



City of Richmond
Navy Hill Development Proposal
Public Hearing Minutes

900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219
www.richmondgov.com/cityclerk

Thursday, January 16, 2020

6:00 PM

Council Chamber, 2nd Floor – City Hall

Councilmembers Present

The Honorable Cynthia Newbille, President
The Honorable Kristen Larson (*late arrival*)
The Honorable Ellen Robertson

Absent

The Honorable Chris Hilbert, Vice President
The Honorable Andreas Addison
The Honorable Kim Gray
The Honorable Michael Jones
The Honorable Stephanie Lynch
The Honorable Reva Trammell

Staff Present

Haskell C. Brown, III, Interim City Attorney
Bill Echelberger, Council Budget Analyst
Candice Reid, City Clerk
RJ Warren, Deputy City Clerk

Council President Cynthia Newbille called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and presided.

Upon the President's request, Deputy City Clerk RJ Warren provided the citizen speaker guidelines for Council public hearings.

PROPOSED NAVY HILL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (NHDP) PUBLIC HEARING

(Associated Ordinances and Resolution: ORD. 2019-211, ORD. 2019-212, ORD. 2019-213, ORD. 2019-214, ORD. 2019-215, ORD. 2019-216, ORD. 2019-217, ORD. 2019-218, ORD. 2019-219, RES. 2019-R044)

The following individuals provided comment regarding the proposed Navy Hill Development project:

Opposition

Leslie Rubio spoke in opposition of the Navy Hill Development (NHD) proposal and stated the project did not address poverty in the city.

Kristin Reed spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal. Ms. Reed expressed her concern that recent changes to the NHD proposal occurred after the Navy Hill Development Advisory Commission had submitted its final report.

John Moser spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and expressed his concern with the city's request for proposals (RFP) process regarding the NHD proposal.

Art Burton spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and stated true economic development should be more than just job creation.

Florence Breedlove spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal. Ms. Breedlove expressed her concerns with the city moving too fast on the project and that the (NHDAC) did not receive all the documents and information associated with the NHD proposal that it requested.

Councilor Kristen Larson arrived and was seated at 6:20 p.m.

Nathanael Rudney, Richmond for All member spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and referenced prior Richmond City development projects that he believed failed. Mr. Rudney expressed his concern that the NHD proposal did not truly address affordable housing.

Charleta Shorts spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and expressed her concern that the city-owned property associated with the NHD proposal did not receive an appraisal.

Johnathan Miller spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and expressed his concerns with Davenport & Company's history consulting other localities regarding development projects.

Murril Smith spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and referenced the construction of Interstate 95 dividing the area associated with the NHD proposal. Ms. Smith expressed her belief that Interstate 95 should be converted into a tunnel to reconnect neighborhoods.

Saad El-Amin spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and referenced the construction of the Short Pump Town Center and the Stony Point Fashion Park. Mr. El-Amin stated he didn't believe the NHD proposal would be successful.

Stephanie Culberson stated she was in favor of some aspects of the NHD proposal, such as a Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) transfer plaza, but informed Council she opposed the proposed arena associated with the NHD proposal.

Pat Levy-Lavelle spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and stated schools should be a priority and not the proposed arena. Ms. Levy-Lavelle expressed her concern with the lack of an appraisal of city-owned land and stated she didn't believe the proposal addressed affordable housing.

Omar Kenyatta spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and inquired why the project wasn't a regional effort. Mr. Kenyatta stated schools and affordable housing should be addressed rather than the NHD proposal.

Bridgette Whitaker spoke in opposition of the NHD proposal and expressed her belief that the prior Richmond Coliseum attracted enough business and should not have been closed.

Support

James "JJ" Minor, Richmond National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) president, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the city should move forward with the NHD proposal.

Pastor Larry Miles, Fresh Anointing Cathedral, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the proposed project would increase diversity and revenue for the city.

Reverend Jerome C. Ross, Ph.D., Providence Park Baptist Church, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and encouraged Council to strategically work through the proposed NHD project by making changes as necessary.

Anthony "Ajay" Brewer spoke in support of the NHD proposal and discussed the benefits of economic developments on small businesses. Mr. Brewer stated past development failures should not prevent this proposed NHD project from being approved.

Brad Armstrong spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the proposal would increase revenue for the city and benefit schools. Mr. Armstrong also stated the project should not be disregarded over details that could be negotiated.

Greta Harris, Better Housing Coalition president and chief executive officer (CEO), spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the Better Housing Coalition was working with developers to produce 200 affordable housing units within the project.

Richard Dickinson, the Doorways Richmond's Hospitality House, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and addressed successful corporate and city partnerships in the city. Mr. Dickinson expressed his belief that the proposed NHD proposal would create affordable housing opportunities in the city.

Tom Tichenor stated he was skeptical of the proposed NHD project when it was first announced but changed his view once he understood the proposal. Mr. Tichenor informed Council he supported the project because it would create jobs, grow tourism and transform the area associated with the project.

Thomas Hairston spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the proposed arena would draw major performance acts to the city.

Carrie Roth, Activation Capital and Virginia Bio+Tech Park president and CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the financial benefit for the city would be significant. Ms. Roth also stated the project would draw businesses to the city.

Katherine O'Donnell, Richmond Region Tourism executive vice president, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and addressed the proposed arena's ability to draw major sporting events to the city. Ms. O'Donnell expressed her belief that the arena and proposed Hyatt Regency hotel would increase tourism and revenue for the city.

Jack Berry, Richmond Region Tourism president and CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and informed Council that multiple potential conventions were interested in hosting events in the city if the NHD proposal was approved.

Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association (RMA) president and CEO, informed Council she doubted the proposed NHD project when it was announced. Ms. Thomas stated she now supports the project after RMA vetted the proposal.

Stephen Story, James River Transportation president, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the project would increase transportation demand in the city. Mr. Story expressed his belief the increased demand would require his workforce to grow and therefore create new jobs.

Lacy Williams spoke in support of the NHD proposal and compared the project to recent developments in Short Pump. Ms. Williams stated the project would provide new housing opportunities.

James Fobbs, Jr., Fobbs Quality Signs, spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Mr. Fobbs stated he traveled to other cities for entertainment due to a lack of an arena, and he believed the proposed arena would provide an opportunity to draw performance acts to the city.

Dasha Runyan, Richmond Region Tourism vice president, sales, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and the potential increase in hotels. Ms. Runyan read a letter from hotel owner, Neil Amin, CEO of Shamin Hotels, regarding the proposed arena and its effect on hotel demand.

Johnny Johnson spoke in support of the NHD proposal and expressed his concern with gentrification's effect on minority businesses in the city. Mr. Johnson stated the project would create more opportunities for minority businesses.

Dave Johannas spoke in support of the NHD proposal and requested Council not be affected by anti-corporation rhetoric. Mr. Johannas stated growth was required to remove people from poverty.

Anne Marie McCartan spoke in support of the NHD proposal and compared the project to recent developments in Scott's Addition. Ms. McCartan stated unlike Scott's Addition, the NHD project would offer guarantees such as green space, jobs and transportation.

Michael Meyers, Greater Richmond Convention Center general manger, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and addressed a shortage of hotels and entertainment in the area associated with the project. Mr. Meyers stated the shortage created many challenges for the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

Ervin Clarke, Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce (CVAACOC) founder and chairman, informed Council that the CVAACOC supported the proposed NHD project. Mr. Clarke expressed his belief that the project would increase opportunities for minority businesses in the city.

Nate Harris, Spectra assistant general manager and director of marketing, addressed the potential increase of sporting events in the city due to the proposed NHD project. Mr. Harris read a letter from Live Nation Worldwide, Inc., that expressed Live Nation's support of the project.

Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and in support of the proposed tax increment financing (TIF) aspect of the proposal. Ms. Sims expressed her concern that other localities will take the development opportunity if Richmond did not.

Dion Clarke spoke in support of the NHD proposal and expressed her belief that a new arena was necessary to draw performance acts to the city.

Brenda Carter spoke in support of the NHD proposal and expressed her belief the city should try and retain development money in the city. Ms. Carter informed Council she wanted her grandchildren to have a renovated Navy Hill neighborhood and new arena.

Grace Washington spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated she was speaking for people left out of opportunities. Ms. Washington stated the proposal was a great opportunity for minority businesses in the city.

Floyd E. Miller II, Metropolitan Business League president and CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated the project would create opportunities for small businesses.

Charles Willis spoke in support of the NHD proposal and addressed similar developments in surrounding localities.

Councilor Kristen Larson responded to comments regarding Council attendance and stated members' were not consulted prior to the announcement of the public hearings schedule.

Micah White, former Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce director, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and expressed his concern with pessimistic views of the project by individuals who do not offer an opinion on how to improve the proposal.

Henry Clifford, Livewire, LLC owner, spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Mr. Clifford stated the biggest challenge for small business owners was attracting talent, and that he believed the proposed development would help attract talented individuals to the city.

Michel Zajur, Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and addressed the increase of Hispanic communities in the city. Mr. Zajur expressed his belief the project would increase city revenue which would benefit schools.

John Green spoke in support of the NHD proposal and expressed his belief that the project would increase opportunities for minorities seeking employment.

Carol Reese, ReeSources, Inc. CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Ms. Reese stated small businesses do not have adequate meeting space downtown and believed the project would provide that need.

Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA president and CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and stated councilors should be aware the proposal was a long term project. Mr. Anderson expressed his belief that the project would be the biggest impact on the city that Council could make.

Robert Winfree spoke in support of the NHD proposal and informed Council he was formerly incarcerated. Mr. Winfree expressed his belief that the project would provide opportunities to individuals returning to public life after incarceration.

Tracy Muhammad, local representative for the Nation of Islam, spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Mr. Muhammad stated the project would not cure everything for the city, but he believed it was a step in the right direction. Mr. Muhammad also stated measures would be in place to make sure developers keep promises made to the minority community.

Liana Acevedo spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Ms. Acevedo expressed her concern that Richmond was not as developed as northern Virginia and that downtown Richmond felt abandoned at night.

Sandra Antoine spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Ms. Antoine referenced a *New York Times* article that listed Richmond as a top 50 destination to visit.

Kenneth Jones spoke in support of the NHD proposal and commended the commitments made by NHD developers to minority businesses and city residents.

Beverly Fox, Hosea Productions president and CEO, spoke in support of the NHD proposal. Ms. Fox stated Richmond was prime to attract performance acts, but sufficient venues were necessary for this to occur.

Lucy Meade spoke in support of the NHD proposal and addressed vacant lots in the area associated with the proposed development. Ms. Meade expressed her belief that the Greater Richmond Convention Center was in desperate need of a neighboring hotel.

F. Todd Gray, Fifth Street Baptist Church pastor, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and informed Council that Fifth Street Baptist Church supported the project.

Burt Pinnock, Baskervill principal, Richmond 300 Advisory Council co-chair, Virginia Art and Architecture Review Board vice chair, spoke in support of the proposal and stated the project would fix broken components of the city grid.

Bernard Johnson stated he did not support or oppose the proposed NHD project but stated the proposed project appeared to be gentrification.

Victory Landry, Virginia State University Multi-Purpose Center general manger, spoke in support of the NHD proposal and encouraged Council to work through the project. Mr. Landry stated developers had made changes to the proposal based on concerns raised by Council and citizens.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

CITY CLERK