

Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group  
Meeting Summary  
October 21, 2008

**PYPAG Members:**

Joseph Bondi  
Michael Caison  
Richard Calderon  
Darryl Dugan  
Garrett Erdle  
Bill Hendrickson  
Deborah Johnson  
Stephanie Landrum  
Jon Lindgren  
Dan McCaffery  
Crystall Merlino  
Jennifer Mitchell  
Peter Pocock  
John Porter  
Mariella Posey  
Frederick Rothmeijer  
Sherry Sadai  
Noah Teates  
Eric Wagner  
Maria Wasowski

**City Staff:**

Faroll Hamer  
Jeff Farner  
Karl Moritz  
Valerie Peterson  
Kristen Mitten  
Terry Russell

**The Perspectives Group Staff:**

Doug Sarno  
Jim Lawson

**Also In Attendance:**

Approximately 20 – 25 Members of the Public

Eric Wagner, Chair, opened the inaugural meeting of the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group (PYPAG) at 7:04 p.m. by welcoming the group and public attendees and by thanking them for their time and commitment.

Faroll Hamer, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning for the City of Alexandria, discussed the need for an advisory group. She explained that the planning schedule has been accelerated and that a lot has changed in the region over the last few years. Many people have moved back into urban areas and are interested in mass transportation, such as Metrorail. The property owners of the Potomac Yard area are interested in redevelopment. This planning process is a convergence of trends coming together. The City tried a different approach to selecting the advisory group members from the past projects. There was an open nomination process for appointment to PYPAG, which is a first for the City, and the project will be facilitated to best capture all perspectives from the group.

Eric Wagner stated that this property is the largest track of land to be developed inside of the D.C. Beltway and its development is a very important issue for the city. It is important that PYPAG members bring their individual and neighborhood perspectives to the table, while jointly seeking what is best for the City of Alexandria as we move through the process. He asked the group to keep an open mind throughout the process because being educated on the issues could certainly change their minds and positions. This applies to all stakeholders, PYPAG, the public and staff.

The PYPAG facilitator, Doug Sarno, explained that The Perspectives Group has been assisting the City in planning the group process and will serve as facilitators through the life of the project. He stated that this was an exciting process and will differ from past approaches. Doug then walked through the agenda and explained that the main goal of the first meeting was to get to know each other and to begin building relationships. He told the attendees that there would be a period at the end of each meeting for audience comments and questions. He then led the PYPAG through a group exercise to help the members become acquainted.

After the introductions, Doug addressed the “toolbox” binders, which were placed in front of the members. He stated that the binders would be filled over time and they would try not to give out big thick reports, but provide well summarized information. All information materials will also be placed on-line.

Doug continued by saying that the group was going to operate by consensus, not by Robert’s Rules of Order. He explained that consensus does not always mean unanimity. Minority views will not be lost in the process and there will be a lot of hard work done by the group. The facilitator does not take a stand in the group’s findings, but is there to keep it fair and to make sure all voices are heard and respected. The ground rules were then reviewed and agreed upon.

*Please see Attachment A for list of Ground Rules*

Mr. Sarno then addressed the expectations of the group. He requested full attendance at every PYPAG meeting, members arriving prepared and agreeing to support the process and each other. The members of PYPAG will also serve as a conduit to the greater community by reaching out and discussing the work of the group and reporting comments heard from the community back to the group. Doug reminded the members that if they must miss a meeting then they have an obligation to make up the work and listen to the audio recording of the meeting missed, not just read the written summaries.

Doug said that Eric Wagner is serving as the Chair and he will be the spokesperson for PYPAG as well help to plan the agendas for each meeting. He also stated that the city staff will listen to PYPAG and make sure that the group has the information needed to create the best solutions.

It was noted that planning design consultants were also being hired to support the planning process and the group, as will city staff and other consultants. It was decided that the PYPAG would take a tour of the Potomac Yard site on **Saturday, November 8, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** The specifics of the tour will be determined and sent to the group.

Jeff Farner, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning for the City of Alexandria, gave a brief presentation on the history, status of projects, and boundaries of Potomac Yard. He stated that only once in a generation is there an opportunity to look at a piece of property this size, and we must do the right thing regarding its use. The entire yard covers about 295 acres and the plan will need to look at how to integrate new development with existing development, surrounding neighborhoods, and transportation needs. We also need to work toward a sustainable site.

Jeff explained the existing approvals at the site. He identified a common thread weaves throughout the history of the yard--transportation. He stated that density could increase but not decrease where there are existing approvals.

Led by Doug Sarno, the group then discussed their mission. The mission is to provide advice to City staff on the best feasible use for Potomac Yard. Doug went on to say that the group will discuss expected outcomes, design principles, land use and amenities for Landbay F, potential height and density increases for all landbays, and transportation needs and solutions to consider to make the entire plan work. The group had no opposition or suggestions to the mission.

Doug also reminded the group that there would be a time set aside at the end of each meeting for public comments and questions. At that time the floor was opened for comments from the public.

A citizen stated that this was an interesting group with new faces; he encouraged the PYDAC to be bold in their thinking and on their ideas on getting a new Metrorail station. He charged the group to do what is best for the city. He concluded by wishing them "good luck".

Another citizen asked if Landbay E on Four Mile Run is on the table for discussion, the answer was "yes". Another citizen inquired about the potential for a pedestrian bridge over or under the railway and parkway to connect to the Potomac. Mr. Wagner responded that he would never say never, but it would be very complicated and require National Park Service approval. The City has also been trying for a bridge from Potomac Greens to Landbay H and it has been very complex.

The meeting concluded at 9:01 p.m.