. He said such a process could also capture the ideas Commissioner Lusk mentioned for revitalization areas.

Commissioner Sargeant pointed out that improving a nomination during the process would be helpful, but on the other hand, would require much staff time to work with task force members and others.

Chairman Hall pointed out that tonight's meeting was to begin the thought process about future procedures. She agreed with Commissioner Alcorn that now was not the time for radical changes. She noted that the committee would meet again on May 24 and on June 13, 2007 to further discuss issues raised tonight.

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Janet R. Hall, Chairman

For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio recording which can be found in the Office of the Planning Commission of Fairfax County, Virginia.

Minutes by: Linda B. Rodeffer

Approved: May 24, 2007

Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk
Fairfax County Planning Commission