Planning Commission Meeting
June 25, 2008
Verbatim Excerpt

S07-IV-S1 - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT (Backlick Road Industrial Use)

After Close of the Public Hearing

Chairman Murphy: Public hearing is closed; Mr. Lusk.

Commissioner Lusk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly been an interesting discussion and I guess I've gotten to the point of decision and I'm going to make a decision on this - - this item. I'll note first that this Plan amendment pertains to property that's referred to as Patriot Ridge. Again, it's a specific outgrowth of the BRAC-related development occurring at the EPG or the Engineering Proving Ground. We've heard about the original authorization back in January of 2007 and I understand that there were some changes to reduce the density required for consolidation and address a number of transportation-related concerns. Again, the Plan amendment seeks to permit the development of office and hotel uses up to a 1.6 FAR on property that includes again, the Pallone car dealership. I am supportive of this request for a number of reasons. First, BRAC-related development will create the need for contractor spin-offs. The EPG property is currently being developed as we've heard with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, or NGIA. And when completed, this complex will house more than 8,500 employees. Understanding that there is no definitive answer on the number of contractor spin-off positions that will be connected with this project, I would estimate that there would be at least a one-to-one ratio government agency contractor to private contractor. I base this assertion on using the NRO, which is National Recognizance Organization, which is located in Chantilly out in the Sully District, as our guide. And the NRO provides what was originally indicated, mapping and imaging service to the Homeland Security Agency. It's a related service that NGIA provides as well. Additionally, when the NRO was constructed, its compound facility comprised approximately one million square feet of uses. It has resulted in the development of three million square feet of related contractor uses in Westfields, in the commercial office park in Sully District. Even with the one-to-one ratio for projection, there will be a significant need for additional office space to accommodate the users that would be connected with the NGIA. This Plan amendment provides flexibility to permit the future development of this much-needed office and/or possible hotel square footage. Number two, I would argue is that the contractors will need office space that's approximate to their federal government client. Again, the Patriot Ridge site is located almost immediately adjacent to the Engineering Proving Ground and per the DOD Forest Protection Guidelines, many contractors will seek to locate within a one to three mile radius of their client. And that obviously can be accommodated with this site. Additionally, this property will be accessible to contractors that might support agencies that are connected with the Washington Headquarters Services or BRAC 133. As many of us have heard, WHS may ultimately be housed at the GSA warehouse or conversely, at the Mark Center or Victory Center sites in Alexandria City. The Department of Defense is scheduled to make a decision on this location later this year. And we've heard WHS has a pretty significant footprint, proposes to house approximately 6,200 employees once it's fully built out. If the warehouse - - GSA warehouse is selected, it will be within this three mile radius of this Plan amendment property. Third, the Lee District Land Use Committee reviewed this Plan amendment and overwhelmingly

recommended its approval. The committee liked the Plan amendment, which is proposing redevelopment in an area that is isolated from residential properties. Additionally, the site is uniquely, again, located adjacent to the Engineering Proving Ground. I'll conclude by saying while I am sympathetic and I have heard the concerns that were raised both at this dais and also raised in the testimony and also raised in the staff report, I would argue that we have an enormous opportunity, with the BRAC decisions, to reshape both the look and feel of Springfield. While we have traditionally seen the properties that are the subject of the Plan amendment be developed industrially, this does not mean that they should continue to be designated or developed in this manner. Now the crossroads in Lee District, the decisions that we make with this Plan amendment and the BRAC nominations, and I don't see them being totally exclusive, later this fall, will position Springfield to become potentially a third, fourth, or even a fifth largest office market in Fairfax County. I made some comments earlier on that, and I'll say that's really important - - it's important because it serves the County's goal to expand the commercial tax base and to move commercial office development from the areas that it's principally been located, again the northern and the western portions of Fairfax County. On the issue of transportation, I've certainly heard the concerns that were raised there and again, I reiterate the point that we will have a 527 Review. We have experts within our own Department of Transportation that will be involved in reviewing and making recommendations on what improvements would need to be made in order for these applications to move forward. I think this Plan language, you know, requires full consolidation and it talks about the access points to Fullerton Road and I believe that once we get to the discussion of the proffers, we will be able to address a number of those concerns as well. So with that, Mr. Chairman, I WOULD NOW LIKE TO MAKE A MOTION. I've actually included for each of you at your desk a copy of the Plan language. I won't read all of the sort of introductory language, which talks about the modification, but THE AREA THAT I'LL FOCUS ON FOR THE MOTION IS THE LOWER PORTION UNDERLINED, WHICH SAYS "AS AN OPTION, PARCELS 99-1((1)) PARCELS 22 AND 23A MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR OFFICE USE UP TO A 1.4 FAR IF CONSOLIDATED. ALTERNATIVELY, OFFICE AND POSSIBLY [sic] HOTEL USE AT AN INTENSITY OF UP TO 1.6 FAR may be appropriate - - MAY BE APPROPRIATE IF PARCELS 99-1((1)) PARCEL 22 AND 23A AND 99-1((5)) PARCELS 3 AND 4 ARE CONSOLIDATED. IN EITHER SCENARIO, THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MUST [sic] BE MET: FIRST AND FOREMOST, it's listed as the first item, DEMONSTRATION THAT SUFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION CAPACITY WILL EXIST ON BACKLICK ROAD AND FULLERTON ROAD TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT. SECOND BULLET, PROVISION OF A UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT PLAN. THIRD BULLET, PROVISION OF VEHICULAR ACCESS TO FULLERTON ROAD. AND FOURTH BULLET, SUPPORT RETAIL IS PROVIDED TO SERVE THE EMPLOYEES AND VISITORS." "Parcels 90-4 - - excuse me - - Tax Map parcel 90-4((1)) parcel 5B and 5F currently are developed with automobile-related uses. In any redevelopment, consolidation with parcels 5A and 5D is encouraged. Development of an auto-related commercial use may be appropriate if consolidated access to Backlick road and effective landscaping along Backlick road are provided."

Commissioner de la Fe: Second.

Chairman Murphy: Point of - - from the staff, is it - - is it appropriate to put the last paragraph in the motion?

Marianne Gardner: You don't need to because that's part of the existing text - -

Commissioner Lusk: I apologize.

Ms. Gardner: - - it's just where we had to stick in the new text.

Commissioner Lusk: I - - I continued on through my reading there.

Ms. Gardner: Right.

Commissioner Lusk: Pardon me, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Murphy: It's okay. Just a - - just as a clarification.

Commissioner Lusk: Okay.

Chairman Murphy: Okay. Without objection, we can delete that last paragraph beginning "Parcels 90-4((1))5B." Is there a second to the motion?

Commissioner Harsel: No, Mr. de la Fe did.

Chairman Murphy: I'm sorry. Mr. de la Fe seconded the motion. Is there a discussion?

Commissioners Litzenberger and Lawrence: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes, Mr. Litzenberger, then Mr. Lawrence.

Commissioner Litzenberger: I have a question. The text said, line four of the underlined portion, "In either scenario, the following conditions should be met," yet it was stated, was that changed to "must" or should it be "shall"?

Chairman Murphy: Shall.

Commissioner Lusk: No, I think that - -

Commissioner Litzenberger: I believe you stated "must" but it says "should" in the text, so.

Commissioner Hart: They're different.

Commissioner Lusk: Let me - - let me clarify then. The intent was as it's written, the following conditions should be met.

Commissioner Litzenberger: Should be met. Okay.

Commissioner Lawrence: Yes, sir.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Lawrence.

Commissioner Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Question for the maker of the motion.

Commissioner Lusk: Yes.

Commissioner Lawrence: Is there language elsewhere in the Plan that will assure that infrastructure balance can drive phasing of this development? The nominator mentioned phasing, but was not specific about it. Can we control it? For example, phased with success of an interim TDM achievement or in other ways?

Commissioner Lusk: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes.

Commissioner Lusk: From my own sort of thought process, I'm making the extension that in the proffer rezoning review of this application that would come forward as a result of this Plan language, we have the opportunity to talk more specifically about the items, which would include the TDMs but also any other related - - transportation-related improvements that would be necessary in order for this to go forward. So, we - - we envision and I guess, I can't speak for the developers, but I do understand the way the credit markets are, it is extremely difficult to get financing for projects and you certainly have to show that you've gotten a certain securitization of tenant base in order to move that forward. So, my thought is that we would address at the - - at the rezoning through the discussion on proffers and obviously, we'll use the advice and counsel of our Department of Transportation to aid in that effort.

Chairman Murphy: Further discussion of the motion?

Commissioner Hart: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes, Mr. Hart.

Commissioner Hart: Question for the maker of the motion. In the new text, in the second line, is the inserted word "possible" or "possibly"? I think you said "possibly" and then someone's handwritten on mine "possible."

Commissioner Lusk: Alternatively office and - - possible, that's fine.

Commissioner Hart: I - - I'm asking. I don't - - I don't - - it said something different than what you said and I wasn't sure what we were voting on it. We're putting words in the Plan. We should - - possible, either way.

Commissioner Lusk: I think they - -

Chairman Murphy: Possible.

Commissioner Lusk: I'll go with possible.

Commissioner Hart: Is it "and" like in the - - that they both have to do it or is it "and/or"?

Commissioner Lusk: The intent is that it be "and/or" in that. They have the option - - they have the option to do an all office use in the first section of the language and alternatively, office and hotel, which will be the combined or possible with in it up to an intensity of 1.6 FAR. So in this case, it would be office and possible office - - hotel, excuse me - - office and possible hotel.

Commissioner Hart: Thank you.

Commissioner Harsel: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Harsel.

Commissioner Harsel: A follow-up on that. So, with the word "possible" in there, that means if we have consolidation of all four parcels, we could have an office use at 1.6. Did I read that correct? Because it says a "possible hotel" so we may get an office. We can get office use at 1.4 on two parcels, but we could also get office use at 1.6 on four parcels.

Commissioner Lusk: The intent is that it would be office and hotel.

Commissioner Harsel: Then let's cross out "possible."

Commissioner Lusk: Well, no. No, we want - - we want the option "office and hotel."

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes, there's no "or."

Commissioner Lusk: Office and hotel. I think I've said that. I'm trying - - trying to be as clear as I can be on that point.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Gardner, did you have a - -?

Ms. Gardner: I believe the intent is, as you said Ms. Harsel, it could be office up to 1.6 or there could be a combination of office and hotel up to 1.6 FAR. So, the hotel is not mandated, it's something that may be mixed in, but it doesn't have to occur.

Chairman Murphy: So, if you have the office alone, it could be 1.6, but if you threw in the hotel, the total of both the office and hotel couldn't go over 1.6?

Ms. Gardner: That's correct.

Commissioner de la Fe: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: All right, maybe that can be fashioned that way then.

Commissioner de la Fe: Mr. Chairman, as the seconder of the motion as I understand it, the difference between 1.4 and 1.6 is not whether it's office and hotel or just office, it's whether there's full consolidation.

Commissioner Harsel: Yes, they're four lots or two lots.

Chairman Lusk: Right.

Commissioner de la Fe: It's two lots or four lots. That's the key - -

Commissioner Lusk: Right.

Commissioner de la Fe: - - of the difference. So, you know, I - - tonight's discussion, but that - - that's what the 1.6 is.

Commissioner Lusk: Right.

Chairman Murphy: Okay.

Commissioner Harsel: That's - - that's what I've asked.

Chairman Murphy: Further discussion of the motion?

Commissioner Flanagan: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes.

Commissioner Flanagan: The first bullet. I'd like this question for Commissioner Lusk.

Commissioner Lusk: Sure.

Commissioner Flanagan: I take it that the demonstration that sufficient transportation capacity will exist on Backlick Road and Fullerton Road includes the intersection of those two?

Commissioner Lusk: Well, it would be a part of the review - - it would be the - - it would be a part of the review that's done through the 527 and again, relying on the Department of Transportation to help me in answering in how we will do that review with the 527. I'm assuming it would be intersections there adjacent.

Leonard Wolfenstein: So, it would include those intersections.

Commissioner Lusk: Right.

Chairman Murphy: Would you identify yourself for the record please, just so?

Mr. Wolfenstein: Leonard Wolfenstein, Department of Transportation.

Chairman Murphy: Thank you, Len. Further discussion of the motion? All those in favor of the motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that it adopt Out-of-Turn Plan Amendment S07-IV-S1, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Murphy: Opposed?

Commissioners Harsel, Alcorn, and Donahue: No.

Chairman Murphy: Motion carries.

Commissioner Hart: Abstain.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Harsel, Mr. Alcorn vote "no." Mr. Donahue - -

Commissioner Donahue: No.

Chairman Murphy: - - votes "no."

Commissioner Hart: Abstain.

Chairman Murphy: And Mr. Hart abstains. Thank you very much.

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(The motion carried by a vote of 6-3-1 with Commissioners Alcorn, Donahue, and Harsel opposed; Commissioner Hart abstaining; Commissioner Sargeant not present for the vote; Commissioner Hall absent from the meeting.)

KAD