

Planning Commission Meeting
October 1, 2015
Verbatim Excerpt

PA 2015-IV-MV2 – HUNTINGTON CLUB CONDOMINIUMS

After Close of the Public Hearing

Chairman Murphy: Public hearing is closed. Mr. Flanagan.

Commissioner Flanagan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On June 23rd, 2015, the Board of Supervisors authorized Plan Amendment 2015-IV-MV2. The authorization directed staff to consider altering or eliminating the recommended office component of the planned mixed-use redevelopment option for Land Unit I of the Huntington Transit Station area, which includes the Huntington Club Condominiums. After considering the Board's request, staff does not support the Board-authorized Plan Amendment, stating that the proposal to eliminate the office use within the Plan option would encourage redevelopment of primarily residential use at a lower intensity, not in keeping with the County's Comprehensive Plan policies pertaining to mixed-use, transit-oriented development. However, this redevelopment project involves a major, community-led neighborhood consolidation effort that began with an Area Plans Review nomination in 2009, which resulted in the adoption of the mixed-use options subject to this Amendment – and has evolved over time with market shifts. The demand for office space near Huntington Metro has evaporated, especially with the large inventory of vacant office space in the adjacent Alexandria/Eisenhour Valley high-rise developments served by the next Metro Yellow Line station. Demand for office space near the Huntington Yellow Line station is unlikely for many years. The Huntington Club Condos' 364 units are now 50 years old and badly in need of redevelopment. Retaining the existing option, however, allows the condo to modify their development with office redevelopment when financially warranted. There is significant support within the community for this redevelopment. And the Planning Commission should support the Amendment for a second option. In an effort to facilitate dialog on the matter, staff suggested alternative language on page 7 of the staff report dated September 17, 2015, which is the basis for my motion, as follows. Mr. Chairman, I MOVE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS THE ADOPTION OF A PLANNING COMMISSION ALTERNATIVE FOR PLAN AMENDMENT 2015-IV-MV2 FOUND ON MY HANDOUT DATED OCTOBER 1, 2015.

Commissioner Sargeant: Second.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Mr. Sargeant. Is there a discussion of the motion?

Commissioners Hart and Migliaccio: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes. Well, it's a coin toss here – Mr. Hart.

Commissioner Hart: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Oh – thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate Commissioner Flanagan's explanation, but I won't be able to support the motion. Staff is recommending that we retain the adopted Plan partly because the nomination – the requested

Amendment is inconsistent with existing policies. In my view, our existing policies anticipate a mix of uses at transit stations, including things like office. It tends to promote – trips in both directions throughout the day – people going to work – people going home. Particularly at transit station areas, I think we want to retain that mix. This Amendment proposes in this situation at a transit station the elimination of office. And what seems to be driving this and – while it – it certainly may be politically popular and I think staff recognizes that it would be – it would be very popular with the residents in this particular property. What seems to be driving this, in my view, from the staff report – or at least from some of the – not from the staff report, from some of the material we've received – is the economic advantage to the residents to be able to do a better real estate deal through their negotiations with a developer – that the price of the land is higher if they can get rid of the office where the – we've had a – a downturn in the office market. That ought not be driving our land use decision. There are plenty of places in the County where – if you took a consensus of the neighborhood as to the most advantageous redevelopment, we would get all kind of strange results driven by the economics of the land value to that particular owner. That's not how we ought to be doing this. I think I could support under certain circumstances a reduction of some of the office at a transit station, but a total elimination to make a real estate deal work is not how we ought to do it. And if we do it here, who are we going to say no to on the next one and the one after that? There are a lot of people with office – land that's planned for office that are having trouble right now. And if we open that up, we may wish that we hadn't. So I won't be able to support the motion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioner Flanagan: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: On that point?

Commissioner: On that point.

Chairman Murphy: All right.

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes, on that point – and I agree with Commissioner Hart. And that is the reason why I insisted that we retain the existing text about – that includes office in it on the basis that – probably within – I suspect it may be 20 years before there is demand, you know, for office at this particular location. And this gives the Condominium Association the opportunity to include office at the earliest opportunity that it is financially advantageous or warranted.

Commissioner Hart: If that – Mr. Chairman, excuse me.

Chairman Murphy: Go ahead.

Commissioner Hart: If that's the case, I apologize. I'm looking at the wrong handout or I'm looking at the wrong paragraph. Maybe it's too late. We've had too many cases tonight.

Commissioner Flanagan: The existing language is going to remain.

Commissioner Hart: The office language is going to remain?

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes.

Commissioner Hart: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Migliaccio.

Commissioner Migliaccio: I'm going to abstain on this and not because of the office option being added to. I still have a concern on the North Kings Highway side that – if they go for the residential portion of this, they'll want to cram as many homes there as possible in the buildings. And I'm just worried about the view shed from the – North Kings Highway with the single-family homes and garden apartments that we have – what they'll be looking at. So I'll abstain, but it's not because of the office having to be pulled out. Thank you.

Commissioner Flanagan: And I'd like to-

Chairman Murphy: Yes, go ahead.

Commissioner Flanagan: -respond to that as well. The – the Planning Commission previously approved buildings on North King Highway at a height of 55 feet and I presume that included your predecessor, you know, from Lee District. And so – there will be nothing on North Kings Highway that will be different than what was previously approved in the original text. So in other words, those buildings won't be 55. The building behind it will be a little bit higher and it's – and the Plan previously approved 200 feet, you know – on the third level – on the third building behind that. So everything that they're proposing to do is consistent with what was previously approved in the original criteria. The only thing that's different is the – is the office aspect.

Commissioner Migliaccio: And-

Chairman Murphy: Okay. I'm sorry, go ahead.

Commissioner Migliaccio: Well, I was just going say then we have a handout that shows differing heights that obviously wasn't approved before. That wasn't part of this because of the tiering of it.

Commissioner Flanagan: Not that's – on both sides that they're shown on that drawing were previously approved, as shown.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Gardner, you – does staff have a comment on this? I see some shifting.

Marianne Gardner, Planning Division, Department of Planning and Zoning: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission. I was just curious about the interchange between Commissioner Hart and Commissioner Flanagan about what the Planning Commission is considering. And-

Chairman Murphy: Yes.

Ms. Gardner: -it was – it's my understanding that the option that recommends 3.0 FAR to include office will stay in, but there's a second option that would allow Huntington Club to proceed with

a proposal that would eliminate office. So there – there would be two options in the Comprehensive Plan. So there would not be the single recommendation for mixed use.

Commissioner Hart: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes.

Commissioner Hart: Can I ask – is this two-sided handout part – is this part of your motion, Mr. Flanagan?

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes.

Commissioner Hart: Which side? The long side or the short side?

Commissioner Flanagan: Both sides. Well, I mean the – the back side is the – is the actual motion.

Chairman Murphy: Well the back side is the actual part of the Plan and the first side is the rationale. Is that it-

Commissioner Flanagan: Right.

Commissioner Hart: If this is the motion, isn't Ms. Gardner right that the office is being deleted from – off from the second option?

Commissioner Flanagan: It was never in the second option. It's – it's – it's always been in the first option. It was never in the second option. The second option is to – is to – in recognition of the fact that times have changed, there is office potential for probably 20 years. And the thing is – are we going to let this property continue to go downhill? Or are we going to allow it to be redeveloped into something that can always be augmented with office – say as demand triggers it to occur?

Commissioner Sargeant: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes, Mr. Sargeant.

Commissioner Sargeant: To the point of clarification, I – what you have here – and let's first start with the document itself. Page 3 of 23, under Adopted Comprehensive Plan Text, you see halfway down – Land Unit 1. In that second paragraph, you have – as an option, redevelopment of Land Unit 1 – with transit oriented – that's where you see the 3.0 FAR, the reference to office conversion – things like that. What you're seeing now – so that stays, correct?

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes.

Commissioner Sargeant: What you're seeing is an addition to that – two additions – one, the reference and the paragraph to – in Mr. – in Commissioner Flanagan's handout to Affordable Housing Units. And then another addition is the language – as a second option, redevelopment of

Land Unit 1 with residential use and so on. The point being here is that you retain the original option, you're adding a second option with some language referencing – one, flexibility – as well as the use of hotel use.

Commissioner Flanagan: Right.

Commissioner Sargeant: Now hotel use is not – go back here – hotel use is not referenced in the first option. Hotel use is now referenced in the second option.

Chairman Murphy: No?

Commissioner Sargeant: No, excuse me. It is referenced in the first option.

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes, it is.

Commissioner Sargeant: So why do we have a second reference to a hotel use? What you're saying here is that-

Commissioner Flanagan: If you choose the second option, they have the possibility of having a hotel along with the residential.

Commissioner Sargeant: What you have is a different FAR too. The first option is 3.0 FAR. The second option is 2.25 FAR. But the first option is 3.0 FAR with the reference to accommodate how many units? It doesn't say. The second option reference is 2.25 FAR with a reference to 1,900 dwelling units and still retains the 120,000 square feet of hotel use.

Commissioner Flanagan: Right.

Commissioner Sargeant: The point – I think the point being, here, is the word “option” appears in both – in both of these paragraphs. These remain options. These do remain final finalities in terms of how you develop this property. I think it's also important to say that we have more than a downturn in office use. We have the equivalent office vacancy space that they have to all of the office space in Loudoun County. This is a significant downturn in office vacancy. Providing the flexibility that's need to make this – one, to keep this plan together for the residents – getting that many residents together to – on a concurrent vote is amazing, in and of itself. To allow planning to go forward – to allow a vision to go forward is pretty – is pretty impressive. They've been working on this for a long, long time. So I think what you're seeing is a way of a compromise language that has been worked out with staff – not with staff – not with staff, okay. Strike that. But as a compromise here, you are looking at two options now defining two ways to go forward, which allows the residents to move forward – still allows the public input to consider what are now listed as options. That's what they are. They are not set in stone. Correct?

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes. And Mr. Sargeant, I'd like to respond what he just said. At the present time, we have 364 dwelling units. We will – with this option – the second option – that can go to 1,900. And the 1,900 will provide 1,536 new users of the Yellow Line because they will have a path that goes directly from this new development. There will be a path that goes directly from this new development to the station itself. And that will – that is what we're trying

to do is to – if we're going to have high density, we want to have it near our metro station. And this is what this accomplishes.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Migliaccio?

Commissioner Migliaccio: This is not-

Chairman Murphy: On that point?

Commissioner Migliaccio: On this – I know we're on verbatim.

Chairman Murphy: Yes, we're on verbatim. And you want to-

Commissioner Migliaccio: But much of what we've just talked about sounds like the public hearing portion, but – as an option for the redevelopment of Land Unit I, there's many things in the first option that Mr. Sargeant just read that are not in your option for the redevelopment of Land Unit I. And most troubling to me regarding this is the – to reduce the visual impact of new development upon the surrounding community, the tapering in Figure 25 is nowhere to be found in your option. So that is one of my major concerns. If you're trying to put that in, that's great. But it's not in your option.

Commissioner Flanagan: If you'll re-read the second option – on there, it says it is desired that the redevelopment also satisfies all Plan guidance of the first option.

Commissioner Migliaccio: Okay.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Hart?

Commissioner Hart: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I MAKE THE SUBSTITUTE MOTION THAT we defer the consideration of this item for one week. No, I guess it has to be Wednesday night – WE DEFER THE DECISION ON THIS TO NEXT WEDNESDAY NIGHT – THE 7TH, if that's an available date for staff. And let me just say – we got this handout tonight. It's after 11:30. I'm not sure what we're voting on and I don't think staff is on board with this – this new option. And it – we could spend some more time with it. But it's too late to be doing something this complicated and I think it would benefit for – from a one-week –

Commissioner Hurley: Second the motion.

Commissioner Hart: -or a six-day thing.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Ms. Hurley.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Ms. Hurley. Is there a discussion of the motion? All those in favor of the motion to defer the-

Commissioner Migliaccio: Do we have a motion to dispense-

Commissioner Sargeant: -with the first motion?

Chairman Murphy: No, we're on the substitute motion. All right, all those in favor of the motion to defer decision on PA 2014-IV-MV2 [sic] to a date certain of-

Commissioner Hart: The – Wednesday night, whatever that is.

Kimberly Bassarab, Deputy Director, Planning Commission: October 7th.

Chairman Murphy: October 7th with the record remaining open for comment, as a substitute motion to take place of the primary motion, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Murphy: Opposed? Motion carries. Thank you very much.

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(The first motion was not voted on.)

(The supplement motion carried by a vote of 10-0. Commissioners Hedetniemi and Lawrence were absent from the meeting.)

JLC