

Occoquan District Land Use Advisory Committee
Prince William County, Virginia
Meeting Minutes
Date: July 19, 2006

Date: July 19, 2006	Time: 7:00 pm to 10:30 pm
Location: McCoart Building, Board Room	
Chairperson: Gail Burda	
Present: Jim Brighton; Gail Burda; Diane Crawford; John Gray; Johnnie Hackett; Kim Hosen; Eileen Sheridan	New Members/Guests:
	Presenters:
Agenda: 1. Planning Commissions' Meeting – Caton's Ridge Presentation (Rescheduled from July 17) 2. Next Agenda 3. Meeting Date/Location	

Discussion:

Item 1.

Planning Commissions' Meeting – Caton's Ridge Presentation

(In lieu of the routinely planned Committee meeting scheduled for Monday July 17, the meeting date was moved to Wednesday July 19 in order that the Committee could speak before the PWC Planning Commissioners regarding Caton's Ridge proposal. See attachment below for Committee Response to Supervisor Stewart and Commissioner Hosen.)

Fran Burnszynski presented the Caton's Ridge development proposal before the PW Planning Commissioners; present were Commissioners Burgess, May, Gonzales; Hendley, Hosen, and Bryant. Mike Lubeley represented the developer.

The PW planning staff has recommended approval of the project.

Present for the Committee speaking against the project were Gail Burda, Eileen Sheridan and Jim Brighton.

Two additional residents spoke in conditional favor, subject to technical concerns. Approximately 20 people spoke in favor of the project.

Observations:

1. The proponents of the development as it was presented were divided into two distinct groups. One group represented the friends of the Catons and remarked regarding the Catons long standing presence and good citizenship in Woodbridge. The other group represented the employees of the Engineering Groupe and offered hearty ovations with public statements affirming the desire to approve this proposal. It was stated that 40 Engineering Groupe employees live in Prince William County.
2. None of the "pro" arguments addressed the technical aspects of the proposal. They were heartfelt comments founded in excitement for being employees of the Engineering Groupe, or based on respect of the Caton family.
3. There was no voiced affirmation or curiosity of the 220 plus 20 residential units but statements relative to the requirement for residential in order to fund the office and remainder of the development. It was also stated several times that the Developer (the Engineering Groupe) should not be expected to take on the financial risk of building any of the office space other than the building that would be their headquarters.

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4. There was strong support of the new Engineering Groupe headquarter building, but little recognition of the remaining 320,000 SF of office and when it might be built.
5. Repeated comments were made by employees of Engineering Groupe regarding the merits of living and working in PW County, though it was unclear which if any were from the Occoquan District.
6. There will be quid pro quo for remote parkland. The developer is recommending contributing dollar proffers to be used to make remote properties available as parklands.
7. Mike Lubeley announced last-minute undocumented changes to the Illustrative Plan and Proffer Statement.
8. There was some discussion to clarify how "substantial changes" could be accommodated after the BOS approved the development proposal, including future changes to the Master Zoning Plan. The Proffer limited review time to 10 days, otherwise such revisions were to be taken as acceptable and the Master Zoning Plan would be changed, as requested by the developer.
9. Repeatedly this proposal was deemed "smart growth" that is being aggressively recommended by the planning staff as the new way to address development needs and provide "live/work" areas.
10. Tackett's Mill was touted as the first "smart growth" development, though there seemed to be contradictory points made regarding if Tackett's Mill was a success or not.
11. The PowerPoint presentations of the plan and renderings are very impressive. The sightline axes generated by the traffic circles, the boulevard-like streets are very alluring. It contains many of the elements and features we (the Committee) have thought to be desirable with commercial settings.
12. At 4 to 5 stories in height, all residential and commercial structures will be taller than any existing structures in the neighborhood.
13. Gail Burda spoke of our general dissatisfaction at a missed opportunity for needed office space since the development not only includes 220 dwellings, but states that the TBD construction phasing of the remainder of the office space comes after the Engineering Groupe office is built. The live/work units would add additional residential densities to the plan and the proffers commit the developer to a MINIMUM of 20 live/work units.
14. Jim Brighton gave specifics pertaining to undesirable construction phasing, highlighting the fact that the proffers did not include a commitment to actually build the significant majority of office/commercial space, density of residential dwellings and violations with respect to the Comprehensive Plan and Regional Employment Center guidelines, and spoke to the 97% occupancy rate in eastern PW for available office space.
15. Eileen Sheridan gave a personal testimony as to how difficult it is to find office space to lease, and posed that proposed office space should be given top priority.
16. One gentleman (self-identified as a hydrologist by profession) spoke against the site development because of concerns for hydrology and transportation.
17. One gentleman associated with military contractors spoke to the need to build office space immediately or risk missing out on reaping benefits from the BRAC changes. He was strongly in favor of the office part of the proposal, but not in favor of the residential part.
18. One gentleman who stated that he was a nearby neighbor said that he was in favor of the entire project. He commented that the Staff Report was not posted on the Website for review, but was able to obtain the Staff Report from Frank Burnszynski and subsequently contacted the Engineering Groupe to discuss the project and stated that they addressed his concerns.
19. One woman spoke in support of the application, stating that she lived in Belmont development and wished she lived in a mixed use community. (Side Note: Belmont development is often praised as the county's finest mixed use community.)
20. Jack Kooyoomjian, LOCCA-PELT spoke in admiration of the project, and voiced appreciation for all the fine community involvement by Skip Groupe. LOCCA-PELT is giving its full support. A primary feature of the plan that LOCCA-PELT and Planning Staff are in favor of is parcel consolidation. Jack also stated that the Comprehensive Plan Parkway Employment Sector housing number was "just a number" and this proposal should not be held to that. He neglected to mention that the Sector Plan

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also identifies the housing to be located on the Eastern side of the Sector and not the Western side. (Side Note: this plan consolidates parcels that are all owned by members of the Caton family.)

21. Kim Hosen presented a motion for deferral. The deferral passed, not through conviction on the part of the other commissioners, but as a courtesy to Kim, in recognition of the fact that the project is in her district. Three commissioners were clearly ready to vote for the proposal with no further community involvement. The next meeting set to discuss Caton's Ridge is September. Kim Hosen recommended that the Advisory Committee be the best forum to resolve concerns.

Item 2.

Next Agenda:

Clarke Property

Item 3.

Meeting Date/Location:

The next meeting will be held Monday, August 21, 7:30 pm, McCoart Building Potomac Room.

Attachment to Minutes:

-----Original Message-----

From: Brighton, Jim

Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2006 8:46 AM

To: 'Corey Stewart'; 'Kim Hosen'

Cc: 'Gail Burda'; 'Burnszynski, Francis'; 'Mike Lubeley'; 'Cronin, Laurie A.'

Subject: Occoquan Distr. Land Use Committee Recommendations - Caton's Ridge

Kim and Corey,

Attached is the Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee's final recommendations regarding the Caton's Ridge proposal and rezoning. Gail asked that I forward it on for your consideration.

The developer was very considerate in offering 2 presentations before the Committee, the second of which incorporated some of the Committee's concerns noted from the first. This proposal has sparked much discussion, and the Committee recognizes it has some desirable features. However, inclusion of the residential component is an issue that we felt is in direct contradiction to the Comprehensive Plan's designated Regional Employment Center, and as such is a significant concern.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Jim Brighton

Member, Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee

Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee
Prince William County, Virginia
Committee Recommendations
June 27, 2006

Subject: Caton's Ridge

Developer: Land Source Investments

Executive Summary

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The Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee (the Committee) has reviewed the subject proposal. This proposal was originally brought before this Committee in June 2005 and again in November 2005; Mr. Mike Lubeley of Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Terpak, P.C. represented the developer/applicant, Land Source Investments. Currently owned by several family members of the Caton family, this ~30 acre property has combined zoning of B-1 and A-1, and is located within the Comprehensive Plan's Regional Employment Center, and the Parkway Employment Sector. Maintaining the B-1 zoning, the developer is proposing a rezoning request to revise the Agriculture, A-1, to Planned Mixed Residential, PMR. The entire development would consist of a mixed use of residential, retail, and office space. A site pad would be dedicated for a commercial purpose or restaurant.

The Committee considers this property to be an important strategic opportunity for business and economic development and employment opportunities for County residents. Located on Minnieville Road, its easy access to Interstate 95 makes it a prime location for office tenants. Additionally, this prime location along with the available acreage has the potential to draw consultants and contractors serving the federal government, Fort Belvoir, and Quantico, as well as offering excellent access for all non-governmental agencies and consultants. Furthermore, it is located near a quality residential community, offering convenience of commute, and quality of life for all tenants.

Upon evaluation and full consideration of the benefits this proposal will offer the Occoquan District and the County, the Committee finds it to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan's Parkway Employment Sector largely due to the inclusion of the proposed residential units in an area long-dedicated for office use. According to the recent study conducted by Parsons Brinkerhoff at the behest of the County, this study concluded that PW County has current inventory or planned inventory to adequately satisfy residential needs for the next 30 to 35 years. This property is neither currently zoned nor planned for residential use, and as such would exacerbate the excess inventory as identified in that study. To further complicate the situation, Mr. Lubeley stated that only one office building would be built for the Engineering Groupe under this proposal, followed by all the residential units. Therefore it was concluded that this proposal would violate long-range planning, add significantly to an excess inventory of housing, and delay critically needed office space, all conditions considered completely unacceptable to the Committee.

Accordingly, the Committee requests that the PW Planning Commission delay acceptance of this proposal until concerns regarding the residential units can be addressed and mitigated. Should the elimination of residential units be a condition unacceptable to the developer, then the Committee would respectfully request that the Planning Commission opt for a Recommendation for Denial. A resolution to these issues should be achieved prior to a presentation before the PW Board of Supervisors.

Introduction

Currently owned by several family members of the Caton family, this property has combined zoning of A-1 and B-1. The B-1 parcels adjacent to the Wawa gasoline and convenience store represent 2.68 acres of the approximate 30 acres under consideration. Mr. Lubeley explained that the owners have the "by-rights" privilege to construct any retail dwelling on a portion of the site currently zoned B1, subject to current constraints, without community concurrence. However, they are proposing to rezone and develop the site into mixed residential, retail and office space and have sought the opinion of this Committee. The Engineer of Record for the owner, The Engineering Groupe, proposes to relocate their offices to this new development and will be the first office tenant. Excluding the Engineering Groupe building, the remaining proposed office space will contain retail on the ground floor. A commercial pad is dedicated for a restaurant. Over 220 residential units are proposed, most are condominiums located in 4 story structures with a club house and swimming pool as amenities. Live/work units, residential units with ground floor retail, is also proposed. Deck parking for residential and retail use is proposed.

Mr. Lubeley explained that the office space for the Engineering Groupe and all multi-story residential condominiums will be built first, as well as all site infrastructure. All remaining office and retail space will be constructed only upon firm commitment by a potential tenant; it was explained in both June and November presentations that there was little current demand for office space. But, the proffers would guarantee that no

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other use than proposed would be permitted.

According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, 890 acres have been identified for special use as defined by the Regional Employment Center Plan, stipulating, among other requirements, that development be dedicated for Class A/B office space. Additionally, this Plan limits total residential dwelling to 325 units. Currently approximately 280 units exist or have been approved for construction within this Sector. This proposal far exceeds the difference.

Observations and Concerns

The Committee in good faith worked with the developer at both meetings to suggest improvements to the proposal, and to their credit, the developer did improve site features. Subsequent to the November meeting however, the Committee learned of the Parsons Brinkerhoff housing inventory study, gained access to current office occupancy rates, as well as had an opportunity to further review the Comprehensive Plan, all of which has caused the Committee to reconsider the entirety of the residential component of the development.

The following details continue to be a concern to the Committee exclusive of all external zoning and Comprehensive Plan issues:

1. Per William Vaughan, Senior Research Manager for Prince William County Dept. of Economic Development, the vacancy rate of office space in the eastern end of PW County is 2.9% and 7.1% countywide. These statistics demonstrate the clear need for additional office space in the eastern region of the County. With occupancy rates running at 97%, it is anticipated that little space remains to lure major tenants with a large employee base requiring significant contiguous floor space. (This contradicts the premise used by the developer to concentrate on the residential aspects.) This high demand for office space if left unaddressed could drive potential tenants to Fairfax and Stafford Counties, bypassing Prince William entirely.
2. The construction preconditions of residential units erected before office is viewed as an unacceptable approach, particularly in light of the current trends in real estate markets.
3. Open space as acknowledged by the developer includes buffers, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, SWM ponds. While the buffers include vegetative material, all others seem to be contrary to the spirit of providing open space. Particularly noteworthy is the lack of play space beyond the immediate club house and pool should the residential units be built.
4. The site is extremely over-built and is covered by impervious surfaces. While SWM ponds are proposed to accommodate surface drainage, the Committee is very concerned about overall management of storm water.
5. The combined live/work units have been copied from the similar units built at the County Center by KCI. A recent site visit indicated meager occupancy, leading to Committee concern that this type of development is not popular, hence should not be repeated.

Closing

The Advisory Committee's approach to reviewing proposals practices the philosophy that any proposal should first bring value to the community, do no harm to the surrounding community, and improve the tax base. Unfortunately, the Committee views this proposal in its current configuration as violating these committee-held tenants for the aforementioned reasons. In fact, we view this proposal in its current form to cause grave harm to the strategic opportunities for business and economic development and employment opportunities for County residents. The Committee expresses great interest in working with the developer and owners to reach a mutually acceptable solution. However, the Committee feels that Comprehensive Plan's Regional Employment Center is well conceived and should be implemented without compromise. The Committee recommends that the Planning Commission seek resolution of these issues prior to the proposal being presented before the County Board of Supervisors.

This recommendation has been prepared by Jim Brighton and respectfully submitted on behalf of the

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Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee by Gail Burda, Chairperson.