

Montgomery County Planning Board

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED
MINUTES AND SUMMARY

SUMMARY

Thursday, April 13, 2023

2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902
301-495-4605

The Montgomery County Planning Board met in regular session in the Wheaton Headquarters Building in Wheaton, Maryland, and via Microsoft Teams video conference on Thursday, April 13, 2023, beginning at 9:07 a.m. and adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Present were Vice Chair Roberto Piñero, and Commissioners Shawn Bartley, James Hedrick, and Mitra Pedoeem.

Chair Jeff Zyontz was necessarily absent.

Items 1 through 4, Item 12, and Items 6 through 8 were discussed in that order and reported in the attached Minutes.

Item 5 was postponed to April 27, 2023.

The Planning Board recessed for lunch at 1:10 p.m. and reconvened in the auditorium and via video conference at 2:06 p.m. to discuss Items 9 through 11 as reported in the attached Minutes.

Commissioner Bartley left the meeting during Item 11 at 3:27 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned 4:55 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Planning Board will be held on Thursday, April 20, 2023, in the Wheaton Headquarters Building in Wheaton, Maryland, and via video conference.

Rachel Roehrich

Rachel Roehrich
Technical Writer/Legal Assistant

MINUTES

Item 1. Preliminary Matters

A. Adoption of Resolutions

1. 7340 Wisconsin Avenue Sketch Plan Amendment No. 32020001A – MCPB No. 23-012
2. 7340 Wisconsin Avenue Preliminary Plan Amendment No. 11994080C – MCPB No. 23-013
3. 7340 Wisconsin Avenue Site Plan Amendment No. 820230010 – MCPB No. 23-014
4. Addition to Ray’s Adventure Preliminary and Final Forest Conservation Plan No. 120200030 – MCPB No. 23-024
5. Free Rein Solar Farm Forest Conservation Plan No. CU202305 – MCPB No. 23-039

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem
Vote: 4-0
Other: Chair Zyontz absent.
Action: Adopted the Resolutions cited above, as submitted.

B. Approval of Minutes

BOARD ACTION

Motion:
Vote:
Other: Chair Zyontz absent.
Action: There were no Minutes submitted for approval.

C. Other Preliminary Matters

Request for Reconsideration Filed by Roma Malkani: Ourisman Ford at Montgomery Mall, Site Plan Amendment No. 82009014C (Resolution Date: March 3, 2023; Hearing Date: February 23, 2023)

BOARD ACTION

Motion:
Vote:
Other: Chair Zyontz absent.
Action: There being no motion, the Request for Reconsideration was Denied.

Item 2. Record Plats (Public Hearing)

Subdivision Plat No. 220220910 – 220220940, Bloom Montgomery Village

TLD zone; 52 lots & 11 parcels; located on the east side of Montgomery Village Avenue, 560 feet south of Stewartown Road, Montgomery Village Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat No. 220230400, PSTA

CR zone; 1 lot & 2 parcels; located in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Great Seneca Highway (MD 119) and Key West Avenue (MD 28); Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat No. 220230490, Greenacres

R-60 zone; 1 lot; located on the east side of Greenway Drive, 300 feet north of Ventnor Road; Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat No. 220230550, National Chautauqua of Glen Echo

R-60 zone; 1 lot; located on the south side of Wellesley Circle, 300 feet north of Cornell Avenue; Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat No. 220230660, Merrimack Park

R-60 zone; 1 lot; located in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Pyle Road and Kenhowe Drive; Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendations for approval of the Record Plats cited above, as submitted.

Item 3. Regulatory Extension Requests (Public Hearing)

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: There were no Regulatory Extension Requests submitted for approval.

Item 4. Roundtable Discussion

Parks Director's Report
M. Riley

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Received briefing.

Deputy Director for Montgomery Parks Gary Burnett introduced Executive Director of the Montgomery Parks Foundation Katie Rictor, who then offered a multi-media presentation regarding the Montgomery Parks Foundation.

Ms. Rictor started by giving the Montgomery Parks Foundation (MPF) mission statement which reads as follows: The Montgomery Parks Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that champions Montgomery County Parks by cultivating financial support and public engagement of County residents and businesses as members, donors, sponsors and advocates.

Ms. Rictor gave a background of what the MPF is, goals of the MPF, and where the MPF invests funds.

Ms. Rictor then explained the MPF was founded in 1992 and reconstituted in 2010. The MPF is governed by a Board of Trustees made up of ten members which provide fiduciary oversight and act as a liaison with the Montgomery Parks Director's Office.

The MPF's current projects: Brookside Garden, Mary Wells-Harley Camp Scholarship Fund, Black Hills living classroom, Josiah Henson Museum and Park, small annual projects, and the memorial bench Tribute Program. Ms. Rictor also explained how new projects are selected, and stated the ultimate decision comes from the MPF Board of Trustees in collaboration with the Parks Directorate. Ms. Rictor noted MPF has donated approximately \$90,000 to the Parks Department within the last year.

The Board asked questions regarding the ratio between individual and corporate donors, the potential for negative effect on the Foundation if budgetary cuts are not restored, and public outreach to encourage involvement with the Foundation.

Staff provided comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 12. Planning Department's Revised Non-Recommended Reductions to Meet Montgomery County Executive's Recommended FY24 Budget

Staff Recommendation: approval of the Planning Department's Revised Non-Recommended Reductions to Meet Montgomery County Executive's Recommended FY24 Budget

T. Stern/K. Warnick

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Bartley

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Planning Department's Revised Non-Recommended Reductions to Meet Montgomery County Executive's Recommended FY24 Budget; and transmittal to the County Council reflected in a transmittal letter to be drafted at a later date.

Acting Planning Director Tanya Stern discussed the Planning Department's Revised Non-Recommended Reductions to Meet Montgomery County Executive's Recommended FY24 Budget. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated April 11, 2023.

At its March 30, 2023 meeting, the Planning Board approved the Planning Department, the Department of Parks, and the CAS departments lists of non-recommended reductions to meet the Montgomery County Executive's recommended budget.

After further conversations with County Council members, Council staff, and internal staff, the Planning Department has revised its list of non-recommended reductions to include increasing the salary lapse by 1% from 4.5% to 5.5%.

Acting Director Stern then referenced the original tier list rankings as well as the revised tier list rankings to the Board.

The Board asked if the increase in salary lapse was still included in tier three, and Acting Director Stern offered comments and responses.

Item 5. POSTPONED TO APRIL 27, 2023 - Work Session and Action: Little Falls Parkway Pilot Project

Staff Recommendation: APPROVE the permanent configuration of two opposing drive lanes along Little Falls Parkway between Arlington Road and Dorset Avenue, with future study of repurposing removed travel lanes.

A. Tsai

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other:

Action: POSTPONED TO APRIL 27, 2023.

Item 6. Hillcrest Property, Preliminary Plan No. 120230010 (Public Hearing)

Application to consolidate two parcels (P829 and P846) into one (1) lot for the construction of a 11,058 SF medical office building.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

A. Duprey

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Pedoeem/Bartley

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Preliminary Plan cited above, subject to conditions, which will be reflected in an associated draft Resolution to be adopted by the Planning Board at a later date.

Patrick Butler, Chief of Upcounty Planning, gave an overview of the project and explained the role of the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee in relation to the project.

Alexandra Duprey, Planner II, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the Hillcrest Property. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated March 31, 2023.

The 0.59-acre Subject Property is located at 18201 Hillcrest Avenue in Olney. The Subject Property is north of Hillcrest Avenue and east of Georgia Avenue in the Town Center district of the 2005 Olney Master Plan. It encompasses a square lot with existing development, and there is currently a single-family dwelling previously used as a daycare, a trailer previously used as a portable classroom, and associated surface parking on the lot.

Ms. Duprey stated the Application proposes to consolidate two existing parcels into one lot. The new lot will be for the construction of an 11,058 square foot, two-story medical office building, associated surface parking, and improvements along Hillcrest Avenue. Public water and sewer will serve all structures associated with the Application. The Applicant will also make a financial contribution in the amount of \$35,000 towards the ongoing renovation of the nearby Greenwood Local Park in lieu of providing on-site public use space.

Ms. Duprey noted the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee reviewed the Application and has met with the Applicant to discuss the project as well.

James Smith (Olney Town Center Advisory Committee) offered comments and testimony with overall support of the project. Mr. Smith offered further comments regarding the pedestrian connection between the two parking lots, implementation of a proposed future bike lane, and dedication of Parkland.

Francoise M. Carrier of Bregman, Berbert, Schwartz and Gilday offered comments on behalf of the Applicant regarding the project. Ms. Carrier explained the Applicant's goal to replace the existing buildings, no intention to replace the noted fence, and is supportive of Staff's conditions.

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The Board asked questions regarding the dedication and improvements to Parkland on Parcel P846, departmental responsibility for administration of improvements to Greenwood Local Park, and the future bicycle lane.

The Board also offered concerns regarding the ingress and egress as well as parking.

Staff offered comments and responses to the Board's questions and concerns.

Item 7. 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, Sketch Plan Amendment No. 32022001A & Site Plan 820230040 (Public Hearing)

- A. Sketch Plan Amendment No. 32022001A – Request to amend previous Sketch Plan approval to revise previously proposed density figures and to include a transfer of up to 32,718 square feet of density from a neighboring property through the FAR Averaging allowance of the Zoning Ordinance, for a total of up to 446,478 square feet of density. Additional modifications include an update to the previously approved public benefit points and categories.
- B. Site Plan No. 820230040 – Request to develop a mixed-use building, up to 90 feet in height, comprised of up to 308,118 square feet of multi-family residential uses for a maximum of 300 units with 15 percent MPDUs, and up to 136,487 square feet of commercial uses (existing 125,472 square feet of hotel to remain), for a total Site density not to exceed 444,605 square feet. Located at the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and South Park Avenue; zoned CR-3.0 C-2.0 R-2.75 H-90; 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

T. Gatling/K.Mencarini

A. BOARD ACTION

Motion: Bartley/Hedrick

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Sketch Plan Amendment cited above, subject to conditions, which will be reflected in an associated draft Resolution to be adopted by the Planning Board at a later date.

B. BOARD ACTION

Motion: Bartley/Pedoeem

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Site Plan cited above, subject to conditions as modified during the meeting, which will be reflected in an associated draft Resolution to be adopted by the Planning Board at a later date.

Tsaiquan Gatling, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated April 3, 2023.

The Applicant proposes to redevelop the southern portion of an existing lot in Friendship Heights that currently contains a one-story retail building and a Courtyard Marriott hotel. A new 18-story mixed-use development with ground floor retail and up to 300 multifamily dwelling units with 15 percent Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) will replace the one-story retail building at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and South Park Avenue. The hotel will remain.

The site design includes a privately owned and maintained but publicly accessible shared street connection between Wisconsin Avenue to The Hills Plaza that features loading and residential parking access.

The Subject Application includes 4608 North Park Avenue, in Friendship Heights, as a Density-Sending Property. The Applicant proposes to transfer up to 32,718 square feet of density from the Sending Property to the subject Property via the FAR-Averaging provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Gatling also noted a few uncommon elements associated with the Application: the Site is located within the boundaries of the Village of Friendship Heights and the Village of Friendship Heights has a related private agreement with the Applicant; the Applicant proposes to transfer density from an off-site property in Friendship Heights to augment the density mapped to the Subject Site; the MPDU “bonus density” equals 55,562 square feet; this Application is using section 59.4.5.2.D which includes special provisions for “T” zones to allow additional height above the mapped maximum 90-foot height on a portion of the Property; and there is no application for a Preliminary Plan of Subdivision, in which the Adequate Public Facilities finding is included with the Site Plan application.

David Brown (Village of Friendship Heights) offered testimony in support of the project. Mr. Brown further requested the development restrictions worked out with the Applicant be incorporated into the Resolution.

Michele Rosenfeld (Somerset House Condominium Association) offered testimony in support of the project with concerns regarding vehicular impacts to Somerset Terrace, pedestrian connections along Somerset Terrace, and requested improvements along Somerset Terrace.

Russell Lacey (Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce) offered testimony in support of the project.

Daniel Dozier (Individual) offered testimony in support of the project.

Nila Vihar (Individual) offered testimony in support of the project.

Pat Donovan (Individual) offered testimony in support of the project

Stacy Silber of Lerch Early and Brewer offered comments on behalf of the Applicant regarding the project. Ms. Silber gave an overview and background of the project, noting the originally proposed building massing, as well as highlighting the benefits and opportunities the project will bring to Friendship Heights.

James A. Donohoe of Donohoe Development Company presented a multi-media presentation and discussed the community outreach Donohoe Development Company has performed. Mr. Donohoe further discussed the private agreement with Friendship Heights as well as the challenges within the Village of Friendship Heights the project has had to overcome.

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Andy Czajkowski of SK+I Architects (of the Applicant team) offered comments regarding the overall design of the building by showing a series of slides which portrayed the various design on all sides of the building.

Trini Rodriguez of Parker Rodriguez Inc. (of the Applicant team) offered comments regarding the engaging street scape frontages which have been designed to encourage a pedestrian environment as well as a shared street scape.

Lastly, Ms. Silber offered further comments regarding the request for improvements to Somerset Terrace and the Village of Friendship Heights request to include the private agreement development restrictions within the resolution to be drafted at a future date.

The Board asked questions regarding existing conditions along Somerset Terrace, clarity of Somerset Terrace ownership, potential usage of Somerset Terrace by the developer during construction, and potential recognition of the private agreement within the resolution.

Staff including Acting Director Tanya Stern and Multimodal Transportation Planner III Katherine Mencarini offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board held further discussion regarding the private agreement between the Developer and Village of Friendship Heights and came to the conclusion for recognition of the private agreement to be included within the resolution without incorporation of the agreement itself.

Item 8. 10601 Falls Road, Special Exception Major Modification No. S-687-H (Public Hearing)

- A. Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment No. 12008003D: Amend previously approved Forest Conservation Plan to reflect new school building and associated site changes.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

- B. Special Exception Major Modification No. S-687-H: Request to transmit comments to the Hearing Examiner on a major modification to an existing special exception to expand a Private Educational Institution pursuant to the 2004 Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance Sections 59-G-1.3(c)(2)-(4) (Specific Conditions), 59-A-4.2 (General Conditions) and 59-A-4.4 (General Conditions) at 10601 Falls Road, Potomac; RE-2 Zone; 2002 Potomac Subregion Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Recommendation of Approval of Conditions

M. Beall

A. BOARD ACTION

Motion: Pedoeem/Hedrick

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan cited above, subject to conditions, which will be reflected in an associated draft Resolution to be adopted by the Planning Board at a later date.

B. BOARD ACTION

Motion: Bartley/Hedrick

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Special Exception Major Modification with conditions as modified during the meeting, and transmittal of comments to the Hearing Examiner, as stated in a transmittal letter to be prepared at a later date.

Mark Beall, Planner IV, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the Application. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated April 3, 2023.

The Bullis School campus is made up of seven existing buildings along with multiple athletic fields for various sports. The school currently has 900 students and 223 staff members. The existing parking facility onsite contains 486 parking spaces for cars and 18 parking spaces for buses. There are a series of existing sidewalks and paths throughout the campus for students and staff to traverse the campus from class to class or to the various athletic fields. The 2004 Campus Master Plan presented to the Board of Appeals at that time showed various future improvements throughout the campus including a new Lower School, expanded parking facilities, additional paths and sidewalks, and additional landscaping.

The Applicant proposes construction of a new lower school building of approximately 40,000 square feet to be located in the southwest corner of the Property. The proposed building may

be 2-stories or 3-stories but will not exceed the 50-foot maximum height allowed by the RE-2 zone and will not be more than 40,000 square feet. The Bullis School is asking for an increase in student enrollment from 900 to 1,096 and staff increase from 223 to 272 staff members. The Applicant is proposing to change the existing grass playfield in the southwest corner of the Property into a new artificial turf field, and the proposed building will require the parking lot drive aisle and fire department access to be relocated around the new turf field. Some parking spaces will be removed where the new Lower School will be built but will replace some of those spaces along the new parking facility drive aisle for a new campus total of 480 parking spaces.

The school is also proposing an inflatable bubble over one of the existing tennis courts. The existing tennis court is towards the back of the property and will not be seen from off campus. This Application will also increase the network of sidewalks and paths throughout the campus to provide better navigation for students and staff members. The Applicant will be providing frontage improvements by installing side paths along both the Falls Road and Democracy Boulevard frontages. The Applicant is working with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) on these projects.

Mr. Beall did note that staff has received correspondence from two neighbors with concerns about the proposed Special Exception Modification. One of the emails included a letter signed by seven of the neighbors abutting The Bullis School on Democracy Boulevard. The neighbors have concerns over health issues, noise and pollution concerns and roads with parking that is a nuisance as well as a potential decrease in property values.

Joshua Penn, Planner III, discussed the Final Forest Conservation Plan as well as one tree variance request for the project.

Allen Friend (Individual) offered testimony in opposition to the project and further offered concerns regarding noise levels and pollution due to the installation of a new road.

Amir Amirjzil (Adjacent Property Owner) offered testimony in opposition of the project and further offered concerns regarding noise levels and pollution due to additional students and staff.

Soo Lee-Cho of Bregman, Berbert, Schwartz and Gilday offered comments on behalf of the Applicant regarding background of the Bullis School and need for growth to accommodate student enrollment. Ms. Lee-Cho offered further comments regarding Condition No. 2 for the timing and construction of the Falls Road sidepath prior to release of the Use and Occupancy Permit.

The Board asked questions regarding timing of the Falls Road sidepath in conjunction with construction of the Lower School, benefits of the proposed loop road to the Lower School, and potential traffic calming measures and additional buffering for the loop road.

Staff offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

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Patrick LaVay of MHG (of the Applicant Team) offered comments regarding traffic calming measures along the loop road, additional buffering, and the topography of the area as well as potential safety issues regarding the Falls Road sidepath.

The Board held further discussion regarding the timing and construction of the Falls Road sidepath, and staff including Acting Director Tanya Stern and Planner III Chris Van Alstyne offered further comments and responses, including a preference to have the sidepath construction triggered by Use and Occupancy permits.

Patrick Butler, Chief of Upcounty Planning, suggested a modification to the order of the language for Condition No. 2, and Staff and the Applicant were in agreement.

Item 9. The Quarry, Site Plan Amendment No. 82005029C (Public Hearing)

Amendment to convert a water feature to a 1,465 square foot park with dog-play features, revise playground areas, install additional sidewalks, and plant more landscaping; located at 8101 River Road; 13.3 acres; CRT-0.5 zone; 2002 Potomac Subregion Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

J. Server

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 4-0

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Site Plan Amendment cited above, subject to conditions, which will be reflected in an associated draft Resolution to be adopted by the Planning Board at a later date.

Jeffrey Server, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding a Site Plan Amendment for The Quarry. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated March 30, 2023.

The Subject Property is the site of the former Stoneyhurst Quarry. On January 26, 2023, the Applicant filed Site Plan Amendment No. 82005029C primarily to address concerns from the Quarry Homeowner's Association regarding the Site Plan's approved central water feature. The Applicant is proposing to replace the water feature with a green space with dog-play features.

In addition to the green space, the Applicant is proposing the following revisions: minor revisions to two playground areas in response to resident feedback; installation of additional sidewalks leading to an outdoor fire pit area; and extra landscaping across the western area of the Property.

Patricia Harris of Lerch, Early and Brewer offered comments on behalf of the Applicant and stated the Applicant agrees with Staff's conditions.

The Board asked questions regarding total number of units and further explanation of what a dog play feature consists of.

Ms. Harris offered comments and example of dog play features.

Adam Rufe of MHG (of the Applicant team) offered comments regarding the total number of units.

Item 10. Veirs Mill Road BRT and BiPPA Plans – Mandatory Referral

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has prepared 35 percent design plans for the Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and also for three separate Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BiPPA) projects. These four projects are being presented to the Planning Board for Mandatory Referral review.

Staff Recommendation: Planning Board comments and transmittal of comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

S. Aldrich

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 3-0

Other: Chair Zyontz and Commissioner Bartley absent.

Action: Approved staff recommendation for approval to transmit comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, as stated in a transmittal letter to be prepared at a later date.

Stephen Aldrich, PE, Planner IV, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the Veirs Mill Road BRT and BiPPA Plans. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated April 6, 2023.

Mr. Aldrich provided an introduction, process for Mandatory Referral, and details of the project. This Mandatory Referral Transportation review is for two projects by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) including: the Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project from the Montgomery College Rockville Campus to Wheaton Metrorail Station, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BiPPA) project along Veirs Mill Road and Randolph Road.

Mr. Aldrich described each of the projects and components in greater detail as outlined below:

Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit Project

The project proposes a new, 7.6-mile BRT service along MD 355 (Rockville Pike) and MD 586 (Veirs Mill Road) from the Montgomery College - Rockville Campus to the Wheaton Metrorail Station via the Rockville Metrorail Station. The transit service would provide a higher-speed, higher-frequency, premium transit bus service along the corridor to address the following needs: system connectivity, travel times and reliability, transit demand/attractiveness, and livability.

As currently proposed, the BRT project includes five main components:

- New, high-frequency BRT service in premium transit vehicles similar to US 29 Flash service;
- BRT operates every 6-10 minutes during commuter peak hours, every 10-20 minutes off-peak, no BRT service between midnight and 6AM;
- 12 BRT stations (4 in Rockville, 8 in Aspen Hill/Wheaton);
- 10 queue jump lane locations (4 in Rockville, 6 in Aspen Hill); and
- Transit signal priority at 19 signalized intersections.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Project

While most pedestrian and bicycle improvements are included in the BiPPA component of the project, the Veirs Mill Road BRT project also includes pedestrian and bicycle improvements outside of the Council-designated BiPPA area.

The combined project proposes extensive bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including:

- Construction of pedestrian hybrid beacons (HAWK signals) on Veirs Mill Road at Havard Street, Bushey Avenue, and Galt Avenue;
- Construction of a full traffic signal on Veirs Mill Road and Pendleton Street;
- Construction of 11,150 feet of sidepath (paths for walking and bicycling) improvements on the north side of Veirs Mill Road;
- Construction of 7,865 feet of sidewalk on the south side of Veirs Mill Road;
- Reconstruction of 2,500 feet of sidewalk on Randolph Road between Veirs Mill Road and Bushey Avenue;

Mr. Aldrich then gave an overview of Transportation Best Practices, Master Plan Conformity, Historic Resource Evaluation, and Environmental Review.

Matt Harper, Natural Resources Manager, explained the impacts to Montgomery Parks, which includes elimination of a portion of the Twinbrook Connector Trail. Mr. Harper also stated MCDOT will submit for funding of the trail to include \$200,000 for design in FY24-25 and \$1.3 million for construction in FY25-26 to allow Montgomery Parks to implement the design and construction of the relocated Twinbrook Connector Trail prior to the removal of the existing trail segment within the right-of-way. This will ultimately improve pedestrian connectivity and safety at the proposed eastbound Aspen Hill Road BRT Station by extending sidewalk around the back of the BRT station, and connecting into the existing park entryway plaza, Rock Creek Trail, and future Twinbrook Connector Trail confluence.

At this time Mr. Aldrich discussed the 22 plan recommendations with the Board in detail.

The Board asked questions regarding incorporation of service roads with BRT, implementation timing of BRT elements, including dedicated lanes and queue jump locations, exclusivity of BRT when not using mixed-traffic, involvement across agencies with comments and recommendations, BRT accessibility within Wheaton, environmental challenges with relocation of the Twinbrook Connector Trail, and agency responsible for incorporation of changes to speed limit.

Staff offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Michael Mitchell of MCDOT offered comments regarding collaboration with other agencies, service roads, and MCDOT objectives.

Item 11. Pedestrian Master Plan Work Session #1

Staff Recommendation: Discuss master plan elements and provide direction
E. Glazier

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Chair Zyontz absent.

Action: Held discussion and provided direction.

Jason Sartori, Division Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, gave a brief overview of different types of Master Plans that come before the Board. Mr. Sartori also highlighted a few of the comments received regarding the Pedestrian Master Plan. Lastly, Mr. Sartori provided a brief outline of the next steps and timeline of the Plan.

Eli Glazier, Project Lead, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, offered a multi-media presentation regarding Work Session #1 for the Pedestrian Master Plan. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated April 6, 2023.

The Pedestrian Master Plan is Montgomery Planning's first comprehensive vision to create safer, more comfortable experiences walking or rolling around the County, and to make getting around more convenient and accessible for every pedestrian.

Since work began on the Pedestrian Master Plan in Fall 2019, Montgomery Planning has held numerous in-person and virtual community engagement events and activities, designed and distributed a survey to 60,000 households, and collected and analyzed commute and crash data to have a deeper understanding of the issues important to pedestrians of all backgrounds, ages, and types of mobility.

The plan vision is supported by four goals:

- Increase walking rates and pedestrian satisfaction
- Create a comfortable, connected, convenient pedestrian network
- Enhance pedestrian safety
- Build an equitable and just pedestrian network

Mr. Glazier then discussed the 291 comments received from 96 individuals, organizations, municipalities, and government agencies. Of the 96 commenters, 32 expressed overall support for the plan, 2 expressed opposition to the Plan, and 62 commented on specific elements of the plan but did not indicate overall support or opposition.

The following topics were discussed during the first work session and listed below (Staff Responses and Recommended Actions were discussed in greater detail during the Planning Board meeting):

Topic 1: Engagement

- **Comment 1.1** - People within communities of color should have the same pedestrian safety measures as our affluent neighbors.

Planning Staff Response: Agree. Communities across Montgomery County should expect a high quality, safe and direct pedestrian experience.

The Board asked if the comment was asked during the public hearing, and Staff confirmed it was made during the oral part of the public hearing.

David Anspacher, Planning Supervisor, Countywide Planning and Policy, referenced Attachment E included with the Staff Report.

- **Comment 1.2** - Representation is extremely important. In a County that is majority people of color, we need to see these people sitting at the table. You don't see it tonight or at these other meetings. Planning and the County must do better.

Planning Staff Response: There is always room for improvement in master plan engagement, especially for a countywide plan.

- **Comment 1.3** - Concern that the Pedestrian Master Plan had insufficient engagement with churches, synagogues, and private schools.

Planning Staff Response: Disagree.

- **Comment 1.4** – The plan should not penalize drivers as most Montgomery County residents require cars to travel in the County

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

- **Comment 1.5** - Every recommendation won't be suitable for every situation.

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

- **Comment 1.6** - This is not a data-driven plan. A big blind spot is data about the projected uses of some things like bike lanes during inclement weather.

Planning Staff Response: Disagree.

- **Comment 1.7** - Disability groups should evaluate the recommendations in the Pedestrian Master Plan.

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

-**Comment 1.8** - Plan maps should include symbols for Metro, Purple Line, Libraries

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

Recommended Action: Planning staff recommends making these changes on the maps in the Complete Streets Design Guide Area Types and Pedestrian Shortcut sections of the plan.

Topic 2: Racial Equity and Social Justice

- **Comment 2.1** – The use of "equity community" doesn't make sense. Is "equity community" being used for shorthand for communities with higher rates of non-white residents, lower-income households as the equity emphasis area methodology does? If there is a lack of equity, that should be called out.

Planning Staff Response: Yes, it is being used as a shorthand.

Recommended Action: In the fifth paragraph on page 7, Planning Staff recommends changing “for equity communities” to “across race, ethnicity, income, and disability”

The Board asked questions regarding use of the term color.

Staff including Acting Director Tanya Stern offered comments and responses regarding amended terminology.

Topic 3: Vision and Goals

- **Comment 3.1** - Pedestrian Safety should be the top goal, not increased walking. Increased walking follows from walking being safer.

Planning Staff Response: Disagree. The goals are not intended to be prioritized, but rather to reflect that higher walking rates are the result of achieving the other three goals.

Recommended Action: Planning Staff recommends revising page 10 to add clarity.

The Board asked if safety defined as the number one goal is identified elsewhere in the Plan, and Staff offered responses.

- **Comment 3.2** - Include a target year for each of the objectives.

Planning Staff Response: Disagree.

- **Comment 3.3** - To better reflect the different area types in the county, analyses should use the area type recommendations in the Complete Streets Design Guide (Downtown, Town Center, Suburban, Industrial, Country), and subdivide Town Center per the “Centers” typology identified in Thrive Montgomery 2050 (Medium Centers, Small Centers, and Neighborhood / Village Centers).

Planning Staff Response: Agree

- **Comment 3.4** - Increase the walking rate targets. How will these targets reduce greenhouse gas emission reductions?

Planning Staff Response: Agree with Modifications.

Recommended Action: Planning Staff recommends adding a key action to the plan's Monitoring section, page 273. The Board agreed by consensus.

- **Comment 3.5** - Additional Objectives and Performance Measures should be added including: access to BRT, Percentage of roads with appropriate posted speed limit, frequency and severity of speeding, frequency of red light running, frequency of driver failure to yield to pedestrians, percentage of roadway lighting up to standards and operational, percentage of crosswalk markings in good condition, percentage of stop bars and roadway lane markings that reflect the safest roadway operation for pedestrians.

Planning Staff Response: Agree with Modifications.

The Board asked questions regarding data collection and access to automated tracking equipment such as red-light cameras.

Acting Director Tanya Stern offered a recommendation to modify language to exclude listing every data metric.

The Board offered further comments regarding generalizing data metrics, and Staff agreed to bring item back during the last Work Session with minor text amendments.

- **Comment 3.6** - Since school buses are public transportation, the walk and public transportation metric is already exceeded. It is unclear how these targets were arrived at and whether the targets are feasible. Getting to 50% of Elementary School students walking across the County would require many schools to reach 100% walk rates to balance out the exurban and rural schools.

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

Recommended Action: Planning Staff recommends removing the "public transportation" component of the school-based objective on page 13.

The Board asked whether there were criteria established regarding distance for students walking to school, and staff offered comments and responses.

- **Comment 3.7** - The Objective 4.1 (Page 18) seems extremely low for a baseline number. I am assuming a very high threshold was set for defining "ADA faults" that may not match the current ADA guidelines and standards on width and sidewalk condition. (Not that it should get improved, but we should not sell the work done in the past short or appear that 93.8% of our sidewalks are unusable for people with disabilities).

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

Recommended Action: Planning Staff recommends continued coordination with MCDOT and the County's Vision Zero Coordinator to develop a suitable replacement data source for this objective in the coming years.

- Comment 3.8 - Should Objective 4.3 (Page 19) include metrics for BRT stations as well as bus stops?

Planning Staff Response: Agree with Modifications.

Recommended Action: As the data to conduct this evaluation already exists, Planning Staff recommends adding on Page 19 (with percentages to be identified prior to transmitting the plan to the County Council).

Topic 4: Existing Conditions

- **Comment 4.1** - Amend the caption of Figure 5 and Figure 6 (Page 30, Page 31) to read "Pedestrian Trip Purpose", or perhaps "Walk Trip Purpose" per the section title.

The series "no reported disability" in Figure 6 is white or transparent, so one cannot see the bars. Amend the "Transit" label in Figure 8 (Page 30) to read "Transit Corridor".

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

Recommended Action: Planning Staff recommends changing the title of Figures 5 and 6, displaying the hidden bars in Figure 8 (page 33) representing "No Reported Disability", and changing "Transit" bars in Figure 8 (page 33) to: "TransitCorridor".

- **Comment 4.2** - We disagree with the assertion on page[s 37-38] that, "Missing sidewalks on local streets are not classified as sidewalk gaps because traffic volumes and speed limits often allow for a comfortable experience for those pedestrians travelling in roadways." As mobility impaired individuals, low vision/blind pedestrians and or those with low hearing (amongst other disabilities), we know that walking in roadways is never safe or comfortable and must not be the only option for pedestrians of all ages.

Planning Staff Response: Neutral.

The Board suggested removing the statement regarding missing sidewalks.

- **Comment 4.3** - This section should include: 1. Crashes occurring within federal, state, and local parks 2. Data on speeding citations, illegal right turns, red light running, violations of pedestrian rights-of-way 3. A survey of lighting conditions 4. A table showing where current posted speeds exceed statutory and/or target speeds, and a rationale from SHA or MCDOT justifying the higher speed.

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

Recommended Action: Adding key action on Page 80 regarding survey of lighting conditions Countywide.

The Board asked if the responsibility of conducting lighting surveys would be led by MCDOT, and Staff offered comments and responses.

- **Comment 4.4** - Implicit references to climate change and the Plan's relationship to climate change mitigation and adaptation should be made explicit.

Planning Staff Response: Agree.

Recommended Action: Planning Staff recommends changes Page 48 (first paragraph) and Page 59 (last bullet) of the Existing Conditions section to incorporate additional references to climate change and the relationship between the plan and the climate.

Mr. Glazier then gave an overview of the future Work Session topics that will be presented to the Board.