

AVCIAC Meeting - November 15, 2022

Jamey welcomed everyone into the Teams meeting and noted those in attendance

Non-Member Attendees:

- Jamey Pratt – Park and Planning Department
- Jewru Bandeh – Director East County Regional Services Center
- Aaron Kraut – Executive Assistant for Montgomery County Councilmember Dawn Leudtke
- Basile Whitaker – Community member

AVCIAC Members Present:

- Amy Medd – Chair
- Julia Roberts – Vice Chair
- Nadine Mort – Secretary
- Leianne Clements
- Paul Mangus
- Jessica Sidar
- Michael Tharkur
- Kathleen Wheeler

Members Absent:

- Harry Burnum

Amy recognized that a quorum was present and the meeting went forward.

Approval of minutes from the Sept 20, 2022 meeting - The minutes were approved following the review and approval of minor editorial changes.

Old Business:

There were no matters arising from discussions in the previous meeting of the Committee.

New Business:

Jamey informed the Committee that a developer has met with Park and Planning regarding a proposal for the Southeast quadrant of the Ashton intersection. The developer was represented by attorney, Ms. Françoise Carrier. He had encouraged the developer to meet with the AVCIAC as soon as possible, but they had indicated that they would do so when they had more details to share. He also committed to following up with Ms. Carrier and offering the opportunity for an early Ad Hoc meeting with the AVCIAC. He was unable to provide more details except that the

plan they discussed appeared to follow the current guidelines approved for the area. He shared that the proposed plan includes duplexes, triplexes and mixed-use residences.

As agreed at the last meeting, Jamey made a presentation with slides explaining some salient details of the approved Ashton Village Center Sector Plan. It included zoning, design, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), building heights and open space/green area guidelines. Jamey confirmed that sidewalks and green panels along the sidewalks are part of the Plan. Jamey noted that a developer who gave input into the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan had asked for 0.75FAR and the majority of area residents supported a less dense 0.25 FAR. The County Council and Planning Board approved 0.5 FAR, as a compromise. Michael noted that an FAR of 0.5 implied broadly that the built-up area would be no more than half of the land area on any parcel of land, and that seemed to be quite acceptable in a rural community. Jamey drew a comparison by pointing out that in other more urban areas such as Silver Spring FARs were greater than 1.0 reflecting allowance for more dense developments with high rise buildings.

Members of the AVCIAC expressed the following concerns:

- current traffic delays and back-ups along New Hampshire Ave as well as concerns about parking, pedestrian and bike safety.
- Whether under the Plan, streets in the intersection would be widened. Jamey responded that that was not part of the plan but the Committee could raise such issues in their review
- concern about the approved height levels of the buildings which would not be in keeping with a rural character. Jamey pointed out that the Sector Plan set maximum heights. He also noted that the proposed development included lower buildings nearer to the roads and higher ones at the rear. He also highlighted the constraint of environmental preservation areas at the rear of the property that would be respected.
- whether a 3D virtual video can be requested of the developer in order to give the community a realistic view of the project.
- traffic congestion and pedestrian safety with serious concerns for Sherwood High School students.

Jamey noted that a project of this size will go to site plan, with a review by the Planning Board and that it will likely have a traffic study. Planners then make sure that the infrastructure is adequate to support the development plans.

The committee noted that there is a mix of county and state control over the traffic and pedestrian safety issues. This can be confusing for community organizations. Jewru noted that all the stakeholders coming together could be very helpful. He offered to arrange for a general presentation by the groups responsible for Vision Zero and Public safety. He emphasized that budget allocations for sidewalks etc. needs community support for desired projects. The county council budget meeting is on Dec 7th and he encouraged everyone to participate and express opinions and needs. Nadine suggested approaching At Large Councilperson Evan Glass as the

Vision Zero project is his top priority. Our new County District 7 Councilperson Dawn Leudtke and our District 14 State Delegation; Senator Craig Zucker, State Delegates Craig Leudtke, Pam Queen and Anne Kaiser should be part of this conversation.

Michael offered to get the ball rolling by sending an email that Jewru could use to follow up with the relevant authorities on road and related infrastructure issues in the Ashton Area.

Michael asked about the zoning of the properties across from the high school under the Plan, including whether the one up for sale was likely to be subdivided for residential development. Jamey explained the Rural Cluster Zoning allows a minimum of 5 acre lots (on MCAtlas), although some properties are “grandfathered”. He also shared that the proposed plan for the north side of 108 in that area includes a proposed bike path.

The group had questions about the temporary planning board and when the new permanent members would take their positions. Some of the new Planning Board members come in on Dec 5th. The replacement process is staggered. Amy asked if the new planning board would require more time and thus have a slower turn around. Jamey did not think that will be the case.

Chelsea requested help related to a stalled project to build a basketball court in the Sandy Spring Missing Middle development. Since this is not in the area covered by the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan, Jewru offered to get her in touch with the right person and it was recommended she also raise it with the Sandy Spring Civic Association.

Notice of Future meeting locations and dates:

Future meetings will be virtual, held on the third Tuesday, every other month at 7 PM or more often if a submission made to the Planning Board warrants a more expeditious review by the Committee.

The dates for the next meetings are: January 17, 2023, March 21, 2023, and May 16, 2023

Please note: community members should contact/email/call Jamey Pratt with any comments and concerns: Jamey Pratt, Planner III, Upcounty Planning Montgomery County Planning Department, 2425 Reedy Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

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Adjourn:

A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 pm