Planning Commission Meeting
April 28, 2011
Verbatim Excerpt

2232A-MD06-10-1 – METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIRPORTS AUTHORITY IN COORDINATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ON BEHALF OF WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY (Sunset Hills Road and Dulles Airport Access Road Traction Power Substation and Train Control Room) (Hunter Mill District)

After the Close of the Public Hearing

Chairman Murphy: Public hearing is closed; recognize Mr. de la Fe.

Commissioner de la Fe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I - - first of all, I want to once again address the issue of the trees that were there and were cut back, and frankly, that should never have happened but it did, and I'm sorry but - - that occurred. With respect to the decision on moving the - - the facilities that are being proposed from the original location to another location within the VDOT area, they have to be moved because VDOT built salt domes where this was going to go. The - - in looking at other locations within VDOT area, this was determined to be the least disruptive to VDOT operations and still meet the requirements of the Metro project. I recognize that this is not an attractive area, but it isn't already. It is a VDOT maintenance yard with salt domes and there is a cell phone tower there. So, I believe that as far as character, location, and extent, this is an appropriate place to locate this Metro facility. I also believe that, although this is not a SE or a rezoning and we cannot require conditions, the applicant has met with members of the community to provide as much landscaping as possible to mitigate the - - not only the new facility, but also if I understand correctly, even the existing facilities already, should VDOT agree to it with site distance and so forth. The other thing that was of concern to me initially when this was proposed was whether this would interfere with the expansion of Sunset Hills Road to what is called for in the Comprehensive Plan, and I - - I am satisfied according to the documents in both in the staff report and what has been - - what we have been told that Sunset Hills can be expanded even if this is built at this location. I'm not saying that - - I don't know when there will be money to expand Sunset Hills Road or - - you know - - when. We've been talking about this for at least 20 years, if not longer. I might add from - - and this is purely from memory - - the minor trail that is called for in the Comprehensive Plan, if I remember correctly what was envisioned was a continuation of what exists already and farther up Sunset Hills Road, which is really a part of almost original Reston and is really a sidewalk. And we call them "minor trails." Minor trail is around six feet. The sidewalk that exists is either four or five feet, depending on when it was built, but I believe that that minor trail, should it ever come to pass, can be accommodated even if this facility is there without necessarily affecting the - - you know - - landscaping that is being provided. So, Mr. Chairman, I concur with staff's conclusion that the proposal by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority in coordination - - in coordination with the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, on behalf of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, as amended, for the construction of a traction power substation, trail control room, and communication room, located in the VDOT right-of-way to the south of Sunset Hills Road in Reston, satisfy the criteria of location, character, and extent as specified in *Virginia Code* Section 15.2-2232, as amended.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I MOVE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION FIND THE SUBJECT APPLICATION, 2232A-MD06-10-1, AS AMENDED, SUBSTANTIALLY IN ACCORD WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

Commissioners Hart and Alcorn: Second.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Mr. Hart and Mr. Alcorn. Is there a discussion of the motion?

Commissioner Hall: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Hall.

Commissioner Hall: I am not supporting the motion. As far as I'm concerned, I understand this is a 2232, it is a public hearing, and we do have the three criteria, and I'm not looking for conditions. But what really upset me was basically Mr. Rak's assumption of "Well, it was going to happen anyway," like this is a rubber stamp. The purpose of a 2232 is for us to look at the three criteria and as far as I'm concerned, when they removed those trees they interfered with the extent of this application. They took away our ability to make the assessment whether that was in fact in keeping and therefore, I'm not going to support the application because this is not a rubber stamp. We're actually looking at these things and we're making decisions. With that, I'll be quiet.

Chairman Murphy: Further discussion of the motion?

Commissioners Flanagan and Hart: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: All those in - - yes, Mr. Flanagan.

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes, I would like to also indicate that I think that this is just bad planning, and so consequently, I will not vote against the motion but I'm going to abstain.

Commissioner Hart: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Hart.

Commissioner Hart: Thank you. I will be supporting the motion. I think that the problem has to do primarily with the cell tower and the screening for the cell tower, which really isn't the issue on the 2232. The - - the relocation of the rail facility, I think is sufficiently screened. I think staff has sufficiently addressed the questions about the dimensions and the trail and that sort of thing, and that's the application that's before us tonight. Whether there are consequences as a result of a contractor clearing the site and there probably should be or there's some implications for the existing cell tower, I don't know, but the question before us is to do with - - has to do with the rail facility and not the screening of the existing cell tower. Thank you.

Commissioner Alcorn: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Alcorn.

Commissioner Alcorn: Yes, I'll be supporting this motion as well. And I just want to point out that in the original Reston Master Plan, this property was designated for industry and government reserve, that's a plan that's been there some 48 years or so. So, if it's bad planning, it's been bad an awful long time.

Chairman Murphy: Further discussion? All those in favor of the motion to approve 2232A-MD06-10-1, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Murphy: Opposed? Motion carries.

Commissioner Hall: No.

Commissioner Flanagan: Abstain.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Hall votes no. Mr. Flanagan abstains. Is there any other business on this application? Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Caperton, Ms. Maier.

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(The motion carried by a vote of 7-1-1 with Commissioner Hall opposed; Commissioner Flanagan abstaining; Commissioners Harsel, Lawrence, and Migliaccio absent from the meeting.)

KAD