

## PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

March 12, 2024 – 5:30 P.M.

Hybrid Meeting

### I. COMMISSION PRE-MEETING (Agenda discussion(s))

**Beginning:** 4:30 PM

**Location:** NDS Conference Room

**Members Present:** Commissioner Roettger, Commissioner Stolzenberg, Commissioner Solla-Yates, Commissioner Joy, Chairman Mitchell, Commissioner Schwarz, Commissioner d’Oronzio, Commissioner Habbab

**Staff Present:** Patrick Cory, Missy Creasy, Matt Alfele, Ryan Franklin, James Freas

Vice Chair Schwarz called the meeting to order. He then asked if lighting was required for the Flint Hill plan. It was noted that it was not. Commissioner Stolzenberg asked about site addressing for the location on the site plan and it was noted that the proposal was approved through the addressing process. Chair Mitchell arrived. There was a discussion about preapplication discussions for ECRB applications. Ms. Creasy noted the guidance provided to a requestor including an introduction of the project and a list of questions they are interested in having ECRB weigh in on. The presentation could be up to 10 minutes with time following for the Commission to provide feedback. Ms. Creasy provided an overview of known items for the April 2024 Commission agenda.

Chair Mitchell introduced Betsy Roettger and noted that he would have her provide an additional introduction in the regular meeting. Commissioner Solla-Yates pointed out a change needed to the minutes on the consent agenda. Mr. Freas will provide an update on the RFP noted in the media during the regular meeting. Commissioner Roettger asked for clarification on the agenda layout and items. A brief discussion of the Council’s discussion on potentially changing public hearings was held.

### II. COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING – Meeting called to order by Chairman Mitchell at 5:30 PM

**Beginning:** 5:30 PM

**Location:** City Hall Chambers

#### A. COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

**Commissioner Stolzenberg** – I have had 2 meetings since our last meeting. The first meeting was LUPEC last month. We have another one coming up on Friday. We talked about the Fontaine Research Park, the new biotech building there, the new parking garage there, and the other space in between. They are aiming to make it more pedestrian friendly, less like a suburban research park with tons of parking. There will be more streets. All the streets have the same name. They will be adding some new names for the streets. They have started the new roundabout at the entrance, which will have a bus stop with transit service there. We had a presentation from the RWSA about the raising of the water level in Ragged Mountain. That had been long planned since they made the new dam. It was big enough to accommodate this increase. They had planned to raise it sometime in the future for resiliency and just to have more water in our supply. We had a conversation about the Fontaine interchange smart-scale project. With MPO Tech, we had a discussion about smart-scale. Hillsdale South is not going to be able to be submitted. There was some talk about some intersections on Pantops in the county. Those likely won’t be submitted again because they scored poorly last time. The things that will be submitted will be what is coming out of the Barracks Road pipeline project. I hope that you all saw the survey that VDOT sent

around. It has already closed because they are on a tight timeline. What they are talking about is a shared use path running along the south side of Barracks Road from Emmet Street out to Georgetown Road. That would require a roundabout at both exits off 250 to have enough room under the underpass to have room for that shared use path. They are talking about a roundabout at Georgetown Road. There are other alternatives in there of more conventional intersections. The long-range transportation plan is still underway. We had a lengthy discussion about that and the Fontaine Project. The Fontaine Project was a smart-scale project from several years ago. One of the big drivers for VDOT wanting to do this was that right now, as you are driving north on 29 at the 64 intersections, you must make a left turn across 29 to get onto 64 westbound. There is a lot of traffic doing that. It is dangerous. VDOT wants to divert to close out the left turn and divert those trucks to keep going up 29, go to the Fontaine interchange, and to make a U-turn and make a right. The project that was approved got most of its points off the shared use path that was in there because of its land use score. It also included a displaced left turn, in which there would free flow northbound traffic to make a left, which would be on the south side of that Fontaine bridge and have free flow back down onto 29 southbound. There were concerns raised by UVA that the plan would not accommodate future traffic from the expansion at Fontaine Research Park. It would have required a loop/turnaround point. If you want to go left but not go back on 29, you would have had to make a right onto Fontaine eastbound and make a U-turn. That would have occurred on UVA property. There was lots of discussion about this over the last 6 months. VDOT hired these consultants to look at different plans for this. All the parties have agreed on a conventional signalized intersection with lights. There will be 2 turn lanes that go into Fontaine. Overall, it will operate similarly now. There was concern that this wouldn't help with that 29 left turn issue. VDOT has determined that they can still close that left turn onto 64. MPO policy has made the decision. If it stays within the bounds and the budget of the original smart scale project, VDOT will allow it. During the design, there will be a lot of concerns to pay attention to particularly with how pedestrians and bikes on that shared use path will get through safely given that there is a free flow right turn lane into Fontaine. Those sorts of things will be determined in the future as the design progresses. The big change is that they are going with the conventional intersection for the Fontaine area. That is separate from the city's Fontaine street-scape project.

**Commissioner Schwarz** – The only meeting that I attended was last month's BAR meeting. The only item of interest was a preliminary discussion for a 3-story apartment building in the Venable neighborhood. There was a mix-up where the applicant had thought that the property was zoned RX-3 because that was the last thing on the latest map before the final maps were issued. It was an RX-5 property. The applicant decided to continue with their preliminary discussion with a 3-story apartment building. They did say that the 3-story project is a walkup. There is one stair. It is a much simpler building. They may end keeping it for that case. We continued to discuss our guidelines. I know that staff discussed how to move that process along.

**Commissioner Habbab** – The Tree Commission met last week. The Inflation Reduction Act Grant was awarded and approved. It had some hiccups. They finally worked it through. That will go to funding a canopy study, training volunteers, and the urban forest plan. RX Fire, which is a contractor that does some of the invasive control is mulching at Free Bridge. It is a property of about 1.8 acres. There wasn't anything to save there. They are going to be replanting trees in that area. They want to do most invasive control items before April. Part of that would be John Warner Parkway, Oak Street, and Quarry Park. The Downtown Mall Tree Management Plan is slated to be completed this summer. That will include what should go, what to do with all the trees, how to remove them, what trees need removal, and how you replace those trees. It is a little complicated on The Mall. Those trees are large at the root systems. If you want to remove the tree and get into the root system, it goes under the bricks. It is going to be a tough job. We will look forward to what they must share in the summer.

**Commissioner Solla-Yates** – I have been telling people about the new development code. It is not on Muni Code. It is on the city website. It is a PDF. It is on the city GIS website on the zoning layer.

**Commissioner d’Oronzio** – With the HAC updates, we are working on a land bank. We came up with a basic work plan on how to get there and scheduled a series of subcommittee meetings to get that underway. We are getting back on track on how to move that forward. Chairman Mitchell, you asked about the social Democratic Socialist Society of America’s meeting on green social housing. It was a meeting that was a panel discussion, which included Councilor Payne to discuss how a land bank in the city would fit in with a green social housing; not so much the green, which would be ubiquitous. The social, housing, and affordability was very well attended with about 80 members of the public. There was a high degree of interest. There were a couple new members of the HAC there. Councilor Oschrein was there. I gave an update to the group. Some of what they are advocating for has already happened. There seems to be a great amount of interest there. The Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund (CAHF) Committee report is out. It is up for the meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, the CDBG Task Force is meeting. We have 5 or 6 meetings scheduled to get that sorted out. Last Thursday, The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission met. One item of interest to me was the Regional Transit Governance Study presentation. There is a lot of working being done and the coordinating of transportation policy and the governance of that and how to establish something on a more regional level. This was a 100-page study on how to do this. It is frustrating. There is a large couple of highlights. There is a dichotomy of the needs between the rural areas and their need for transit and what is needed and how to engineer that versus the inner urban ring and the city of Charlottesville. That work in the rural county needs a centralized coordinated body like a transit authority. Fortunately, the legislature did authorize a statute that we can fund and stand up the Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transit Authority. There are several of those in the state. Our version has less power to acquire money than the others unfortunately. Part of this had to do with possible funding options. The short answer is that they all stink. It is the outlining counties that need the organizational structure first. The Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transit Authority requires that the sole members of this organization be Charlottesville and Albemarle. They must establish it and then they can invite in the surrounding members of the commission. We are in a position where the city and county must get together so that we can invite the others in. Once we have done that, figure out how we are going to govern this thing and go back to the legislature. Part of the study was to look at similar communities like ours to see how they manage these funds, coordinate these processes. They all have a somewhat different model. There was universal appreciation for the Blacksburg model. The town of Blacksburg runs it. Christiansburg pays a little bit for their service. Virginia Tech pays for all of it. There is a lot of work to be done in terms of getting the interim group up and moving.

**Commissioner Roettger** – I have lived here for about 20 years. I went to school here. I came back to try out teaching at UVA. I have always been interested with what is going on in town. I went to school for architecture. I am much more interested in the public spaces that it is creating and the policies that go behind creating great public spaces. I am glad to be here.

## **B. UNIVERSITY REPORT**

**Commissioner Joy** – We had our Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting at the end of February. I previously mentioned the Darden Graduate Housing. That is now formally approved. That will be 350 beds literally out the door of Saunders Hall. That will be a nice addition for the graduate experience there. There was another key project that would be helpful for this Commission to know about. That is the parking garage on North Grounds. There is 1000-car parking garage that is slated to be at the northwest corner of Massie and Copley. There are some 1960s era garden apartments that are there. Whereas we know losing housing is not ideal right now, the idea is that this consolidated parking will help enable future infill on sites that are currently surface parking. It is a strategic addition to the North Grounds. I think that it will help with some of the commuter load at the hospital and our events. It will hopefully be open in 2 years.

## **C. CHAIR’S REPORT**

**Chairman Mitchell** – We are probably going to ask you (Commissioner Roettger) to take on 2 or 3 additional committees. I believe that we have at least 2 or 3 openings. There were a couple of meetings. One meeting was Parks and Recreation. The dogs and dog waste and dogs on/off leashes remains a big topic of conversation. We are just beginning that. As we get further along, I will update you on that. People are talking about it, and we are working on it. The Parks and Rec Master Plan is underway. We also talked about the garden plots. The garden plots are now available.

#### **D. DEPARTMENT OF NDS**

**Missy Creasy, NDS Deputy Director** – We don't have a March work session specific to the Planning Commission. City Council will be having a work session on the decarbonization study. Everyone is invited to attend that. You could attend virtual or in person. If 3 of you end up in the room, it is Ok for that to occur.

**James Freas, NDS Director** – The press has been reporting on an RFP released this week for on call support for design review services. The purpose is to be able to have an as needed basis, additional support for design review under the new zoning ordinance. That is the primary purpose. As we go forward through this bringing on board the new zoning ordinance, I think of it as ongoing learning and experimentation process. As we learn from our experience with the ordinance, we are aware of the value of being able to put out information on how the new ordinance works. The other role that this on call consultant will be able to provide to us is help developing those educational pieces.

We are advertising one or two intern spots coming up this week. One of the projects that we have identified for an intern to work on will be a street tree strategy working with the urban forester and Parks and Rec to look at strategies for promoting more street trees within the city and protecting the ones we have. We anticipate the conclusion of that project will include a presentation to the Planning Commission on their work. One of their work products will be an ordinance related to street trees at the end of the summer.

**Commissioner Stolzenberg** – Do we have a sense of what kind of firms would respond to that sort of RFP?

**Mr. Freas** – Architecture and design firms. We sent it out to both local and national firms.

**Commissioner Roettger** – They would be working for the city. The city would provide assistance for free to applicants.

**Mr. Freas** – It is paid by the city. It is set up now as an extension of staff time and expertise. We will see how it evolves over time. If it becomes something useful, we may offer it in the future as more of a traditional peer review where it is paid for by an applicant. Given the newness of the ordinance, we have set it up this way.

**Commissioner Stolzenberg** – Will they be doing plan review or general advice?

**Mr. Freas** – It is set up for both because it is as we need. We are in new territory. To a certain extent, what are we going to need as we go forward? We have seen an uptick, not in applications, but interest under the new ordinance. We are trying to be ready for that.

#### **E. MATTERS TO BE PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC NOT ON THE FORMAL AGENDA**

No Public Comments

#### **F. CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Minutes – October 10, 2023 – Regular Meeting
2. Minutes – August 9, 2022 – Regular Meeting

3. Site Plan/Subdivision – Flint Hill PUD

**Commissioner Solla-Yates – Second by Commissioner d’Oronzio – Motion passes 6-0 and 5-0 with 1 abstention (Commissioner Roettger).**

**III. JOINT MEETING OF COMMISSION AND COUNCIL**

*Beginning:* 6:00 PM

*Continuing:* Until all public hearings are complete

*Format:* (i) Staff Report, (ii) Applicant, (iii) Hearing, (iv) Discussion and Motion

No Scheduled Hearings

**IV. Commission’s Action Items**

No Additional Items

**Commissioner Solla-Yates** – I have something from the public that I would like to raise. I have had a few questions about public safety, especially around 5<sup>th</sup> Street. It has been some time since we have had an update from our transportation planning team. Could that be considered for the future?

**Mr. Freas** – I had a third item that I wanted to mention. I will be speaking on the 18<sup>th</sup> to City Council on our work program for the upcoming year. It would be nothing unfamiliar with you guys. We talked about it at a previous meeting, the projects coming out of the adoption of the zoning ordinance. In addition to that, our transportation planning program will be presenting to Council on April 15<sup>th</sup> and be doing a detailed review of everything that is happening, including a grant we received from VDOT where VDOT will be leading a study of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street corridor from Cherry all the way to the entrance of 5<sup>th</sup> Street Station.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 PM.