

SEVEN CORNERS VISIONING LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE

Minutes: October 9, 2012 Meeting

Task Force Acting Chair Evelyn Haught called the second meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. She welcomed all members, then introduced Supervisor Penelope Gross.

Supervisor Gross welcomed Task Force members and the visiting Quality of Life and Connectivity Work Groups, as well as members of the public. She explained that the mission of the two Work Groups will be to provide short-term recommendations that address current issues and may potentially resolve more immediate problems, unlike the Task Force, which is expected to undertake in-depth study of the existing land use and transportation plans and develop recommendations that might guide development for the next 10, 15, or 20 years or perhaps even longer. She also advised the Work Groups that they might discover issues that should be considered for longer-term study; in such cases, they should bring them to the Task Force's attention, which will have ample time to consider them. In response to a question about whether environmental issues will be considered as part of any recommendations, Supervisor Gross said that such issues are covered in the current comprehensive plan and thus are likely to be considered in any new recommendations by the Task Force, particularly if they involve infrastructure issues.

On the subject of communication while the Task Force work is underway, Supervisor Gross stressed that there must be strict compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, which does not allow for telephone participation by members in meetings except in the case of a medical emergency or if a member should have to travel 60 miles or more to attend a meeting. To ensure that all meetings will be open, the Supervisor stated that more than two members cannot meet privately to discuss Task Force business; even casual conversation about Task Force matters is not allowed under the law. Senders of email messages should not "reply to all," even in response to messages they might receive. She also informed members that her staff would be their contacts for identifying and obtaining any needed resources, such as research materials.

In addressing Task Force administrative matters, Supervisor Gross announced that previously named Co-Chairs Patrick Hoar and Evelyn Haught had encountered scheduling difficulties that would prevent them from serving in those leadership positions. She named new Co-Chairs Mary Ellen Ward and John Thillmann, then invited Mr. Thillmann to proceed with leading the remainder of the Task Force meeting while the Work Groups withdrew to undertake their scheduled business.

Following the departure of Supervisor Gross and the Work Groups, Mr. Thillmann introduced the next item of business: how the Task Force wished to address opportunities for public comment. Ms. Haught introduced the following motion: "Once every quarter, the Task Force will designate its first hour of meeting--if public attendance should warrant that amount of time--to public comment during an open session in which individuals will be allotted three minutes to speak, and representatives of community organizations five minutes." This motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Mr. Bernard Suchicital of the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) next presented the Task Force with an introduction of the current County comprehensive plan and the differences between land use and zoning. He noted that a glossary is included in that plan that will be helpful to the Task Force in understanding topics common to land use discussion. Mr. Suchicital also described how the County is divided into different geographic areas for the purposes of comprehensive plan recommendations. Mr. Thillmann assured members that they would be adequately prepared during the first four to five months of work to undertake their mission. Background would be provided by various expert presenters. He thought that in approximately six months members would feel comfortable beginning their own in-depth study and will be ready to begin development of land use

and transportation recommendations.

Mr. Thillmann next asked members to choose a Task Force Secretary. Mr. Matthew Flis, Revitalization Program Manager of the Office of Community Revitalization (OCR), said that following the Task Force's approval of minutes, they would be posted on the county website, usually a month or two following the pertinent meeting. Ms. Haught was nominated and unanimously elected to serve as Secretary. Members then unanimously approved the minutes of the September 11, 2012 meeting.

Mr. Michael Garcia of the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) next briefed members on transportation basics and noted that, while all methods of transportation are likely to be considered by the Task Force, work will focus predominantly on motor vehicles. He mentioned that his department had not yet begun a new transportation study. He asked for input from the Task Force on anything that should be considered in the study, but noted the Task Force's focus will not be on the need for something as specific as, for example, a needed sidewalk connection in a particular location, but rather on recommendations for the long-term, such as in the next 10-20 years. He also explained that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) controls and maintains a majority of the roads in the County, including those in Seven Corners. He pointed out that the Task Force study should include not only automobiles, but also bicycle and sidewalks/trails, as well as buses and other types of transit. A particular focus must be on how to improve connectivity among them. The Seven Corners interchange will certainly be a key part of the study, but the goal should be on envisioning the transportation needs of the next 15-30 years. In response to Mr. Thillmann's comments about the Columbia Pike Streetcar, Mr. Garcia noted that a street car line proposed to run between Pentagon City and Skyline in Bailey's Crossroads may not impact the Task Force's work, although a future line might be considered that would extend south to Alexandria and/or north to Seven Corners, but the County has no plans for an extension of the proposed Columbia Pike Streetcar line at this time. Eventually, the county's transportation map may be updated as a result of this effort. He said the Transportation staff will be available to interact with the Task Force and pointed out a couple of possible approaches the Transportation Department might take regarding the study: it might be able to obtain a concept of upper limit density levels to help guide the Task Force, or await the land use recommendations from the Task Force to consider their feasibility. Mr. Garcia concluded by stating there will always be a significant interplay between land use and transportation.

OCR staff informed the Task Force that they would be sponsoring a conference on retail and revitalization on October 22 that might interest members.

Mr. Thillmann next informed members that the goal would be to help the group "get up to speed" on not only pertinent retail issues, but the complicated topics of mixed use, affordable housing, environmental issues, etc. Once a sense of familiarity is achieved, he said the Task Force might be interested in dividing into sub-groups that focus on particular aspects of the overall mission. Along with Mr. Flis, he announced that the November 13 meeting would focus on existing conditions, including an overview of existing land uses, zoning, the current comprehensive plan, transportation conditions, and several other topics.

The Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Evelyn L. Haught
Task Force Secretary

November 13, 2012
Date