

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, January 8, 2020, for the purpose of meeting with Beltway Plaza regarding a proposed preliminary plan of subdivision.

Mayor Byrd started the meeting at 8:31p.m. It was held in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Colin A. Byrd.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Nicole Ard, City Manager; Terri Hruby, Director of Planning and Community Development; Molly Porter, Community Planner; Charise Liggins, Economic Development Coordinator; Laura Allen, City Treasurer Designate; and David E. Moran, Assistant City Manager.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Kap Kapastin, Beltway Plaza; Michael Lenhart, Lenhart Traffic Consulting; Alex Villegas, Rodgers Consulting; Mathew Tedesco, Attorney for the Applicant; multiple Beltway Plaza tenants; Mason Nelson, representing Franklin Park and others.

Mr. Tedesco asked that tenants be allowed to make brief remarks. Multiple Beltway Plaza tenants provided testimony for support of the plan and the need for redevelopment at the mall to bring in more customers.

Ms. Mach asked about how to keep tenants during the redevelopment of the mall. Mr. Kapastin responded that Beltway Plaza has moved tenants in the past. He indicated tenants would be relocated to other retail/commercial space at the mall.

Mr. Jordan thanked the tenants for attending and being at Beltway Plaza.

Ms. Davis stated that Council was not the enemy and expressed appreciation for the tenants and Mr. Kapastin's efforts to keep Beltway Plaza vital. She agreed Beltway Plaza needed to change, but that Council had to carefully review the plan and consider density and Greenbelt's needs.

Mr. Tedesco thanked the tenants and thanked Council for allowing them to be heard.

Mr. Villegas presented a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the proposal. He thanked City staff for working with them during the review process.

Ms. Davis asked if the Berwyn Heights ladder truck could navigate the roadways and turns shown on the plan. Mr. Villegas agreed to check this.

Mayor Byrd asked staff to make their presentation.

Ms. Porter stated that staff was continuing to review the revised plans. She noted the Advisory Planning Board had just reviewed the plan earlier in the evening and the Park and Recreation Advisory Board would review the plan next week.

Ms. Porter outlined staff concerns as follows:

- 1. The Traffic Impact Study doesn't include all the pertinent intersections.*
- 2. Breezewood Drive traffic projections are low.*
- 3. Projections for a 20% reduction in transit trips are too high and the State Highway Administration has also commented these are too high.*
- 4. The need for an engineering study of Breezewood Drive.*
- 5. Recreation – Applicant has offered 20,000 square feet of interior space which staff believes needs to be higher. There has also been talk about monetary contributions for the maintenance of Greenbelt Middle School ballfields and an addition to the Springhill Lake Recreation Center.*
- 6. Review Time – staff stressed the need for more time to review the plan including exhibits that had been submitted recently and noted that the current planning board hearing was set for February 6.*
- 7. School capacity – staff believed this was a major issue that needed to be addressed.*
- 8. Housing concern – staff noted all the units were proposed to be multi-family and lacked owner occupied housing units.*

Mr. Roberts asked about the site across from Beltway Plaza and using it for recreation. Ms. Porter responded that this has been broached with the applicant. Mr. Roberts suggested Beltway Plaza provide/acquire this site as well as the scrapyard site. He expressed concern about the lack of open space in this plan.

Mr. Nelson stated that the review schedule was brutal. He noted the preliminary plan had been revised. Mr. Mason indicated that comment letters were done and the plans were revised again. He listed traffic study concerns and agreed to provide a report to the City. Mr. Nelson stated the traffic study was flawed and seriously underestimates the traffic counts. He believed there should be an interior perimeter service road, the density was too intense and this redevelopment should generate no more traffic than the road network can support. Mr. Nelson stated that Franklin Park was asking the City to ask the County to slow this process down.

Ms. Davis asked about street dedication. Ms. Porter responded that none of the interior streets are proposed to be dedicated to the City.

Ms. Davis asked about ownership of the property across the street and indicated it was part of the plan at one point. Mr. Kapastin responded it was not owned by Beltway Plaza and never part of the plan. Ms. Davis expressed concern about the proposed housing mix (own vs rent vs senior) and that it could all end up as 2,500 rental units. She expressed disappointment with the latest plan and felt it was too different from the Conceptual Site Plan (CSP). Ms. Davis stated she could not accept the plan. It would not benefit the Beltway Plaza merchants or its Franklin Park neighbors and adjoining communities.

Mr. Jordan referenced the Memorandum of Understanding and noted the diverse mix of residential types listed. He asked why the mix was changed. He also wanted a better understanding of the phasing. Mr. Jordan stated this was a big change.

Mr. Tedesco stated the Preliminary Plan tests adequacy and does not approve a certain product or housing type. He stated the plan was to ensure that a worst case scenario was adequate and reiterated that it didn't include specific product types.

Mr. Villegas responded that they received comments from the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) about safety and physical constraints of the site. He noted that some of the comments received were conflicting. Mr. Jordan asked about the phasing. Mr. Villegas stated the phasing was still the same as in the CSP. Mr. Kapastin indicated that it would take 5-15 years for the retail phase to build out. He was worried about the viability of the tenants, noting that foot traffic at Beltway Plaza was down.

Mr. Kapastin indicated that Beltway Plaza can't commit to a specific housing type until they have someone willing to build it.

Ms. Hruby stated that staff was not averse to changing the townhouse type, but this proposal was a departure from the CSP. She elaborated that this plan affects the green space functionality and changes the circulation on the site. Ms. Hruby indicated there were some positive aspects such as reducing the residential in the front, but staff needed to ensure that this was working cohesively.

Mr. Tedesco stated it was the same number of residential units shown on the CSP and from a Preliminary Plan perspective that is what they needed to test. He stated there was an increase in green space in this plan. Mr. Tedesco believed multi-family cured some of the problems in the CSP.

Ms. Mach expressed support for changing townhouse to multi-family if it was cooperatively owned multi-family. She reiterated the need for senior cooperative housing and limited equity cooperative housing.

Mr. Putens was appalled that Council was looking at a totally different plan and asked how we got here. He stated there was no recreation and traffic circulation was an issue. He agreed that this was a bait and switch. He expressed concern about the number of residents and that City services could not support it.

Mr. Roberts referenced examples of the City acquiring the Sunrise property and the Old Greenbelt Theater in exchange for charitable tax deductions and forgiveness of debt. He discussed new apartment developments (i.e. Brickyard & Route 1) where ground floor retail had not developed as anticipated. Mr. Roberts reiterated concerns about the lack of playing fields in Greenbelt West.

Mr. Jordan talked about the need for adequate public facilities, especially regarding schools and education and stated it was a big problem. He believed developers and landowners needed to figure out a creative way to address school capacity needs. Mr. Jordan suggested public-private partnerships as a solution to this challenge.

Ms. Davis discussed the proposed hotel noting that Greenbelt already had many hotels. She asked about the five structured parking garages and asked if patrons would have to walk from the garages to the retail. She asked about a second noise study. Ms. Porter responded that this was required at the detail site plan phase. Ms. Davis asked that it be added to the City's conditions.

Ms. Pope agreed that what the City was seeing today was very different from what the City saw previously. She agreed that something needed to be done at Beltway Plaza and expressed concern about the lack of senior housing in the plan. Ms. Pope observed the list of City concerns and conditions had now grown since the CSP was approved.

Mr. Orleans requested that Mr. Kapastin provide the list of 125 marketing contacts to the public.

Mr. Tedesco stated they are still committed to the conditions in the CSP. He indicated the notion that they are not doing anything for the City is false and cited the 20,000 square feet of usable indoor recreation space that would be donated to the City and the increase in green space as examples. Mr. Tedesco again stated that the preliminary plan has to test the worst case scenario. He stated he has 100% confidence that the transportation analysis is correct and consistent with requirements from M-NCPPC and agreed to provide responses to City staff to Mr. Nelson's points.

Mr. Villegas appreciated the feedback and stated the preliminary plan was consistent with the CSP. Mr. Villegas stated that the existing parking structures would be replaced with multi-level structures and each of the multi-family buildings would have its own garage.

Mr. Roberts stated that all the garage parking would be a public safety nightmare, especially on the low levels.

Mr. Jordan was hoping to wrap the garages and expressed concern about the circulation plan.

Mr. Putens again expressed concern with the large increase in residents and about the lack of City facilities and schools to serve these new residents.

Mr. Kapastin stated that there were only 20 school age children students living at Verde apartments. He indicated that Mr. Roberts should not be providing tax advice. Mr. Kapastin stressed the need to make things better for the tenants. He believed the math was flawed regarding the potential school age children generated by this development. Regarding the hotel, he noted they have been contacted by hotel developers who expressed a very preliminary interest. Mr. Kapastin expressed hurt about the "bait & switch" comments made at the meeting.

Ms. Davis reiterated the school construction needs.

Mr. Orleans suggested a visioning session about what the future of Beltway Plaza/Greenbelt West should look like.

Information Items

Ms. Ard noted problems with the City's phone system and that staff may need to bring a proposal forward to upgrade the system.

The meeting ended at 10:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*