

La Plata Planning Commission
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
November 5, 2002, 7:00 PM

Present: Chairman Raymond J. Becmer, Keith A. Hettel, C. Keith Back, Roy G. Hale - Commission Members; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Steven F. Schroeder, Project Manager; Jeffrey F. Guido, Director of Inspections; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk (Due to the absence of Mr. Sollars and Mr. Echols, Mr. Back had full voting rights.)

Guests: (See roster.)

Minutes:

Chairman Becmer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and read the agenda. Chairman Becmer asked Mr. Hale to lead the Commission and audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of October minutes

Mr. Hale made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 1 meeting. Mr. Back seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Back made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 17 special meeting. Mr. Hettel seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Streetscape proposal

Mr. Miller praised the unprecedented support the Town has received from the State of Maryland, part of which has provided a streetscape program for the Town. He advised there would be an open house at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 13, with presentations describing all four grids of the Town. He noted that the first open house had described only the downtown area. In response to Chairman Becmer's question, Paula Winkler, member of the streetscape task force, advised it was determined to be cost prohibitive to put utilities underground.

Other business

Mr. Miller discussed the elevations for Creative Image Hair Salon on Howard Street (copies provided to each Commission member), which portray a grander style building more in tune with the Town's Vision Plan. He noted that this has not yet gone to the Design Review Board. Chairman Becmer asked Mr. Miller to bring this back to the Commission when more details are available.

Mr. Miller introduced Jeff Guido, the Town's new Director of Inspections.

Mr. Miller briefly discussed his memorandum to the Commission, dated October 31, 2002, describing a proposed new Urban Highway (UH) zoning district. Mr. Miller described the proposed boundaries of the UH district as including only the eastern side of Rt. 301 (which abuts the CB district), starting from Charles Street down to Centennial Street and the former Golden Corral property. During the discussion, the Planning Commission agreed they wished to exclude planned shopping centers, include senior living communities, allow second tier lots, include 15' vegetative strip to channel ingress and egress,

and include fast food restaurants as special exception uses. Due to concern about the close proximity to the highway, Mr. Miller was asked to check with the police department to see if there have been accidents, such as vehicles jumping curbs, which would indicate a hazard to allowing buildings so close to the highway. Mr. Miller advised that after the ordinance is prepared and introduced by the Mayor and Council, public hearings will be held prior to adoption.

Agricopia - request for revisions to master site development plan

Mr. Miller explained that the developer is asking the Planning Commission to approve changes to the master development plan for Agricopia. The Planning Commission members were provided copies of the Agricopia Preliminary Plat subdivision review report (November, 2002) and Town Manager's memorandum (October 31, 2002) regarding Agricopia.

Gore Bolton and R. J. Earnshaw made a Power Point presentation and provided paper copies of it to the Commission. The changes for which they asked approval included: combine parcels 6 and 7 to become new parcel 4 and remain medium high density; parcels 3, 4 and 5 to become new parcel 3 and change from medium high density to high density. Overall density remains 760 dwelling units (951 is the maximum allowed.)

During the discussion which followed, Mr. Back expressed concern about approving the revisions and that the developer would come back to the Planning Commission to ask for more high density. Mr. Hale asked if current buyers are being informed of the future development plans in Agricopia. Some audience members spoke up that they were not aware and have been told there were no townhouses or apartments being planned. Mr. Back pointed out that a letter was on file from the previous property owner, which stated that the final plan would not have condominiums.

The Planning Commission expressed concern that the developer be able to develop the property as allowed by the provisions for mixed use developments, and that homeowners not be misled about the plans for the property. Mr. Bolton and Mr. Earnshaw advised they were working with the builder to put a copy of an approved master site development plan in the model home/office.

Following this discussion, Chairman Becmer asked if anyone wished to make a motion to approve the revisions to the master site development plan for Agricopia. No motion was offered. The current master site development plan stands as previously approved. The developer was asked to post the plan so potential home buyers are aware of the plans and are able to make an educated decision about purchasing a home in Agricopia.

Mr. Miller briefly explained the background of Agricopia to the current and potential home owners in the audience, noting it was always multi-zoned, including the high density R-3, multi-family. During the Town's Comprehensive Rezoning, Mixed Use Development was applied to all remaining large tracts of land in the Town, including Agricopia.

Agricopia - preliminary plat

Mr. Miller noted that this preliminary plat is not ready for approval, as outlined in his memorandum dated October 31, 2002 and asked that the Planning Commission give the developer guidance on those issues listed in the memorandum. In response to the issue regarding the requirement that the townhouse lots must front on a public street, Mr. Bolton noted that they plan to extend the public street (tertiary) to correct that. Chairman Becmer complimented Mr. Earnshaw for the provision in the covenants for maintenance of the planting areas and front yards. Mr. Back asked that the developer break up the townhouse area showing 28 in a row on both sides of the street. In response to Mr. Bolton's question about providing two 2 ½ acre park areas, Mr. Miller advised that Parks and Recreation wants a total of 5 acres of park area.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier