

Approved 9/3/15

**MINUTES**

**Baltimore County Planning Board Meeting**

**August 20, 2015**

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**Minutes**

**August 20, 2015**

**Call to order, introduction of Board members, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and announcements**

Chairman Phillips called the Public Hearing to order at 5:00 p.m. The following members were:

**Present**

Mr. Scott Phillips

Ms. Michelle Lipkowitz

Mr. Wayne McGinnis

Mr. Howard Perlow

Mr. Mark Schlossberg

Mr. Scott Holupka

Ms. Nancy Hafford

Mr. Richard Yaffe

Mr. Scott Jenkins

Ms. Christina Berzins

Mr. Jon Herbst

## Absent

Ms. Lori Graf

Mr. Jeffrey Gordon

Mr. Todd Warren

County staff present included: Andrea Van Arsdale, Jeff Mayhew, Kathy Schlabach, Krystle Patchak, Matt Diana, and Laurie Hay.

## Special Announcement

Chairman Phillips introduced the newest Planning Board member, Rick Yaffe. Chairman Phillips also announced that Christina Berzins will now be Vice Chairman of the Planning Board.

## Items for Public Hearing

### 1. Towson Urban Center Overlay District

Before the Public Hearing began, Andrea Van Arsdale, Director of the Department of Planning, made some brief comments before introducing Laurie Hay. Ms. Van Arsdale noted that people's preferences have changed over time and that now the desire is to have a more walkable, mixed use approach to design, which current zoning in Towson does not address. She also noted that the Towson Urban Center Overlay District is not dramatic, but straightforward and consistent.

Ms. Hay outlined the staff's recommendations, stating that the proposal would eliminate the CT district and replace it with a specialized, design-driven overlay district, where development would not be required to adhere to prescriptive zoning guidelines that regulate setbacks, height, floor to area ratio, density and parking. Ms. Hay noted that there are currently too many plans governing development in Towson and that too many contradictory regulations hinder development. The intent of the proposed design guidelines is to provide a clear, comprehensive document outlining the level of design quality expected of all proposed improvements located in the Towson Urban Center. The guidelines are broken down into six general categories: block configuration and site design, parking, outdoor site design/streetscape, building principles/architecture, building materials and lighting and signage. Ms. Hay also stated that the implementation of the proposed overlay district will occur in five steps, from the creation of the overlay district to the adoption of the overlay district map.

The first speaker to address the Planning Board was Councilman David Marks. Councilman Marks stated that the original resolution had a second piece to it that dealt specifically with student rentals, which is a major concern of the community. He noted that it should now be addressed as a separate piece of legislation. Councilman Marks stated that the main concern he had was with the proliferation of zones in Towson. Creating a uniform set of guidelines for Towson should be the focus, because Towson is a distinct part of the County. He continued, stating that the two major issues the need to be addressed are parking and signage. Councilman Marks noted that he likes that there is a distinct set of boundaries associated with the new proposal, ensuring that commercialization will not spread west of Bosley Avenue. He also stated that he would like to build on the other positive trends occurring in Towson,

including: maintaining the bike parking requirements, maintaining the height standards in East Towson, continuing to incorporate open space in Towson, and expanding the Design Review Panel (DRP).

The second speaker was Delegate Steve Lafferty. Mr. Lafferty noted that the overlay plan is a very important step for the community and appreciated that there would be a second input session. He believes that design standards are critical to guiding community development, but there are some aspects of the overlay plan that still need to be addressed, such as height and setback restrictions. Mr. Lafferty also stated that the DRP review should be binding, not merely advisory. Mr. Lafferty was also concerned that there was no mention of historic preservation, open space, green design or transit in the proposal.

Bruce Knauff, from the Association of Loch Raven Village, was concerned that the DRP was only advisory and not binding. He also advised that the proposed zoning change not be done until the open space regulations passed. Mr. Knauff suggested that streetscaping and signage remain requirements for all developments. He was concerned that there was no mention of green design in the proposal.

Paul Hartman, past president of the Greater Towson Council of Community Associations, stated that he thought that streamlining the zoning in Towson is critical for the future. He also expressed concern that there was not enough time to fully digest the proposal. He stated that the time to get this right is now and that more time is needed to create a better product.

Joe LaBella, from the Towson Manor Village Community Association, stated that the community was concerned with the transparency and timeline of this proposal. He emphasized that green development should be taken into consideration and that the enforceability of these regulations should be outlined.

Eric Rockel, from Neighbor Space, but speaking as a private citizen, stated that the proposal was a good framework to begin with, but that height restrictions at the edges should be mandated and that site design, transportation and open space should be integrated into a cohesive template.

Johna Ruffo, from the West Towson Neighborhood Association, stated that she is worried about building height, signage and lighting. She also stated that there was no mention of green design in the proposal, and that the DRP only being advisory was a step backwards.

Wendy Jacobs, from the West Towson Neighborhood Association, stated that she would like to see environmentally respectful design that incorporates open space and green buildings, as well as alternative forms of energy.

Beth Miller, from the Greater Towson Alliance, expressed concern that the proposal removes the standard code and replaces it with guidelines that would be difficult to enforce. She was also concerned with building height and parking, and the fact that the new overlay district would not protect the surrounding community.

Chris Mudd, attorney at Venable, commended the councilman for initiating this process and that the proposal was a good start. He also stated that the Towson plans need to be updated.

### **Adjournment of Public Hearing**

Chairman Phillips called for a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing. Ms. Hafford made the motion and Ms. Berzins seconded the motion, which passed unanimously at 5:55. Absent were Messrs. Gordon and Warren as well as Ms. Groff.