

**Marymount University Task Force
Meeting 3 | June 8, 2006
Minutes**

In attendance:

Michael Foster, Task Force Chair, Planning Commission
Peter Fallon, Transportation Commission
Anne Wilson, Donaldson Run Civic Association
Maxine Nagel, Donaldson Run Civic Association
Christine Smith, Old Dominion Civic Association (arrived late)
Pamela Gillen, Old Dominion Civic Association
David Wahl, Rock Spring Civic Association
David Haring, Yorktown Civic Association (left early)
Peter Judge, Washington Golf
Loretta Seigley, VP Academics, Marymount University
Christopher Domes, VP Enrollment Management & Student Affairs, Marymount University

Abby Denham, WCLEW
Art Walsh, WCLEW
Robert Kohler, Wells
Martin Wells, Wells
Robert Atkinson, DCS Design
Steve Saff, DCS Design

Jill Griffin, Arlington County, CPHD
Robert Gibson, Arlington County, DES

Will Anthony, Neighbor
Ken Busey, Neighbor
Vaughn Collins, Neighbor
Laura Fall, Neighbor
Maureen Farrell, Neighbor
Peach Ohlerich, Neighbor
Tom Simpson, Neighbor

The meeting started at 7:05 p.m.

Introductions

Michael Foster asked for brief introductions. He then provided a review of the agenda and suggested that agenda item 4 be placed after item 5. There was overall agreement.

Review of Task Force Charge

Mr. Foster reviewed the task force charge again. He stated that the task force is trying to reach consensus and looking to see that the proposed project has compatibility with the area. He further explained that the task force is to give guidance to the County Board – and be able to balance the concerns raised throughout the process.

Review of Use Permit

Jill Griffin reviewed the use permit definition from the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Foster asked for clarification to understand that no variances are permitted under the use permit. Ms. Griffin responded that there were no variances requested with this revised use permit application.

Peter Fallon asked for further clarification. Ms. Griffin stated that, while staff is still reviewing the revised plans, it appears as though there are no variances from the Zoning Ordinance.

Informational Overview & Update of Proposal

Robert Atkinson stated that they received further clarification about the required setback requirements of the Zoning Ordinance from the Zoning Administrator. Mr. Atkinson stated that the project was redesigned and showed the old plan as compared to the revised plan. He reviewed the "Revised Space Calculations" chart with the task force.

In summary, the project was reduced by 59 parking spaces, 24 beds, 5,799 square feet of academic space and 4,466 square feet of commons area. The auditorium space expanded slightly (4,469 square feet) – through an expansion into the parking garage.

Mr. Atkinson explained that the proposed pedestrian bridge was shifted – bringing it closer to the middle of the new complex and more central to the main campus. This shift will make the bridge longer and, as a result, more expensive.

Mr. Atkinson also explained that the loading dock was reduced to one berth. He explained that most of the receiving is on the main campus. The loading dock would be used primarily upon the initial use of the facility.

David Wahl asked for clarification about the sections and the elevations of the revised projects.

Mr. Fallon questions the types of deliveries, the size of the loading dock and the turning movements. Steve Saff answered that the loading dock was 12-feet by 55-feet and it would accommodate a truck without impeding the sidewalk. Mr. Atkinson stated that they are still studying the turning movements along Yorktown Boulevard.

Mr. Atkinson discussed the architecture of the building. He stated that they reviewed the architecture in the neighborhoods, the church, and the university and recognized that the architecture was very diverse. Therefore, they decided to use the university style (a classical revival) as the template for the design. They created a series of pavilions with smaller lengths of the buildings.

Mr. Atkinson also discussed the pedestrian access around the site. Art Walsh emphasized the changed orientation of the pedestrian bridge. He stated that such a crossing would require additional funds and approval by Arlington County.

Mr. Atkinson explained that the redesign pulled back the building and created more of an "object building." They are still looking at the color of the roofs – which are currently red. The buildings will remain a light color.

Mr. Wahl commented that the textures are important.

Mr. Atkinson stated that they are still working on modeling because only pieces of the building will be seen – especially with the setback.

David Haring questioned the number of units compared to the number of beds. He stated that there was a large reduction in the number of rooms but not in beds.

Mr. Fallon asked the university if the revised bed count worked for the university. Christopher Domes, from the university, stated that it meets the current needs.

Anne Wilson asked about the heights. Mr. Atkinson gave an overview of average site elevation. He stated that the height on Old Dominion is 39 feet and the height on Yorktown is 64 feet.

Ms. Wilson asked about the additional height on the dorms. Mr. Atkinson stated that the floor-to-ceiling height for the dorms was reduced and an additional floor was added.

Mr. Fallon asked staff to clarify average height. Ms. Griffin provided an explanation.

Mr. Haring questioned the number of seats in the auditorium.

Mr. Fallon asked about the streetscape and the reduction of parking spaces.

Mr. Foster suggested that one element of compatibility was to ensure that no part of the parking garage was exposed. Mr. Atkinson stated that a bit may be exposed on 26th Street and they are working on this issue.

Pamela Gillen asked about the campanile placement. Mr. Atkinson explained that the campanile should be on the axis with the pedestrian bridge spanning Yorktown Boulevard.

Ms. Gillen asked about the span of the classroom space along 26th Street. She also stated that the rendering indicates undulation but the plan view is not as articulated.

Ms. Gillen clarified that the second row of trees along Old Dominion Drive would be located above the parking garage. The architects confirmed this.

Ms. Gillen asked if the auditorium could be shifted to the corner. This would allow for some lower heights. Mr. Atkinson responded that they looked at a variety of options. Mr. Foster suggested that an auditorium on the outside may not provide the compatibility as it may require blank walls.

Mr. Foster shared with the community and the task force the current analysis of this proposal. First, there has been a history of looking at the alternative sites. The applicant has studied options. Second, there is a parking problem that affects the community – a point of contention – and that placing parking on the periphery of the campus is actually safer for the pedestrian environment. He suggested that an underground parking facility is more desirable than above-ground. Finally, it had been suggested that dorms on the campus may equal less trips – but the trip generation would be approximately the same.

Mr. Atkinson explained that the original mater plan by Leo Daly had numerous buildings scattered throughout the campus. He explained that they looked at options including the placement of the proposal on the parking lot in front of the “Lodge.” He explained that this placement had three problems: concerns with the historic elements of the Lodge as it is the oldest building on the campus; concerns about the fire access between the buildings; and concern about the urban design – the proposal may help to better define the street.

Ms. Wilson asked whether the buildings could be on the university as it is "R-10" zoning. Mr. Fallon suggested that the property could be rezoned from R-10 to S-3A.

Mr. Fallon then stated that he hasn't seen a transportation impact analysis (TIA) that states there is an impact. The TIA should establish the baseline – look at the new – and manage the difference.

Ms. Wilson asked about a garage entrance off of Glebe Road. She suggested that traffic patterns would be different for 26th Street. Marty Wells concurred.

Peter Judge asked about the net impact – and how to factor the current traffic. Currently people drive to the university – don't find any parking and continue to drive around. He suggested that the impact may be less than anticipated. Mr. Wells stated that the estimates are conservative.

Mr. Wahl stated that the existing garage is a success.

Mr. Fallon suggested that the absence of parking drives the trips now. With additional parking – perhaps people will drive to and from the campus. He stated this is why a strong Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan is necessary.

Art Walsh indicated that the university already has self-imposed restrictions for parking.

Task Force Discussion

5a. Zoning/Use Permit

There was no discussion or questions.

5b. Transportation, Streetscape & Parking

Mr. Fallon asked about the traffic analysis. He was also concerned about the mechanics of the parking garage and the clear line of sight from the garage entrances. Mr. Fallon asked about the intersection of 26th Street and Yorktown Boulevard. He also questioned the width of the streetscape – if it is 40 feet – perhaps more than just lawn panels and trees.

Ms. Gillen asked about Old Dominion and the capital improvement project. This proposal allows for improvements past 26th Street and provides an opportunity to review all of the lane widths to make the merge area smooth.

Robert Gibson stated that there will be a signal at 26th Street and Old Dominion Dr. This is the best opportunity to address the merging area. Staff is working with VDOT – but the funding is earmarked and the signal is warranted.

Ms. Gillen asked about meshing all of these projects because DES is working on all of the elements. This process may allow for the appropriate vetting.

Mr. Foster suggested that the task force could ask staff about the status of these projects in its report to the County Board.

Mr. Wells stated that they used the signal to model the traffic impact and recognized that the signal will help the traffic on 26th Street.

Ms. Gillen stated her concern about the synchronization.

Mr. Fallon asked about the university decision about the pedestrian bridge. Any other location could encourage more pedestrian traffic along 26th Street. Mr. Atkinson stated that they are pricing some of the pre-engineered bridges.

Mr. Fallon suggested review of the parking management plan – and faith that this tool will work.

The task force asked for a report from DES pertaining to these issues.

5c. Site Design & Characteristics

Mr. Atkinson stated that the scale is inherent in the redesign. He was asked to provide an acetate overlay to show the changes.

5d. Building Architecture

There was not discussion (see above comments)

5e. Sustainable Building Design Elements

Mr. Atkinson explained that they are still early in the schematic phase. However, they would take a first cut at the LEED scorecard – but without any commitment to the number of credits.

Ms. Gillen suggested that the university look at the maintenance and facility management of the entire university. This project may also be a candidate for the LEED – Commercial Interiors program.

Update from the Community

Mr. Judge stated that the changes were good so far and the project provides enhancement to the area. He does question the zoning, the sustainable design and is interested in seeing a report from DES about the coordination of traffic.

Ms. Gillen stated that the Old Dominion neighborhood is of mixed opinion – some supporters and some nay-sayers. She is personally pleased with the direction – but she would like to see some more view points of the campanile.

Mr. Wahl presented the letter from Paul Michl and summarized the contents. He stated that the elements have been examined fairly well and there is support. The project is consistent with the neighborhood and the task force needs to move forward. He stated that there is a large improvement with the broader promenade.

Ms. Wilson stated that Donaldson Run is a quiet community. The improvements are just that. There is still concern about traffic – specifically the traffic along 26th Street and she is not certain anything would alleviate that. She suggested that a third party review the TIA. She stated that she is okay with the garage – but is uncertain whether the size is appropriate. She would like to see additional work on 26th Street for traffic calming. She stated that the density of the project – especially the seven stories on Yorktown – is too much. There is concern about the multi-use of the project – an active area into the nights and weekends. The dormitory use is less palatable than the other proposed uses. She stated some concern about the auditorium. She suggested that any crossing over Yorktown Boulevard needed to work for the students.

Mr. Foster stated that there has been progress and would like to isolate the consensus points. First, there seems to be general consensus about the use but noted the concern about the dormitory use. Second, the parking garage appeared to have general consensus but details about parking management needed discussion. Third, the overall zoning seemed to have general consensus.

Ms. Gillen stated that there is general consensus of the landscaping – with the double row of trees. The setback with the streetscape and landscaping is compatible with the neighborhood.

Mr. Fallon stated that he would like to see more than a double-row of street trees. He would like to see a true streetscape.

Ms. Gillen agreed – the site should be well-landscaped.

Mr. Wahl stated that the county-owned land, if ever redeveloped, could change the scale of the neighborhood. Ms. Gillen stated that any master plan for the county land is far away.

Comments

Mr. Foster opened the meeting up to the citizens in attendance.

Ken Busey spoke and stated that he was surprised at the issues not raised by the Donaldson Run representatives. He spoke of construction (timing, hours, and staging); parking relocation during construction; noise mitigation with the dormitory; and lighting.

Mr. Foster explained that these are more operational elements and that the task force has not reached that point. Mr. Fallon stated that it is not unusual for the community to address these issues in conditions.

Maureen Farrell asked whether the alternative plan was presented on behalf of Donaldson Run. [Ms. Wilson provided a copy of this plan to members of the task force].

Peach Ohlerich asked what Marymount's ten-year plan is for the community. She stated that the university is not residential in character.

Will Anthony expressed his concerns about traffic and commented that there was no solution offered. He lives on 26th Street and witnesses large traffic jams. He was concerned about the 26th Street and Yorktown intersection.

Vaughn Collins asked about the changes made without respect to the required setbacks. Distinguishing these changes from the required changes would be helpful to see.

Laura Fall asked about the change in the bed count. There was only a decrease by 24 beds. The proposal is a combination of the zoning requirements and reaction to concerns. However, she stated that the proposal did not do much for the neighborhood. There was no real decrease in density and that the proposal was an insulting change.

Tom Simpson agrees with the other neighbors. The project still overwhelms the neighborhood. He is concerned that the project would depress housing values. He stated that the task force was poorly conceived in that no nearby neighbor was included.

Conclusion

Mr. Foster wrapped up the task force meeting. The applicant was given their marching orders. Staff was asked to look at the roads, the parking and typical conditions. The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, July 6, 2006 at the Reinsch Library. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.