

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2007**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Walter L. Alcorn, At-Large  
Janet R. Hall, Mason District  
Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District  
James R. Hart, At-Large  
Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District  
Kenneth Lawrence, Providence District  
Rodney Lusk, Lee District

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Earl L. Flanagan, Mount Vernon District

**OTHER PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Frank A. de la Fe, Hunter Mill District  
Timothy J. Sargeant, Mount Vernon District

**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  
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 Hart MOVED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 4, 2007 POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE BE APPROVED.

Commissioner Hopkins seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

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Chairman Hall noted that tonight the committee would discuss proposed changes to the Area Plans Review (APR) process.

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### **Improvements to APR Public Outreach**

Clara Quintero Johnson, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), noted that during the discussion of public outreach efforts in the last committee meeting, comments had centered on the need to prepare and educate task force members, nominators, and the public with an approach designed specifically for each of them. She said the need for a well-formed nomination at the time of submission, with a desire to maintain flexibility to allow for a nomination to be improved during the process, had also been discussed.

Ms. Johnson explained that on May 15, 2007, a group of APR Task Force representatives had met with Planning Commission staff and several Commissioners to discuss their experience with previous APR cycles. She said many suggestions had been made to simplify language used in outreach materials and to make information more accessible to the general public.

Commissioners Harsel and Hart said they did not recall being notified of this meeting.

Ms. Johnson stated that outreach activities would take place in advance of the nomination submission period; i.e., public education meetings, training, technical assistance for nominators, and preparation of educational videos to encourage broad participation and awareness of the APR process. She noted that this would also let nominators know that they were expected to refine their proposal and present it to the community for feedback prior to formal submission. She also said that nominators would be encouraged to submit proposals that they would support throughout the process. She asked for comments on the 11 public outreach activities listed in the handout, a copy of which is in the date file.

1. Presentations to the general public including civic associations which would encourage broad participation by educating the public about APR and how it affected their communities.

Commissioner Harsel noted that the Braddock District had done this in the past and pointed out that if this was done far in advance, people might drop out for various reasons.

Commissioner Lawrence said since the Providence District did not have a standing land use committee, this item would be important for task force members who were appointed from civic associations. He agreed with Commissioner Harsel that there could be problems with turnover, but nevertheless, said this activity would still be very desirable as far as he was concerned.

Commissioner Sargeant suggested that the length of the training and orientation period should be determined. He said since there were approximately 2,000 civic associations, there should be a consistent training format that could easily be presented to new APR participants. He

commented that this activity should have a broad reach so that recruits could be easily trained in a concise manner prior to the start of the APR cycle.

Commissioner Harsel agreed, pointing out that sometimes a task force was not appointed until the submission period had begun.

Ms. Johnson said that this activity would be a broad effort and would not necessarily take place after the appointment of a task force but was meant to let people know about the land use process and to look for it in the near future without getting into more details than necessary.

Commissioner de la Fe pointed out that it would be impossible for all nine of the supervisory districts to handle the APR process the same. For example, he said that the Hunter Mill District had two land use committees in different parts of the district and that a special task force was set up with representatives from both land use committees as well as others who had volunteered to serve. He said the key to the success was to make sure the presentation was ready early in the process.

Commissioner Sargeant said perhaps supervisory districts could establish a timeframe for the orientation/training process so that staff had enough time to appropriately brief the potential APR participants.

2. Training for APR participants should be conducted before the submission period to educate developers and prospective nominators on changes to the process.
3. Training for APR task forces to occur prior to the task force's first meeting with more in-depth planning topics.

Commissioner Harsel said she thought these were excellent suggestions and could be broken into sessions, one for general information; one for future task force members; and one for developers and nominators.

4. Technical assistance for prospective nominators prior to and during the nomination submission period.

Chairman Hall and Commissioner Harsel both agreed that this was an excellent idea.

5. APR video updated and copies made available to Planning Commissioners and Supervisors to use with their constituents. The video may be made available online.

Responding to a question from Chairman Hall, Ms. Johnson said the current video would be taken off Channel 16 at the beginning of June.

6. Presentations by topic (i.e., "Understanding FAR" or "How to Use the Comprehensive Plan"). Prepare presentations on specific topics that may be available on video, DVD, and/or online with video on demand.

In response to a question from Commissioner Sargeant, Ms. Johnson said these could begin as Policy Plan presentations and become more sophisticated and available as streaming video on the internet and made available on DVDs.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Harsel, Ms. Johnson said if Channel 16 agreed, these presentations could be made available as short vignettes. Barbara Lippa, Executive Director, Planning Commission, said that requests were made on a quarterly basis and Channel 16 determined what would fit into the televised schedule.

Commissioner Hart said education and training should be tailored to individual needs because some potential task force members would be more experienced and knowledgeable than others. He said those who were new to the process might feel more comfortable learning by themselves or online since "one size did not fit all."

7. Countywide interest groups: continue to identify groups and make aware of APR nominations (i.e., Transportation Advisory Committee, EQAC).

There were no comments on this item.

8. Revise the Citizens Guide to make it more easily understood.

Chairman Hall asked how the Guide could be improved. Ms. Gardner responded that it served as a tutorial and at the end, one was supposed to know how to fill out the nomination form. She explained that at the meeting of Task Force chairs, a suggestion had been made that a box be added in the front of the nomination asking for information about the size of the parcel and how many houses or square feet of office space were being proposed. She said this might encourage an inexperienced nominator to hire a land use attorney. Chairman Hall said that would be valuable for those who did not have the expertise necessary to fill out the nomination forms.

Commissioner Harsel noted that in the past the Guide had been written by the Committee and the Planning Commission staff in conjunction with DPZ. Ms. Lippa said this would not change. Chairman Hall pointed out that it might be a good idea to ask questions about the acreage and density being proposed.

9. Postcard mailing: use a simply postcard that gets the public's attention and notifies them about the APR process

Responding to a question from Commissioner Alcorn about the cost of mailing postcards, Ms. Gardner replied that she would first need to know how many postcards would be sent. She said perhaps publication of the tabloid could be discontinued. Commissioner de la Fe emphatically stated that the tabloid should not be discontinued. Ms. Gardner said in that case, perhaps postcards would not be necessary. Commissioner Alcorn pointed out that it might be appropriate to send postcards to homeowners associations (HOAs).

Responding to a question from Chairman Hall, Ms. Gardner explained that postcards could be sent earlier in the process since the tabloid was distributed after public hearings had been scheduled. She also said that the postcards could be used to raise interest in the APR process and simply say information was available on the County's website.

Commissioner Sargeant questioned whether a postcard would have enough space to adequately explain the APR process. He also said such communications should be part of a larger plan coordinated with the Office of Public Affairs (OPA).

Chairman Hall said this was a good point and instead of a postcard, suggested that a one page document be sent to HOAs.

Commissioner Sargeant commented that there were a variety of ways to raise awareness about the APR process, such as public service announcements on radio stations and Channel 16. He said postcards might be appropriate, but recommended against doing stand-alone communications.

In response to a question from Commissioner Harsel, Ms. Johnson said that the idea was to send postcards before the submission period, noting that it could raise interest about what was happening in a neighborhood.

Commissioner Hart said, depending upon the event or message, a postcard might not be the right format. He said much more information could be contained in a letter. He also said some recipients might have no idea what the APR was. Commissioner Harsel commented that bulk mail was as cheap as postcards.

Chairman Hall commented that sending postcards might not be such a good idea after all.

Commissioner Lawrence agreed with Commissioner Sargeant that a communications plan should be developed. He pointed out that although production of a public service announcement was not free, air time was free. He said that the Media Department of a high school would probably be able to produce an announcement. He also suggested publishing information about the APR process, similar to "What's Going Where" which appeared monthly in the *Fairfax Extra* section of *The Washington Post*.

Chairman Hall strongly recommended that staff contact OPA for advice on the best venues to widely disseminate information and educate the public about the process, noting there would always be those who would say they had not been notified. She said the goal was to reach as many people as possible to let them know what the Comprehensive Plan was, how and when it could be changed, and how to become involved in the process.

Ms. Gardner noted that DPZ had worked with OPA in the past, but not on developing a communications plan, which she thought was a great idea. Chairman Hall also agreed both a communications plan and enlisting schools to produce a public service announcement were excellent ideas.

10. Fairfax County webpage: The APR process will be made visible on the County's website with use of the "What's New" section. Staff will look into use of banners on website.

Commissioner Alcorn made the following suggestions with regard to this item:

- Create an APR website, accessed from the County's home page, with links to all outreach and training materials, a schedule page, the tabloid, OPA, and Supervisors' offices;
- File and view nominations online as a Word or PDF document with current status indicated, i.e., active, withdrawn, scheduled for a task force meeting, or scheduled for public hearing. He said if details were available about specific nominations, a person could attend a meeting related to a nomination he was interested in.
- With GIS staff, create a clickable map of nominations and integrate it into "My Neighborhood" functions so people could see what nominations had been made.

Commissioner Lawrence commented that populating an APR webpage could have big resource implications and said this issue should be addressed as soon as possible.

Commissioner Alcorn said that the biggest difficulty would not be putting the information online or on the map; it would be keeping the status of the nominations current.

Commissioner Hart suggested that Channel 16 could run a banner at the bottom of the screen, similar to many television stations, stating, for example, "Check proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments on line at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov)" or "APR training program tonight."

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### **Early Screening Criteria for APR Nominations**

Referring the Number 4, Mixed Use Center, under Early Screening of nominations, on page 2 of the handout, Commissioner de la Fe said he agreed that nominations proposing a substantial change in the use or intensity of an Urban, Suburban, or Community Business Centers or a Transit-Station Area should be evaluated in the context of the entire area and might not be appropriate for consideration in the APR timeframe. However, he said there have been situations in which the Supervisor's office or the Planning Commission Office had advised against submitting an Out-of-Turn Plan Amendment, but to wait for the next APR cycle. He said many of these cases were in a suburban or pseudo urban areas and said this item should not rule out a nomination.

Referring to the same section, Early Screening, Commissioner Harsel made the following points:

- Number 1, Adequate Justification – Nominations were often submitted without proposed alternate text.
- Number 2, Concept for Future Development – citizens could be persuaded to support a nomination not knowing that the proposal was not in conformance with Zoning Ordinances, such as development in a resource protection area.
- Number 3, Traffic Impact Analysis – The nominator should be responsible for conducting a traffic impact analysis for VDOT review, not staff.

Referring to Number 2, Chairman Hall said that it was the responsibility of the Supervisor's office to explain what did and did not constitute a viable nomination.

Commissioner Alcorn said he would like to see all of the suggestions and comments incorporated into one document for review. Ms. Gardner replied that staff could draft a communications plan before the next meeting, scheduled for June 13, 2007, however more time would probably be needed to consult with OPA on it and to determine costs.

In response to a question from Commissioner Harsel, Fred Selden, PD, DPZ, said that he thought dividing the APR process by North and South County, as had been done in the past, should continue. Chairman Hall agreed.

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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: June 13, 2007

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Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk  
Fairfax County Planning Commission