

PYPAG Meeting Summary
Thursday, February 4, 2010

PYPAG Members in attendance:

Joe Bondi
Michael Caison
Richard Calderon
Steve Collins
Allison Cryor DiNardo
Darryl Dugan
Garrett Erdle
Bill Hendrickson
Deborah Johnson
Mark Krause
Ed Woodbury for Dan McCaffery
Jennifer Mitchell
Crystall Merlino
Peter Pocock
Frederick Rothmeijer
Eric Wagner
Maria Wasowski

PYPAG Members not in attendance:

Mariella Posey
Noah Teates

City Staff:

Bethany Carton
Jeffrey Farner
Claire Gron
Farroll Hamer
Daniel Imig
Mark Jinks
Sandra Marks
Helen McIlvaine
Valerie Peterson

The Perspectives Group Staff:

Doug Sarno

Approximately 15 Members of the public were in attendance.

Welcome

The PYPAG meeting began at 7:10 p.m. Eric Wagner, the PYPAG Chairman, welcomed the group. There were 17 PYPAG members in attendance.

Doug Sarno, the facilitator, noted that this meeting is intended to be the final meeting of the PYPAG. He reviewed the agenda for the evening.

Metrorail Financing & Implementation

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager, provided a brief summary concerning financing a Metrorail station. He indicated that tax revenues at buildout are sufficient to support the construction of a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard. However, in the short term, there is a funding gap. The City is working to develop a financing plan to close the gap. Mr. Jinks stated that developer contributions towards the Metrorail station will not replace other proffered contributions, for example, the affordable housing contribution.

Bill Hendrickson asked if the City is nearing closing the funding gap. Mr. Jinks stated that the City has made significant progress towards – but has not yet closed – the gap.

Eric Wagner questioned a reference on page 2 of the “Implementation” chapter to a \$5 million contribution for transportation improvements, including a “future east-west connection to Commonwealth Avenue.” Sandra Marks, T&ES, stated that the Plan was recommending improvements to increase east-west connectivity and relieve congestion.

Valerie Peterson, P&Z, briefly summarized the Plan schedule.

Staff and Developer Resolutions to PYPAG Issues

Flexible Zone/Pedestrian-only area

Jeffrey Farner, P&Z, stated that the City and RREEF have worked together to develop performance standards for the Flexible Zone.

School/Heights

Mr. Farner stated that the Plan has been revised so as not to preclude the construction of a school in Block 4 (instead of in Block 6 as previously discussed). If a school is provided in Block 4, residential density and height would be redistributed to Block 6 (adjacent to Route 1). He stated that the possible location for the school in Block 4 considers the National Park Service (NPS) preference for shorter buildings adjacent to the GW Memorial Highway. Mark Krause, the PYPAG representative for Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), added that ACPS had been concerned with the Block 6 location and prefers the Block 4 location.

Mr. Sarno asked the group if the change in the possible location for a school from Block 6 to Block 4 – and the resulting density and height transfer – was reasonable.

Mr. Hendrickson questioned if Block 6 was near the dedicated high-capacity transitway on Route 1. Ms. Marks stated that the width of Route 1 was consistent from Four Mile Run to the Monroe Avenue Bridge so as not to preclude the location of the dedicated high-capacity transitway in the future.

Mr. Wagner stated that he does not support the location of a school at Potomac Yard in close proximity to a Metrorail station. He stated that the City should accept a financial contribution and construct the school elsewhere. Mr. Farner noted that the Plan is not requiring the provision of a school at North Potomac Yard. Faroll Hamer, P&Z, agreed with Mr. Wagner that the location of a school near a Metrorail station is not ideal because the Metro does not add value to the school.

Mr. Calderon noted that the new possible location for a school in Block 4 is preferable because it is closer to open space.

Clarifying Comments or Questions

East-west connection to Commonwealth Avenue

Peter Pocock stated that he did not support an east-west connection because of the increase in traffic that would result on Commonwealth Avenue. Ms. Marks stated that the connection to Commonwealth Avenue was not anticipated to increase the overall traffic, but to further disperse the existing traffic.

Mr. Wagner stated that PYPAG has not previously discussed the potential of an east-west connection to Commonwealth Avenue. Ms. Marks stated that the intersection at E. Glebe Road is/will be failing, and that the proposed connection would help address this issue. This improvement was identified in the transportation study that was released in early December and included in the Draft Plan.

Mr. Sarno asked the group who opposed the east-west connection to Commonwealth Avenue. Approximately half of the group expressed that they did not support the connection.

Jennifer Mitchell stated that she was not convinced that the connection would create additional traffic on Commonwealth Avenue. Garrett Erdle stated that E. Glebe Road will fail in the future and something could be done today to mitigate this failure.

Mix of Uses

Maria Wasowski stated that she is concerned that North Potomac Yard will be mixed-use community. She is also concerned about creating a connection between retail in Landbay F and Landbay G. Mr. Farner stated that the range of mix of uses will be included in the CDD zoning. He also stated that the City will be working with a group of retail consultants to discuss the connection between retail in Landbay F and Landbay G.

Public Comment

David Fromm stated that adjacent neighborhoods will experience traffic impacts due to development at Potomac Yard. He is concerned about the ease of addressing future problems in these neighborhoods if they are not dealt with now. He felt that the language in the Plan needed to be strengthened.

Mr. Fromm noted that Metro Square Park has gotten considerably smaller over time, from one acre to 0.70 acres. Bethany Carton, RP&CA, stated that the park has been approximately 0.75 acres in size for some time.

Mr. Fromm expressed concerned that the Flexible Zone language did not reference entertainment uses in this area. Mr. Farner stated that the area still supports a theatre.

Finally, Mr. Fromm asked if an oversight group, like the Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee (PYDAC) would be formed to guide the development process at North Potomac Yard. Mr. Farner stated that there would be a similar group.

A member of the public asked about the timing for required transportation improvements. Ms. Marks stated that transportation improvements will occur in three phases, the timing of which will be worked out in the CDD zoning.

A member of the public questioned the rationale for maintaining Route 1 as four lanes when it is six lanes in width elsewhere. Ms. Marks noted that Route 1 will include four lanes for vehicular traffic, and two dedicated transit lanes. Mr. Farner stated that City policies do not support the widening of Route 1 for vehicular traffic.

A member of the public noted that the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) runs alongside Potomac Yard and asked if there was an opportunity for a hub/connection. Ms. Marks stated that nearby VRE stations were too close. Mr. Farner added that VRE is unwilling to add a stop between King Street and Crystal City.

Final Comments from PYPAG members

Mr. Sarno asked for final comments from each of the PYPAG members:

- Are you supportive of the overall Plan?

- Is the Plan consistent with the vision and Principles established by the PYPAG?
- Are there any major recommendations of the Plan that you do not support, and if so, why?

Garrett Erdle is in Support of the Plan.

His greatest concerns relate to transportation, and he is looking forward to transportation improvements.

Peter Pocock cannot definitively Support or Not Support the Plan.

He feels that all improvements east of Route 1 are great, but is greatly concerned about the Commonwealth connection.

Ed Woodbury (on behalf of Dan McCaffery) is in Support of the Plan.

Darryl Dugan is in Support of the Plan.

He is concerned that Route 1 is not being widened. He does not believe that cars are unsustainable, and feels that the Plan should better accommodate cars.

Joe Bondi is in Support of the Plan.

His greatest concern is protecting the Lynhaven neighborhood. He stated that Lynhaven wants a Metrorail station, and the Plan gives them Metro. He also stated that the proposed heights on Route 1 were good, and that Lynhaven generally does not want streets opened.

Jennifer Mitchell is in Support of the Plan.

Her main concerns are transportation and protecting adjacent neighborhoods. She feels that the Plan should not preclude opportunities for a connection to Commonwealth Avenue.

Allison Cryor DiNardo is in Support of the Plan.

She is most concerned about economic development and creating areas in which to locate businesses. She noted that the City should keep an eye on Crystal City, because they are the competition for North Potomac Yard. She stated that this Plan does not work without Metro.

Michael Caison is in Support of the Plan.

His main concerns are the Lynhaven neighborhood and affordable housing. He would like to see a greater emphasis on – and strengthened language relating to – affordable housing.

Richard Calderon is in Support of the Plan.

He feels that the Plan includes too much residential use. He is concerned about the future big box retailers, and would like to see a mall at the Metrorail station.

Mark Krause is in Support of the Plan.

Maria Wasowski is in Support of the Plan.
She feels there is still work to do.

Deborah Johnson is in Support of the Plan.
Her main concern is economic sustainability. She would like to see the majority of the site developed as commercial uses. She likes the inclusion of Metro in the Plan.

Steve Collins is Not in Support of the Plan.
His main issue is funding for the Metrorail station. He stated that Pulte/Centex has been asked, but will not contribute to the funding of the Metrorail station.

Fred Rothmeijer is Not in Support of the Plan.
His main issue is also funding for the Metrorail station. Like Pulte/Centex, MRP has been asked to contribute to the funding of the Metrorail station. He is further concerned with the impacts of the proposed retail uses on his property (Landbay G).

Bill Hendrickson is in Support of the Plan.
He sees the potential for a vibrant community at North Potomac Yard, but would have liked to see additional options for development. He sees the pedestrian-only street and the inclusion of Potomac Avenue into the development as special elements of the Plan. He notes that there will need to be additional work in the future to address congestion and limited open space, especially athletic fields.

Crystall Merlino is in Support of the Plan.
She is concerned about Mr. Collins and Mr. Rothmeijer's lack of support for the Plan. Her main issue is the inclusion of sustainable components in the Plan. She noted that the graphics in the Plan relating to land use do not appear to be consistent with the text.

Ms. DiNardo asked Mr. Collins and Mr. Rothmeijer if, the issue of funding the Metrorail station aside, they would support the Plan. Mr. Collins stated that other issues can be worked out. Mr. Wagner asked, if the requested contribution was off the table, would they support the Plan. Mr. Rothmeijer said he would support the Plan if the requested contribution was no longer an issue, along with other considerations. Mr. Rothmeijer stated that it appears as if RREEF is being held to a different standard than MRP.

Mr. Sarno stated that he felt the Plan has come out well, but that transportation issues continue to be a major concern.

Eric Wagner is Not in Support of the Plan.
He stated that his primary concern is the Commonwealth connection. Other important issues include economic sustainability and traffic. He is concerned

about the long-term costs of the Metrorail station. He is also concerned that too little attention has been paid to traffic, and believes that the traffic impact of development at North Potomac Yard will be greater than is anticipated.

Final Thoughts

Mr. Farner noted that there is an upcoming Joint Planning Commission and City Council Work Session scheduled for February 23, 2010.

Mr. Sarno stated that he would draft a letter voicing the PYPAG's general support for the Plan. Mr. Farner thanked the City staff and everyone who has participated in the process. Mr. Sarno and Mr. Wagner added their thanks.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.