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5-12-12

**Gloria Sitton**

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**From:** Jackie Henderson  
**Sent:** Monday, May 14, 2012 8:39 AM  
**To:** Gloria Sitton  
**Subject:** FW: COA Contact Us: BSAP - item 12 for 5.12.12 docket  
**Attachments:** 766ba353c2ba8c4b0ddafac5a5e9bf1d.docx; ATT00001.txt

**From:** Jon Liss [<mailto:jlissva@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Friday, May 11, 2012 7:16 PM  
**To:** William Eulle; Frank Fannon; Kerry Donley; Alicia Hughes; Del Pepper; Paul Smedberg; Rose Boyd; Jackie Henderson; Rob Krupicka; Linda Owens; Elizabeth Jones  
**Subject:** COA Contact Us: BSAP - item 12 for 5.12.12 docket

**COA Contact Us: Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members**

Time: [Fri May 11, 2012 19:16:20] Message ID: [39388]

**Issue Type:** Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members  
**First Name:** Jon  
**Last Name:** Liss  
**Street Address:** 219 Burgess Avenue  
**City:** Alexandria  
**State:** Virginia  
**Zip:** 22305  
**Phone:** 703.549.4298  
**Email Address:** [jlissva@gmail.com](mailto:jlissva@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** BSAP - item 12 for 5.12.12 docket  
Critique and recommendations for consideration concerning BSAP. Thank you.  
**Comments:**  
**Attachment:** 766ba353c2ba8c4b0ddafac5a5e9bf1d.docx

TO: Mayor Euille and members of Council

FROM: Jon Liss

DATE: May 11, 2012

RE: Item #12 - Beauregard Small Area Plan

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Vote no on the BSAP – need more information regarding tenant incomes and needs, financial information regarding the proposed agreement with developers and the strengthening of language outlining the proposed agreement.

**Context:** The City of Alexandria has lost 12,000 market rate affordable homes over the last decade. The proposed Beauregard Small Area Plan (BSAP) will quickly eliminate 2,475 more units of affordable housing. Profit seeking developers with City approval are turning Alexandria into a City exclusively for the affluent with virtually no housing for low and moderate income people. The concentration of people of color in the West End is such that the elimination of market rate affordable housing also means the forced exodus of a large portion of Alexandria's people of color from Alexandria.

**Impact:** It is likely that within months of BSAP approval all families living in current 'market rate affordable units' in the BSAP area will be forced to move from the City of Alexandria.

- 1) In the last months increases in utility charges and rents of up to 30% have forced many tenants to leave. Rent increases have far exceeded increase in the cost of living. According to City analysis 1,500 units dropped from the affordable category between 2010 and 2011.
- 2) Going forward, there is no limit on rent increases for units located within the BSAP area.
- 3) The 2,475 units will be demolished according to market demand and at the developers' discretion. There is no commitment from the developers to 'freeze' current rents or demolish and (re)construct in phases to ensure continuous access to affordable housing for current residents.
- 4) The 'donated' units and many of the affordable 'to-be-built' units are not scheduled to be available until 2020 or 2028 and even that is based on market forces.
- 5) Approximately half of the money dedicated to affordable and workforce housing is from taxes from projected increases in the value of properties. If for any reason building is slowed or housing prices don't increase as anticipated then dedicated affordable units will be further delayed or there will less produced.

The multi-ethnic, vibrant community that lives in the West End will be completely displaced. There *may* be additional housing units but the whim of the market will determine their availability. With approval of this plan we can expect an accelerated exodus of low and moderate income working families who currently reside in the West End of Alexandria. Effectively the City will be a partner in the largest displacement of working class people of color since mass evictions at Shirley Duke /

Foxchase in the late 1970's. Hundreds of units should be protected from rent increases and preserved as affordable prior to the projected area wide redevelopment.

### **Policy Alternatives:**

#### *Financial Transparency; a prerequisite to Council Approval*

In every major development developers consistently threaten to build 'by-right'. That is they will develop the properties they own without concessions or benefits to the City. Developers and ultimately City officials claim that it will be much worse without City approval of the plan. The City has claimed their role is as a "partner and investor." For this project to be successful major current and future public resources will be dedicated to implementing this project. We need full and honest disclosure or **transparency** from the ownership grouping. The consortium of developers needs to open their books. No one argues that private owners are not legally entitled to a reasonable return on their investment. The difference between a City approved 'give-away' and a good public 'deal' can be verified through a thorough analysis of the value created by the City's investment and the City's 'up-zoning' of the property. We hear much of public – private partnership. No private investor would ever invest in a deal without a thorough economic analysis. We should expect nothing less from our elected officials.

#### *Tenant Needs Assessment prior to Council Approval*

The City of Alexandria in their housing policy paper called for a tenant 'needs survey' in the spring of 2012. Properly conducted this survey should help shape the housing portion of the small area plan. This survey has now been delayed until the fall of 2012. This is, presumably after the plan has been approved. If tenants and community are at the heart of the affordable housing component of the BSAP then it is obvious that this survey should be conducted prior to approval. Analysis of future dog populations, tree canopies, and traffic impacts are completed prior to plan consideration. Human and family needs should receive similar if not greater consideration.

#### *Language Parity between developers' commitments and public (Alexandria) obligations and commitment*

The 18 pages of the BSAP plan are cluttered with words like 'may', 'depending on market forces', 'potential(ly)', 'goal'. 'Preliminary target', 'some dedicated units', and 'shall negotiate in good faith'. Due diligence by the City Council should include the public benefits portion of the agreement having the same language as the portion of the plan that grants increased density rights to developers. In other words if the the developers were treated similarly they would be promised 'possible' increased density, 'some' increased density or a commitment from the City to 'negotiate in good faith' for increased density. More positively, language could be added that is clear and unequivocal in committing current and future owners to specific commitments by specific dates. Due diligence and adherence to standard business practices should lead the City to demand *language parity* between commitments 'to' and 'by' the City of Alexandria. Our community interests and benefits should be protected with rigor.

If approved, as is, without additional information or detail, the City will have bartered away a vibrant portion of our community. Five thousand or more people will be displaced. What is needed is a revised plan. Vote 'no' on the BSAP as proposed and instead spend the next 120 days improving the plan – insert real dates, timetables, and affordable housing commitments. Have parity in the language which offers increased density AND which protects current residents. Even at the cost of 'promised' units, secure more affordable units available now. As a good faith gesture, the City should secure a 120 day rent and utility charge freeze from all 5 property owners while the tenant survey and 'transparent financials analysis' are completed. Alexandria citizens, especially the 2,475 families at risk of displacement, deserve nothing less. ###