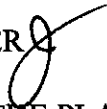


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 8, 2006

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF REFERRING TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR PROCESSING A TEXT AMENDMENT ON THE HUNTING CREEK AREA PLAN

ISSUE: Consideration of Referring to the Planning Commission for Processing a Text Amendment on the Hunting Creek Area Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council refer to the Planning Commission for processing a text amendment on the Hunting Creek Area Plan as described below.

DISCUSSION: The Hunting Creek Area Plan, which is a supplement to the Old Town Small Area Plan, was adopted by City Council in October 2005. The Hunting Creek Area Plan addresses land use on property south of the Beltway to the City limit, east and west of Washington Street. There are three properties in the area: the Porto Vecchio condominium, Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace.

Hunting Terrace, an apartment development is owned by an entity formed by Mr. Jay Kay, previous owner of the site, and Mr. Giuseppe Cecchi, who will serve as the managing partner for the redevelopment of the site. The owners have proposed to the City a development plan for the site.

The attached May 22, 2006, letter to Planning and Zoning Director Eileen Fogarty, from Howard Middleton, attorney for the owner, requests that a text amendment be initiated to allow additional height on the Hunting Terrace site in accordance with Section 3.4.3 of the Hunting Creek Area Plan. In his letter Mr. Middleton requests that the Zoning Ordinance be revised in order to allow the property owner to provide for an "extraordinary affordable housing" contribution, in exchange for allowing the height of the development to increase from the allowable 50 feet up to 150 feet.

Referral of this matter to the Planning Commission for processing of a text amendment would enable staff to review this request and present its recommendations to the Planning Commission and upon action by the Commission, to City Council for consideration.

ATTACHMENT: May 22, 2006 letter from J Howard Middleton to Eileen Fogarty

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director of Planning and Zoning

ReedSmith

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
ALEXANDRIA, VA

2006 MAY 25 P 1:06

J. Howard Middleton
Direct Phone: 703.641.4225
Email: jmiddleton@reedsmith.com

Reed Smith LLP
3110 Fairview Park Drive
Suite 1400
Falls Church, VA 22042-4503
703.641.4200
Fax 703.641.4340

May 22, 2006

Eileen Fogarty
Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22304

Re: Hunting Creek Area Plan; Affordable Housing Recommendation; Initiation of Text Amendment

Dear Ms. Fogarty:

The Hunting Creek Area Plan, Supplement to Old Town Small Area Plan ("Hunting Creek Plan"), was adopted by City Council in October 2005. The Hunting Creek Plan addresses land use on property south of the Beltway to the City limit, both east and west of Washington Street. This area consists solely of three properties: Portovecchio, a condominium; Hunting Towers, a rental apartment development presently owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation; and Hunting Terrace, an apartment development recently purchased by an entity formed by Mr. Jay Kay, the previous owner of the site, and Mr. Giuseppe Cecchi, who will serve as the managing partner for redevelopment of the site. As you are aware, the new owner, led by Mr. Cecchi, has proposed a redevelopment plan to the City as well as to the existing residents of the apartment development and has submitted a plan for concept review.

The Hunting Creek Plan incorporates sections entitled, "Affordable Housing Recommendations," including § 3.4.3 which reads as follows:

3.4.3 In order to retain affordable and workforce housing in the City, the City may consider a zoning text amendment or zone change to allow additional height and density with setbacks appropriate to the project and the site, and in conformance with the Board of Architectural Review's Washington Street Standards and Guidelines, with SUP approval, if the project provides for extraordinary affordable housing, including but not limited to the acquisition by the City, or by a nonprofit housing corporation, of units at the project.

In the process leading up to the adoption of the Hunting Creek Plan, this section was included by City Council with the purpose of encouraging an "extraordinary affordable housing" contribution. As you are aware, the Cecchi proposal does include an "extraordinary affordable housing" component.

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MUNICH ♦ PRINCETON ♦ FALLS CHURCH ♦ WILMINGTON ♦ NEWARK ♦ MIDLANDS, U.K. ♦ CENTURY CITY ♦ RICHMOND ♦ LEESBURG

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FRXLIB-418350.1-JHMIDDLE 5/22/06 11:13 AM

The purpose of this letter, written on behalf of the new owner of Hunting Terrace, is to request initiation of a zoning text amendment to allow additional height on the Hunting Terrace site in accordance with § 3.4.3 of the Hunting Creek Area Plan. As we proceed with consideration of development plans for the Hunting Terrace site, it is important that the Zoning Ordinance conforms to the Comprehensive Plan provisions recently adopted by Council. Presently, the Old and Historic Alexandria Height District provides that the maximum height of buildings and structures in the District must be no greater than 50 feet. We are therefore requesting that the Zoning Ordinance conform to the Comprehensive Plan and include a provision which permits heights greater than 50 feet on the Hunting Terrace site if the project provides for an "extraordinary affordable housing" contribution.

The area south of the Beltway and the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge construction creates a significantly different context for development from the portion of the Old and Historic Alexandria District extending north from the Beltway. The property subject to the Hunting Creek Plan consists of only three sites, two of which are developed with buildings extending well beyond the 50-foot height limitation. It is only logical that the area south of the Beltway and the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge is considered differently from the other parts of the Old and Historic Alexandria District to the north. In addition, § 3.4.3 relating to affordable housing, was clearly adopted to encourage affordable housing in the City. The zoning text amendment we are requesting will therefore effectuate the policy adopted by City Council in the Hunting Creek Plan.

We appreciate your kind cooperation on this request.

Yours truly,



J. Howard Middleton
Reed Smith LLP

JHM:vmi

cc: Richard Josephson
Jeffrey Farner
Harold Phipps
Gary Wagner
Mayor and Members of City Council
Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission
Giuseppe Cecchi
Carlos Cecchi

36
6-13-06



Ellen Pickering
<elpickering@juno.com>
06/12/2006 10:54 PM

To <jackie.henderson@alexandriava.gov>
cc
bcc

Subject Text Amendment item #36 6/13/06 please forward

Hi Jackie....Please Forward my comments on item #36 to the Mayor and members of City Council....maybe one day I will learn how to do this on my own.....Thank You and thanks from all of us for having such a responsive office ...Ellen Pickering

Mr. Mayor and Members Of City Council:

It is premature to send the text amendment on the Hunting Creek Area Plan to the Planning Commission for processing.

Just the vote sending this proposed text amendment to the Planning Commission, as you know, is the first step towards passage of the amendment. And, if you will, a sense of tacit approval of increasing height on Washington Street which is in the Historic District. The GW Parkway on Washington street has been given to Alexandria to protect the ambience associated with early days in our Country's history and it has been given the designation of a National Landmark on the National Register.

Community meetings laying out all the possible dimensions stemming from the proposed text amendment must be held before starting the process for approval.

Answers for questions such as:

What is the actual cost per unit for a \$45 million Cecchi offer, or the \$85 million asked by VDOT?

The loss of the ambience of Hunting Creek View of Alexandria as one enters the City?

Will additional height create an abrupt wall for the eye from the golf course and GW Parkway's gentle landscape?

What are the other potential ways to obtain affordable housing at Hunting Towers?

Section 3.4.3 of the Hunting Creek Area plan is nothing but Cecchi's lawyer's words.....

What does that say about the completeness of any analysis of this issue????

Please set up a process for Community Study of all the ramifications of the proposed Text Amendment.

Everyone

depends on you.....Ellen Pickering

36
6-13-06



<boydwalker@hotmail.com>

06/11/2006 12:06 PM

Please respond to
<boydwalker@hotmail.com>

To <alexvamayor@aol.com>, <delpepper@aol.com>, <council@joycewoodson.net>, <councilmangaines@aol.com>, <council@krupicka.com>, <macdonaldcouncil@msn.com>

cc

bcc

Subject COA Contact Us: Docket 36- Hunting Creek

COA Contact Us: Docket 36- Hunting Creek

Time: [Sun Jun 11, 2006 12:06:06] IP Address: [70.108.95.29]

Response requested: []

First Name: Boyd
Last Name: Walker
Street Address: 922 Cameron St.
City: Alexandria
State: VA
Zip: 22314
Phone: 7037327269
Email Address: boydwalker@hotmail.com
Subject: Docket 36- Hunting Creek

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

I would like to request that Docket Item #36, the Study for the Text Amendment for Hunting Creek be moved to earlier on the docket. Clearly this Amendment is gathering a lot of attention and should be considered so that folks watching can listen to the discussion. Placing the docket earlier would show that you support an open dialogue and discussion of the study. Either that or defer the docket to a public hearing so that interested individuals can speak on the issue.

Comments: The study will only be considering one thing, allowing the extra height or density rather, whereas it could encompass a whole range of issues, and this should be done through a public discussion, not at the end of a long city council meeting. It is an issue that should also be looked at from a historic preservation standpoint, environmental impact, and affordable housing. Also, Howard Middletons letter makes no mention of the Washington Street Standards which would also have to be amended in order to make his plan possible.

Sincerely,

Boyd Walker

36
6-13-06



<boydwalker@hotmail.com>

06/13/2006 04:46 PM

Please respond to
<boydwalker@hotmail.com>

To <alexvamayor@aol.com>, <delpepper@aol.com>, <council@joycewoodson.net>, <councilmangaines@aol.com>, <council@krupicka.com>, <macdonaldcouncil@msn.com>

cc

bcc

Subject COA Contact Us: Docket Item 36

COA Contact Us: Docket Item 36

Time: [Tue Jun 13, 2006 16:46:39] IP Address: [70.108.106.102]

Response requested:

First Name: Boyd
Last Name: Walker
Street Address: 922 Cameron St.
City: Alexandria
State: VA
Zip: 22314
Phone: 703-732-7269
Email Address: boydwalker@hotmail.com
Subject: Docket Item 36
June 13, 2006

RE: Docket Item 36

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council,

We are writing today to address some of the concerns we have in terms of changing the Hunting Creek Area Plan by text amendment to allow 150 feet in height for "extraordinary affordable housing." We believe that before this study is even commissioned there should be a public hearing so that council can consider the views of the people who will be impacted and other interested parties, and so that those views can be incorporated into the study and the directions given to the Planning Commission. Currently, the only request for this study is being made by Howard Middleton, an attorney for representing the potential developer of the site, Gusseppe Cecchi. It is of broader concern to many citizens throughout Alexandria, and it should be given a fair hearing. Here is an outline of our concerns:

1. We are concerned of the impact that 150 foot towers will have on the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Gateway from Mt. Vernon to Geroge Washington's hometown. Like Gunston Hall, the current Hunting Terrace provides a pleasant transition from open space to modest sized buildings, including large mature trees. 150 feet is much higher than the current 80 feet of Porto Vechio, and Hunting Towers.

2. The Washington Street Standards and Washington Street Guidelines will both be affected by allowing this change. The Standards were initiated and then passed in response to the Saul Center at 600 North Washington Street which many thought was too large and too high, and did not fit in with the character of the Memorial Parkway. Indeed, the parkway itself is one of the Historic Districts that must be protected.

3. The Old and Historic District will also be impacted. It is the third oldest Historic District in the United States and was designated in order to protect our First President and Founding Father's hometown. Indeed one of the criteria in the ordinance refers to maintaining the character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

4. The environmental impact is also a concern. Hunting Terrace, although next to the capital beltway is also bordered by quiet Hunting cCeek, where many herons, bald eagles and other birds fish and frolic. The impact of increasing the density at this site will have detrimental consequences not only to the view, but in water and air quality. It will also assure that we have more cars on the parkway, impacting traffic. It is advisable to have an environmental review before proceeding, and/or to outline the concerns that should be addressed.

Comments:

5. The social and community impact are also concerns. We cannot always solve concerns about our tax base by tearing down the old and building new. In fact, by maintaining Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace we are preserving affordable rental units which are in short supply in Alexandria, and even more so on the east end of the city, neighboring one of the most affluent parts of the city. We need to maintain a mix of young and old, those with high incomes and those with low incomes. Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace have provided affordable housing next to Old Town for 50 years and help us maintain a

diverse community. It would clearly be an ideal place for young teachers or city employees starting out to live and become invested in Alexandria.

We would like you to consider that the trade off of allowing an important parcel of land to be developed at three times its current potential in trade for maintaining some affordable housing of a currently unknown quantity, is a false choice. Secondly, whether the city pursues buying Hunting Towers to maintain them themselves should not hinge on a 150 foot building across the street. Thirdly the extraordinary cash contribution, 20 million dollars, offered by Mr. Cecchi, although generous, should not be a consideration of whether allowing buildings of 150 feet in height at this location is right or not. That should be considered on its own merits, of which there are few but the benefit to the developer. If this is eventually approved it will appear like it was done for the monetary contribution, and that the city can be bought.

We urge you to consider postponing the study till the purchase of the towers is either made by Mr. Cecchi or offered to another party, such as the City of Alexandria. This would assure that the discussion is about affordable housing and not compensation. At the least, the consideration of studying this text Amendment should be postponed till the next public hearing, and a wide range of options should be considered. One option is to continue lobbying the State of Virginia to sell it to the City of Alexandria at a reasonable price, because affordable housing is a state and national concern, not just a local one, and when any state legislature or congressman crosses the Woodrow Wilson Bridge he or she can point down to the Towers and the Terrace and say here is an example of a cooperative effort to preserve something important in our community: the ability for people of all means to live there.

Sincerely,

Boyd Walker

King Street Preservation Group

36
6-13-06

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of City Council

FROM: Mayor William D. Euille

SUBJECT: Consideration of Docket Items for Tonight's Legislative Meeting

Please note that I will be moving consideration of Docket Item No. 36 (Hunting Creek Area Plan) after consideration of Docket Item No. 24. Following consideration of Docket Item No. 36 will be consideration of Docket Item No. 27 (Virginia Paving). Earlier consideration of these items will be done in the interest of time for citizens and our viewing audience. Thank you.

cc: Jim Hartmann, City Manager
Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager
Department Heads