



City of Richmond

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Meeting Minutes Planning Commission

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

3:00 PM

2nd Floor Council Chambers

THIS IS A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Call To Order

Mr. Poole called the special meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 3:03 p.m.

Roll Call

-- Present 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson, and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

Chair's Comments

Mr. Poole welcomed all who were present.

Director's Report

There was no report.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

There were no continuances or deletions from the agenda.

Consent Agenda

No Consent Items

Regular Agenda

Mr. Matthew Ebinger provided staff's presentation regarding the items on the Regular Agenda.

Mr. Tom Farrell, Navy Hill District Foundation, spoke in support of the items on the Regular Agenda.

Mr. Michael Hallmark provided the applicant's first presentation regarding the items on the Regular Agenda.

Ms. Jennifer Mullen provided the applicant's second presentation regarding the items on the Regular Agenda.

Mr. Murthy asked has N and U been a part of the original package.

Ms. Mullen stated yes they have.

Mr. Murthy asked are there any ordinances or specifications related to that property that are different than the existing zoning that is there.

Ms. Mullen stated those parcels will stay the existing zoning but they do have the requirements for U in particular with respect to the facade around the historic garage so the development would need to meet those criteria and the Master Plan governs the development on the blocks themselves.

Mr. Murthy asked is the intent of that development to be designed to be part of a larger development.

Ms. Mullen stated it is a part of the five year plan, it is in sequence 2 so it is in the second sequence of the development. We decided to keep the Coliseum Mall District all on the north of Broad for that because it dealt primarily to keep all the signage components on the north of Broad section and then N and U were able to develop pursuant to the B-4 standards in accordance with the Master Plan to help govern that section.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked will any of the street design elements of Clay Street or any of the other public right of way come back before Planning Commission as Location, Character and Extent.

Ms. Mullen stated there will be elements that will come back as Location, Character and Extent. We probably need to defer to Mr. Khara on the specific components. This is in accordance with the complete streets package so portions of them could be administratively approved because it ties specifically into those pieces particularly around 6th Street as well as the new Clay Street. Ms. Mullen believes that area will come back before the Urban Design Committee and ultimately the Planning Commission because they tie into the arena and to the Blues Armory themselves.

Mr. Khara stated yes, it will come back.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan asked what is the current status of the relocation of the Department of Social Services and what does that process look like.

Ms. Mullen stated the Department of Social Services has had in their Master Plan to consolidate and they have been looking for spaces. We have been trying to assist with that and have currently been unable to find a fit. We are still working with them on that. She stated she does not have a specific location right now but in the documents themselves it requires us to continue to pursue it, it is very much in our interest in order to find them a new home because of our desired development for the block, we are looking for a location within downtown and the Interim Chief Administrative Officer may have more details that she can share with you but the documents do not allow us to take down that block. We cannot purchase that block until that lease has been executed and they are moving forward in their move to find them the home that they want to have.

Ms. Greenfield asked, the Department of Social Services will be required to stay downtown?

Ms. Mullen stated yes, it will be downtown.

Public Hearing:

Mr. Charles Willis stated he resides in the eighth district of Richmond. He stated he is in support of all ordinances.

Mr. Jack Berry, President of Richmond Region Tourism, stated they are in support of the ordinances.

Mr. Wheatley McDowell, Board Chair for the Better Housing Coalition stated they support the project.

Mr. Robert Jones, Icon Commercial, stated they are in support of the ordinance for this project.

Mr. Joshua Builder stated some of his ideas were used for this project. Where are people going to park during construction? Construction is needed for homeless people also. Consideration should be paid to history of Navy Hill neighborhood.

Mr. David Lambert stated he is a resident of the third district and his business is in the third district. He is in support of this project.

Ms. Robertson thanked the staff for the report provided. She commended Mr. Poole for his leadership on the Commission. She stated this is a significant development for the City of Richmond. The Planning Commission's action today is critical to us being able to have the necessary foundation for the Council to consider all of the additional development agreements that is attached to this development. One of the most critical components to this development and having an opportunity to move this development forward is for us to take action on the ordinances that are before us. Without the actual surplusing and conveying of properties as identified in the ordinance, we do not have the foundation that we need to even consider the rest of the ordinances. She stated she appreciates all of the accolades that have been made in support of it, this is a critical step and I strongly support us moving forward in making an affirmative recommendation to Council to support the ordinance that is before us.

Mr. Johannas thanked the development team for coming to us and putting together this scheme. It is a great scheme, it shows a lot of work and an in-depth understanding of where this city sees itself going, definitely relative to the Downtown Master Plan and the Pulse Corridor Plan. It shows a vision for the City also. The vision for the city is we are going to become an active, vibrant, downtown Center City for the region. We are looking at increasing the population base. The City has been working diligently in terms of upgrading our zoning around this area. We have a strong population of workers in the district but we do have this flat zone of asphalt sitting in the middle of our city that is dead. He stated when I took the tour, I stood on the corner of 6th Street in front of the Marriott facing toward the National Theater and saw a great vision because behind me I had the Marriott, to the right I had the Miller and Rhoads Hotel, directly passed that we had the Carpenter Center, right in front of me was the National Theater and then you turn left and you look down to the space and you could see where the arena would be sitting. He stated, I saw the connection as the first block heading north, there is room for retail across from the Marriott and then the arrival to the Blues Armory building. It showed an area that had incredible vibrance, it showed a response to the arts district which was also behind me and how it could tie all that together. That's just a great vision, a great way to be looking at our City to develop this area. He stated I feel that the promise for success was so great, for that reason I cannot imagine that we would not open the gate to provide

continuing down the road for looking to improve this project.

Mr. Murthy stated this is an overall strong master plan, the comments and statements related to organic growth are not feasible in this scenario to points as discussed by the applicant in that the infrastructure calls for being significant. This is the opportunity to bring our city's grid back and that is the right thing to do. He stated I would like to thank the applicant, coming in I had lots of questions and concerns, both staff and the applicant did a great job taking time, energy and effort to help address those questions, concerns and comments. I also want to commend them for their creativity of maximizing every piece of real estate that is available to bring back the original intent of what it probably looked like before all of this occurred and that is from the point of wrapping around parking decks and other structures and I hope that this is the catalyst for other areas in the city to where we can do that. He stated I would like to ask the applicant to take this into consideration, as we think about the open space, make it inclusive of all from any background or age group, let's think about families, grandparents, let's think about accessibility, let's think about spending time down there, really think about putting more art in that space, to consider how to make art playful and interactive and also assuring that we are doing just to the history of what happens to this district initially, and representing that I feel that whether that be in art or some form of sharing for future generations when we are all gone so they know what happened and why it happened and then hopefully it does not happen again. On a more tactical note, as they get more detail as they move through this process such as a traffic study, they can take that data and help organizations that are associated with it such as GRTC or City of Richmond Traffic and help them, guide them to manage traffic flow when large events come to the City so that they are successful, their experience is phenomenal and people want to come back. Because it took strength and depth of the applicant that are here today when you think about folks like Mr. Farrell and what they did to pull this together and the scale of this and the impact of our city, it feels like a good time to fix some things that are not right with the city and maybe the state. Also, allowing us to be able to leverage state parking decks on weekends so we have the capacity for great developments like this. He stated I plan on voting on everything.

Mr. Hepp-Buchanan stated I also want to thank the City staff and the development team for their transparency and comprehensive reports and briefings. They have definitely made our decision a lot easier as a commission. The things that I really like that is contained within the six ordinances are that it is consistent with the Pulse Corridor Plan and Downtown Master Plan, it reestablishes the street grid. Like the transit center, I do not love the location. He stated I do like the attention to bicycle and pedestrian travel through downtown. I hope and expect that as the project moves forward, we get to weigh in further with regard to urban design in a meaningful way because there is still a lot of work to be done and those details will really matter when it comes to this new urban experience downtown. I do hope and expect that the Department of Social Services is integrated into this area in a way that is dignified and honorable. He stated I plan on supporting the six ordinances.

Ms. Reid stated being part of the staff that has been in negotiations with the project, it is very important to say that staff has put in countless hours along with the developer and others but the staff has done a heavy lift but this project is unlike other city projects so we can say lessons learned from the past. The city attorney's office has been at the table during negotiations, the city attorney's office hired outside counsel to ensure protections for the city. The City's financial advisors have been at the table and through our staff here at the City working with the applicant; she stated I think it is the best project that I have seen for the City. And reviewing past projects for the City, I can say that City staff has heard the Council and that there are projects for the City that they were not pleased with,

they have heard the commission and again lessons learned. Being on the Board of the Greater Richmond Convention Center, it is impactful when you are losing 49,000 room nights, it is very impactful. It is impactful from an economic impact standpoint of those \$10 million dollars that is lodging revenue that could be directed right here to the City and in more support not just when individuals come into the city they are not just staying in our hotels but they are eating at our restaurants and spending money in our shopping centers so when you look at the countless lost revenue it is very impactful to the City. She stated she is looking forward to having that convention center, hotel, a new arena and we cannot do those things without making sure these ordinances are supported, so I will support moving forward for approval these ordinances to Council.

Ms. Greenfield stated she will support the proposed ordinances. She stated she would like to thank the development team and the staff for all their work and particularly the tour, that really put it in perspective for me how much this is needed in the downtown area but I do want to call attention to the affordable housing component and just say thank you, I am very excited about that, among other things. I hope that momentum continues to carry with similar proposals throughout the city.

Mr. Law stated I commend those persons who have been a part of this presentation and previous presentations relative to the Navy Hill Project. He stated I recall in a previous meeting a question was asked with regard to what was the biggest threat to the success of this effort and the answer was the biggest threat really is public education or public schools not being up to par. I thought that was a very astute answer. I remember when the Trailway's Bus Station was next door, I remember when this building did not exist, when the coliseum did not exist. This building cost about \$17M, the coliseum might have cost a little more than that. This took me back to a bit of history that covered more than fifty years. Ladies and gentlemen, I plan to support all of these ordinances enthusiastically. I will now take off my planning commission hat and put on my taxpayer citizen of Richmond hat. I was excited to learn that a team of people had gotten together and had taken the initiative to bring this project forward. I would be more than thrilled and excited to see a similar effort undertaken with regard to the public school system. The threat to this project can be eliminated with a few people putting their heads together and developing a plan to find out:

What will the citizens of Richmond support in the way of a public school system? Will you support small schools, smaller schools, do you support reduced classroom size, do you support giving more support to the teachers, do you support paying the teachers a professional wage in order to assure that our children will be properly taught, that is an investment that I think Richmonders need to consider and I think Richmonders will be willing to make the necessary investment to assure that not only this project succeeds but that the City becomes the city that we have all been dreaming about for the last several decades.

Mr. Poole stated, our role as the Planning Commission is to consider the zoning, the surplus, the reestablishment of the priority streets and street oriented commercial districts and the rezoning of the CM district and that is what our function is here today and I appreciate all of the members of the public who stuck to that issue and I thank you for that. He stated I plan to support these six ordinances but I also want to say that coming together, the applicant, the commission, the staff and the presentations to the general public, in virtually any venue that the public wanted to hear, has been most impressive to me and I would ask that the applicant continue to do that as we move forward on this project but I think that the voice of the commission in recommending to the City Council, these six ordinances will begin the process and is our function.

- 1. [ORD. 2019-213](#) To declare surplus and direct the conveyance of a portion of the City-owned real estate known as 601 East Leigh Street, consisting of 171,906± square feet, for nominal consideration to the Economic Development Authority of the City of Richmond.

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2019-213 - Stricken 20200210](#)
[Staff Report](#)
[Staff Report Presentation Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 1 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 2 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[20200210 Formal Navy Hill Public Comment Handout Justin Griffin](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Ellen Robertson, seconded by Commissioner David Johannas, that this Ordinance be recommended for approval to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

- 2. [ORD. 2019-214](#) To declare surplus and direct the conveyance of certain parcels, or portions thereof, of City-owned real estate known as 601 E. Leigh St., 501 N. 7th St., 808 E. Clay St., 800 E. Clay St., 500 N. 10th St., 500 E. Marshall St., 500 A E. Marshall St., 116 N. 7th St., 114 N. 7th St., 112 N. 7th St., and 401 E. Broad St. to The NH District Corporation for the purpose of facilitating the redevelopment of the area bounded generally by E. Leigh St. on the north, N. 10th St. on the east, E. Marshall St. on the south, and N. 5th St. on the west.

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2019-214 - Stricken 20200210](#)
[Staff Report](#)
[Staff Report Presentation Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 1 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 2 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[20200210 Formal Navy Hill Public Comment Handout Justin Griffin](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner David Johannas, seconded by Commissioner Lenora Reid, that this Ordinance be recommended to the City Council for approval with amendments per the Staff Report. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

3. [ORD. 2019-215](#) To close, to public use and travel, certain right-of-way areas comprised of portions of East Leigh Street, East Clay Street, North 5th Street, and North 7th Street, such portions together consisting of 44,590± square feet, to retain easements in certain of the closed right-of-way areas, and to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to accept the dedication of right-of-way improvements and property, consisting of approximately 66,977± square feet, in connection with the closing of the right-of-way areas, for the purpose of facilitating the redevelopment of the area bounded generally by East Leigh Street on the north, North 10th Street on the east, East Marshall Street on the south, and North 5th Street on the west.

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2019-215 - Stricken 20200210](#)
[Staff Report](#)
[Staff Report Presentation Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 1 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 2 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[20200210 Formal Navy Hill Public Comment Handout Justin Griffin](#)

A motion was made by Vice Chair Melvin Law, seconded by Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, that this Ordinance be recommended for approval to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

4. [ORD. 2019-217](#) To repeal ch. 30, art. IV, div. 26 (§§ 30-448.1-30-448.4) of the City Code; to amend ch. 30, art. IV, by adding therein a new div. 26 (§§ 30-448.1-30-448.8); and to amend City Code §§ 30-503, 30-519, 30-710.1, 30-710.4, 30-710.13, and 30-1220, all for the purpose of modifying the zoning regulations applicable in the CM Coliseum Mall District.

- Attachments:** [Ord. No. 2019-217 - Stricken 20200210](#)
[Staff Report](#)
[Comparison of New and Old CM Districts and B-4 District](#)
[Staff Report Presentation Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 1 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 2 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[20200210 Formal Navy Hill Public Comment Handout Justin Griffin](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Ellen Robertson, seconded by Commissioner John Thompson, that this Ordinance be recommended for approval to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

5. [ORD. 2019-218](#) To amend the official zoning map for the purpose of designating certain street blocks as “priority streets” and certain street blocks as “street-oriented commercial streets” in the area bounded generally by East Leigh Street on the north, North 10th Street on the east, East Marshall Street on the south, and North 5th Street on the west.

- Attachments:** [Ord. No. 2019-218 - Stricken 20200210](#)
[Staff Report](#)
[Staff Report Presentation Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 1 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[Applicant Presentation 2 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)
[20200210 Formal Navy Hill Public Comment Handout Justin Griffin](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, seconded by Commissioner David Johannas, that this Ordinance be recommended for approval to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

6. [ORD. 2019-219](#) To rezone the properties known as 601 E. Leigh St., 501 N. 7th St., 808 E. Clay St., 800 E. Clay St., 500 N. 10th St., 900 E. Marshall St., 406 N. 7th St., 408 A N. 7th St., 500 E. Marshall St., and 500 B E. Marshall St. from the B-4 Central Business District to the CM Coliseum Mall District.

Attachments: [Ord. No. 2019-219 - Stricken 20200210](#)

[Staff Report](#)

[Staff Report Presentation Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)

[Applicant Presentation 1 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)

[Applicant Presentation 2 Navy Hill Project 16 October 2019 Planning Commission Meeting](#)

[20200210 Formal Navy Hill Public Comment Handout Justin Griffin](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, seconded by Commissioner John Thompson, that this Ordinance be recommended for approval to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 9 - * Chair Rodney Poole, * Vice Chair Melvin Law, * Commissioner David Johannas, * Commissioner Vivek G. Murthy, * Commissioner Ellen Robertson, * Commissioner Elizabeth Hancock Greenfield, * Commissioner Max Hepp-Buchanan, * Commissioner John Thompson and * Commissioner Lenora Reid

Upcoming Items

Mr. Ebinger stated for our next regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, October 21, 2019, we will have two special use permits, an Urban Design Committee item, as well as other items.

Adjournment

Mr. Poole adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

All persons attending the meeting are requested to register on the attendance sheets. Once you have completed an attendance sheet, it should be provided to the Commission staff.