

Montgomery County Planning Board

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED
MINUTES AND SUMMARY

SUMMARY
Thursday, February 22, 2024
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, February 22, 2024, beginning at 9:06 a.m. and adjourning at 3:49 p.m.

Present were Chair Artie Harris, Vice Chair Mitra Pedoeem, and Commissioners James Hedrick and Josh Linden.

Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent for the meeting.

Items 1 through 7, Item 10, and Item 9 were discussed in that order and reported in the attached Minutes.

The Planning Board recessed for lunch at 12:38 p.m. and reconvened in the auditorium and via video conference to return to open session at 2:30 p.m. to discuss Item 8 as reported in the attached Minutes.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Planning Board will be held on Thursday, February 29, 2024, 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. Corso Chevy Chase Preliminary Plan No. 120240020, MCPB No. 24-013
2. Corso Chevy Chase Site Plan No. 820240030, MCPB No. 24-014
3. Corso Chevy Chase Forest Conservation Plan No. F20240110, MCPB No. 24-015

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem
Vote: 4-0
Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.
Action: Adopted the Resolutions cited above, as submitted.

B. Approval of Minutes

BOARD ACTION

Motion:
Vote:
Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.
Action: There were no Minutes submitted for approval.

C. Other Preliminary Matters

BOARD ACTION

Motion:
Vote:
Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.
Action: There were no Other Preliminary Items submitted for approval.

Item 2. Record Plats (Public Hearing)

Subdivision Plat Nos. 220221080 thru 220221120, Bloom Montgomery Village

TLD zone; 57 lots & 16 parcels; located at the western terminus of Stewartown Road, Montgomery Village Master Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat No. 220230060, Joseph's Park

CRT zone; 1 lot; located in the southeastern quadrant of the intersection of Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Plyers Mill Road (MD 192), Kensington Sector Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat Nos. 220240100 thru 220240130, Westwood Square

CRT zone, 71 lots, 9 parcels; located on the west side of Westbard Avenue, 2,200 feet north of Massachusetts Avenue (MD 396); Westbard Sector Plan.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Subdivision Plat No. 220240430, Creekside at Cabin Branch

RNC zone, 27 lots, 1 parcel; located on the north side of Dowitcher Way, approximately 1,700 feet west of Clarksburg Road (MD 121); Clarksburg Ten Mile Creek Amendment Area.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval of the Record Plats cited above, as submitted.

Item 3. Regulatory Extension Requests (Public Hearing)

504 East Randolph Road Site Plan Amendment No. 82002017A Extension Request No. 2 - Request to extend the regulatory review period for the Site Plan Amendment for 3 months, from February 17, 2024 to May 17, 2024.

The Application proposes to add additional drive-thru lanes and improve the surface parking lot for the existing McDonalds; on approximately 1.20 acres (51,950 sq. ft.) of land zoned NR-0.75 H-45; located on E. Randolph Road, 75 feet east from the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue; within the 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan.

Staff recommendation: Approval of the extension request

T. Leftwich

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval of the Regulatory Extension Request cited above.

Item 4. Roundtable Discussion

Planning Director's Report
J. Sartori

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Received briefing.

Planning Director, Jason Sartori, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the latest updates for the Planning Department.

Mr. Sartori gave an overview of the Attainable Strategies Initiative that is aimed to provide opportunities to the residents of Montgomery County to make housing more equitable and inclusive. Mr. Sartori stated the initiative will be discussed in greater detail during the afternoon session of the meeting but noted making homeownership in Montgomery County more attainable to more households will require the reassessment of the County's former single-family housing structure. Mr. Sartori noted the initiative is a very important first step to impact the quality of life for all within Montgomery County.

The Board asked if any attainable housing initiatives exist elsewhere, if their goals have been achieved, and if such initiatives could make values of homes decrease.

Mr. Sartori offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Mr. Sartori recognized new staff including Planning Associate, Karen Gouws-Dewar, and Human Resources Intern, Khushbu Nishad.

Lastly, Mr. Sartori recognized Tina Schneider and Brian Kent as they were recently celebrated and honored at the Years of Service Awards for 25 years with M-NCPPC. Mr. Sartori noted that all Staff recognized at the Years of Service Awards totaled roughly 1200 years of service, and Mr. Sartori gave an overview of both Ms. Schneider and Mr. Kent's careers for M-NCPPC noting key projects both have worked on. Mr. Sartori thanked both Ms. Schneider and Mr. Kent for their continued contributions to Montgomery Planning's work.

Item 5. Amalyn (WMAL Bethesda), Forest Conservation Plan No. F20230270 (Public Hearing)

Request to amend the Final Forest Conservation Plan associated with Site Plan No. 82017017B; The Applications propose to change the location of the noise wall, requiring additional forest clearing and specimen tree impacts; On approximately 74.83 acres zoned R-90; Within the 1992 North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan area.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

A. Lindsey

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Pedoeem/Hedrick

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily 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.

Amy Lindsey, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the proposed Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment for Amalyn Bethesda. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 9, 2024.

Ms. Lindsey stated the amendment proposes to change the noise wall material type along the southern property line, adjacent to I-495, which will require an increased area of disturbance. As a result, an additional 0.34 acres of forest will need to be cleared and a variance request has been submitted for the removal of four trees and impact to one protected tree. Ms. Lindsey noted there will be no impacts to the Category 1 Forest Conservation Easement, and mitigation trees will also be planted in adjacent forest on-site.

Lastly, Ms. Lindsey noted community correspondence was received after the posting of the Staff Report with concerns regarding loss of specimen trees, location and size of mitigation plantings, noise from I-270, and use of property as an informal playground.

The Board asked questions confirmation of noise wall location and reasoning for preference of approved materials from SHA. Staff offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 6. 12500 Ardennes: Sketch Plan Amendment No. 32018020A, Site Plan No. 820240060, and Forest Conservation Plan No. F20240250 (Public Hearing)

Located at the intersection of Ardennes Avenue and Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville; 1.73-acre tract; CR-2.0, C-1.5, R-2.0, H-145T Zone; 2009 Twinbrook Sector Plan.

A. Sketch Plan Amendment No. 32018020A: Request to modify the type of affordable units, public benefit categories, architecture, site design, layout, and minimum public open space for up to 198,718 square-feet of residential density.

B. Site Plan No. 820240060: Request for approval to construct a 198,718 square-foot multifamily building with up to 213 units including a minimum of 25% MPDUs.

C. Forest Conservation Plan No. F20240250: Request for approval of a final forest conservation plan to remove one specimen tree and satisfy the afforestation requirement for Site Plan 820240060.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

E. Tettelbaum

A. BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Linden

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily 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: Hedrick/Linden

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval of the Site 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.

C. BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Linden

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval of the 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.

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Emily Tettelbaum, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding 12500 Ardennes. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 9, 2024.

Ms. Tettelbaum stated the Applicant acquired the Property in 2023, and requests approval of a Sketch Plan Amendment, Site Plan, and Forest Conservation Plan to allow construction of a residential building with up to 213 multi-family units and associated open space and amenities. Ms. Tettelbaum noted the project is proposed as 100 percent affordable, with all low-income tax credit units. Twenty five percent of the units will be designated as Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs), and the rest will qualify under the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development requirements.

Ms. Tettelbaum discussed the open space requirements as well as the access and circulation for the project noting access will be made via Ardennes Avenue utilizing two driveways located near the northwest corner of the site. The western driveway will provide access to the parking garage, which the Applicant has reduced parking to the minimum required, and the eastern driveway will provide access to the loading area.

Ms. Tettelbaum also discussed the Forest Conservation Plan and stated the Applicant has submitted a variance request to allow for the removal of the National Champion Crabapple Tree, which is at the end of its life. Ms. Tettelbaum noted the Applicant is making arrangements to preserve the germplasm of the tree through propagation of cuttings, as the genetic materials of old trees is considered important to save. Development of this property will also result in an afforestation requirement of 0.23 acres, which will be met off-site in a forest mitigation bank or by payment of fee-in-lieu.

Matthew Gordon of Selzer Gurvitch offered comments on behalf of the Applicant and noted full agreement to all conditions proposed by Staff.

Robert Barnard of Fairstead offered comments regarding the background and goal of Fairstead to provide affordable housing within Montgomery County. Mr. Barnard offered further comments regarding the parking requirement and financing for the project.

Jane Mahaffie of Mahaffie Consulting offered comments regarding the project's modifications including reduction in parking, additional units, and open space requirements. Ms. Mahaffie offered further comments regarding the construction type, vision for the community space, provided amenities, and limited right-of-way for bicycle improvements.

The Board asked questions regarding the open space requirements, undergrounding of utilities, parking, construction type, vision for the community space, amenities provided for affordable buildings, potential recreational facility, and reasoning for fee-in-lieu payment in place of the bicycle improvements.

Staff, including Planner III, Richard Brockmyer, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 7. Briefing: Demographic Profile of the Black Population in Montgomery County

L. Savonis/J. Lee

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Received briefing.

Luke Savonis, Planner II, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the Demographic Profile of the Black population in Montgomery County. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 1, 2024.

Mr. Savonis gave an overview of the most recent data (2022) from the American Community Survey (ACS) for the Black population in Montgomery County.

Mr. Savonis discussed the native- and foreign-born populations, educational attainment, housing, household types, household income, top occupations, and modes of transportation to work as well.

Lastly, Mr. Savonis stated there will also be demographic profiles for the female population and Asian population within the County as well.

The Board asked questions regarding changes in the foreign-born population and accuracy of data.

Staff, including Planning Director, Jason Sartori and Forecaster & Demographic Research Specialist, James Lee, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 10. Review of County Executive’s FY25 Capital Budget and FY25-30 CIP – Schools (MCPS)

Review of the schools elements of the County Executive’s Recommended FY 25 Capital Budget and FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Staff Recommendation: Transmit Comments to County Council

H. Baek

BOARD ACTION

Motion: Hedrick/Linden

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval to transmit comments to the County Council, as stated in a transmittal letter to be prepared at a later date.

Hye-Soo Baek, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the County Executive’s FY25 Capital Budget and FY25-30 CIP – Schools. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 14, 2024.

Ms. Baek gave a brief overview of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) FY25-30 CIP regarding the County Executive’s recommendation versus the Board of Education’s request. Ms. Baek stated the County Executive’s recommended total for the FY25-30 CIP is \$91.8 million short of the Board of Education’s request. Ms. Baek showed a series of graphs displaying the Board of Education’s request compared to the County Executive’s recommendation for FY25-30, and discussed newly added projects, approved projects not in the construction stage, projects in the construction stage, and completed projects. Ms. Baek also showed a map of the individual capital projects overlaid on Planning’s Equity Focus Areas, and areas where there are recent or current master plan efforts noting overall, the capital investment in schools align with the County’s and Planning’s focus on underserved areas and growing communities. Ms. Baek further stated that there are several projects requested in this six-year CIP cycle to address the County’s demand for additional high school capacity and portrayed the high school capacity project schedule and seat deficit projections through a series of maps as well.

Ms. Baek noted the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MCPS has been executed and adopted, stating Planning and Parks Staff will now conduct a high-level review of newly proposed capital projects and provide site design related comments that should be considered early in the CIP process.

Ms. Baek discussed Staff’s comments stating, in general, the comments touch on promoting schools as safe accessible public spaces, emphasizing street presence, improving bike and pedestrian accessibility, deemphasizing vehicular circulation, and attempting to make net zero energy schools. Ms. Baek also discussed additional transportation comments focused on providing bicycle parking across MCPS schools, and identified a list of schools to prioritize first, as well as over the next six years. Ms. Baek further noted a comprehensive list of comments was attached to the Staff Report as Attachment 1.

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The Board asked questions regarding whether the County Executive provides a narrative based explanation with the proposed cuts, how the school impact taxes affect CIP requests, and if recommendation for additional bike parking was due to need or to encourage biking.

Staff, including Planning Director, Jason Sartori and Acting Chief of Countywide Planning and Policy, David Anspacher, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 9. 2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy Update – Growth Status and Trends

Briefing: The County Council is required to adopt the 2024-2028 Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) by November 15, 2024. As part of this update to the GIP, Planning Department staff is analyzing the County’s current growth context, including recent demographic and housing trends, forecasted trends in population, households, and employment, and key drivers of these trends, which will inform recommendations to policy revisions. This briefing will provide an overview of the County’s current growth context for the current GIP update.

Staff recommendation: Brief the Planning Board

J. Lee/L. Govoni/D. Buckley

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Received briefing.

James Lee, Forecaster & Demographic Research Specialist, offered a multi-media presentation regarding 2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy Update. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 15, 2024.

Darcy Buckley, Multimodal Transportation Planner III, offered comments and gave a brief overview of the Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) and the County’s Adequate Public Facilities (APF) requirement. Lisa Govoni, Acting Housing, Infrastructure, and Zoning Supervisor, discussed the project schedule and key dates. Ms. Buckley stated the 2024 report will provide analysis of relevant growth measures and forecast probable growth trends, examine changes from the 2020 analysis, and inform recommendations for GIP revisions.

Mr. Lee discussed the analysis of Montgomery County’s growth trends including population growth rates, the increasing racial and ethnic diversity, household types, average family size, median household income, average homes for-sale, rental units, employment trends, and forecasted growth in MWCOG Activity Centers.

The main findings and summary of growth trends include:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on recent population and employment growth trends may be a temporary disruption of longer historical trends;
2. Montgomery County’s population has become more racially diverse and aging;
3. Large multifamily buildings are increasing their share of the housing stock,
4. Population and employment are projected to grow but at a slower pace than previous forecasts; and
5. Projected growth is expected to further concentrate jobs and population in areas served by major transportation corridors.

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The Board asked questions regarding population demographics, real estate trends, and employment.

Staff, including Planning Director, Jason Sartori, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 8. Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative

Briefing: The County Council requested the Planning Board consider and recommend “zoning reforms that would allow greater opportunities for Missing Middle housing and Attainable Housing Strategies is the resulting effort.

Staff recommendation: Brief the Planning Board on the recommendations and seek guidance on next steps.

L. Govoni/B. Berbert

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Other: Commissioner Bartley was necessarily absent.

Action: Received briefing followed by comments.

Lisa Govoni, Acting Planning Supervisor, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 15, 2024.

Ms. Govoni stated in March 2021, the County Council requested the Planning Board to consider zoning reforms to allow opportunities for more diverse housing types within Montgomery County, provide opportunities for public input, and send recommended zoning modifications back to the Council for review. Subsequently, through the Attainable Housing Strategies initiative (AHS), the Montgomery County Planning Department studied, reviewed, and refined various housing policy options to identify viable options for existing and future residents of the County to find homes at the right sizes, locations, and price points for their needs. Ms. Govoni noted the draft report was nearly completed, but the initiative was put on pause in 2022 to focus on the completion of Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Ms. Govoni gave an overview of why an attainable housing initiative is needed now stating the root of the initiative is an effort to make communities more equitable and more inclusive by countering the historical discriminatory aspects of zoning within the County. Ms. Govoni noted attainable housing is not income-restricted affordable housing, but it is market-rate housing that generally will be more affordable than the typical new detached single-family home due to its smaller size. Ms. Govoni further noted that while the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative doesn’t address affordable housing, it will still identify opportunities to create more housing products that make homeownership attainable to more households. Ms. Govoni also discussed overarching attainable housing strategy goals, how terms have evolved since 2021, and how the County’s neighborhoods have become less attainable and more exclusive over time.

Atul Sharma, Acting Assistant to the Deputy for Development and Design Review, discussed the Pattern Book for the initiative and stated it will provide recommendations that clearly articulate building placement, massing, frontage design, on-site parking, and neighborly house details. Mr. Sharma also discussed the Pattern Book goals and desired outcomes as well.

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Ben Berbert, Planner III, discussed the primary zones focused on for the initiative including the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones. Mr. Berbert described the Priority Housing District, which is defined as a straight-line buffer of 1-mile from Red line, Purple Line, and MARC rail stations, plus 500 feet from a BRT Corridor, River Road (inside the Beltway) and Connecticut Avenue. Mr. Berbert discussed the attainable housing optional method and gave an overview of the recommendations for the three scales of attainable unit types for small-scale, medium-scale, and large-scale geographic targets noting as the scale increases, the geographic focus becomes more refined. Mr. Berbert also provided examples of attainable housing, where attainable housing would be allowed, how attainable housing would be approved, development standards, and where attainable housing would be implemented for each of the three scales as well.

Mr. Berbert and Ms. Govoni gave an overview of additional recommendations from Staff including allowing duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes in existing optional method of development standards for cluster and MPDU's, modifying parking to reduce parking requirements, and catalyst policies for property owners and community-level. Ms. Govoni also briefly discussed what other jurisdictions are doing to expand housing options in comparison to what Montgomery County is proposing.

Lastly, Ms. Govoni discussed the next steps for the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative noting an upcoming public listening session with the community on March 21, 2024, followed by work sessions to discuss the previous Planning Board's recommendations and potential changes, and finalization of a report to be sent to the County Council on the initiative and revised recommendations made by the current Planning Board by early summer 2024.

The Board asked questions regarding current recommendations for setbacks/building restrictions lines, square footage lot sizes for the different zones, APF and LATR requirements for the three scales, open space requirements, consolidation of lots, bonus density, property tax refunds, parking, vision for shared spaces, and potential for speed to market incentives.

Staff, including Planning Director, Jason Sartori, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board also offered comments and suggestions regarding providing examples of potential number of units included in consolidated lot size requirements, a 1500 square foot unit depiction, how shared spaces would be envisioned, parking, and potential incentives.