



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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VICE-CHAIR

MICHELLE STAHLHUT
COORDINATOR

GIZELE C. JOHNSON
CLERK

September 15, 2015

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201
7:01 PM Call to Order

SUBJECT:

8. Master Transportation Plan. Consideration of the appropriateness of amending the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Map to include a new segment of 18th Street North for approximately 65 feet to the west of North Quantico Street.

RECOMMENDATIONS: **The Planning recommends that the County Board deny the proposed request to amend the Master Transportation Plan Map to include a new section of 18th Street North west of North Quantico Street.**

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard these items at its September 15, 2015 public hearing. Rich Viola, Department of Environmental Services (DES) Transportation, gave a presentation on the background information related to the denial of the project based on loss of an off-street bike trail connection, stormwater issues, and tree removal.

Evan Pritchard, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, on behalf of HITT Contracting said his applicant views this as an issue of fairness. His client got a buildability letter from the Zoning Administrator. One of the lots is a grandfathered buildable lot which would result in an odd shaped house that is out of character with the neighborhood. During the discussion of consolidating the lots, the intent to come up with a buildable lot that fits more with the neighborhood. Of the three trees on the property, one is an invasive species. Another is in fair to poor health. The third is a healthy tree on private property. They could improve the stormwater situation on the site. The MTP Amendment is a necessary precursor to potentially consolidating the lots.

Public Speakers

There were no public speakers for this project.

P.C. #47.

Planning Commission Reports

Commissioner Schroll reported the Transportation Commission endorsed the staff recommendation to oppose the request based on the connection to the trail, stormwater runoff, and loss of trees.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Iacomini asked if the notion that there is a buildable lot here even without a new subdivision came up at the civic association meetings. Mr. Viola responded he has had a number of meetings with people from the civic associations at the site and they have submitted letters to the County following those meetings. Staff was not part of any formal civic association meetings. The idea of the buildable lot was discussed at his informal meetings. There is a preference in the community not to see a house in this location, but it was acknowledged that a buildable lot did already exist. The strongest concern of the citizens about the proposed lot consolidation is building the street would be a bigger impact than a house. They are very concerned about the negative impact of the proposed street on the trail.

Commissioner Hughes asked if there is process for a house that more properly conforms with the neighborhood that can be built without the street. Mr. Viola said the restriction as outlined by the Zoning Administrator is that Parcel A could be considered a buildable lot because it was a lot in the past and is therefore grandfathered in. That is a small area which limits their ability to build on it. To extend off of that lot is unclear.

Commissioner Siegel asked Mr. Pritchard what he meant when he said this would be an initial step.

Mr. Pritchard said his client began the process by getting a buildability letter from the County. He stated that his client has been working on the process of submitting a plat to the County. The County suggested that although it is a buildable lot, it would make sense to consolidate the two outlots to build something more in character with the neighborhood. In order to do so, the applicant would have to improve the Right of Way (ROW), and in order to improve the ROW, the MTP amendment is required. If that were amended, they would continue with plat approval and pull permits. Commissioner Siegel asked if the only alternative would be to build on the grandfathered lot. Mr. Pritchard said that would be the only alternative although he does not know if the applicant would follow through with that alternative.

Commissioner Sockwell asked if the proposal would eradicate the bike trail. Mr. Pritchard said with the 65 foot extension of the street, the end result would not change the current condition but to get to the trail, bicyclists would be partially traveling farther on an improved street. Mr. Viola said there would still be access but access to the off-street trail would be lost which is valued in this community. Commissioner Sockwell agreed.

Commissioner Ciotti asked if it is a matter of someone not being able to realize their property rights. Mr. Pritchard said the client bought two lots in the 1970s before I-66 was built. The third lot was purchased in the 1980's after I-66 was built. They may not have formally known whether it was a buildable lot because they didn't have a letter from the Zoning Administrator, but there was an understanding that based on the existence of the paper street they reasonably thought they would be able to build on the lot by extending the street if they paid for the improvements.

Commissioner Gutshall asked if there would be a way to attach conditions if the Board approves the MTP amendment and if it becomes a matter of right that the property could pay for the improvement of the street.

Mr. Viola said the MTP Amendment would not provide the opportunity to put a condition on the adjacent property. Part of their public improvements as part of their subdivision and associated plat would be reviewed by the County. Mr. Viola was unsure if they could be required to do more than building just a street as allowed by Virginia law.

Planning Commission Motion

Commissioner Schroll made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board deny the proposed request to amend the Master Transportation Plan Map to include a new section of 18th Street North west of North Quantico Street. Commissioner Gutshall seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission voted 7-1 to support the motion with Commissioners Sockwell, Siegel, Iacomini, Brown, Schroll, Gutshall, and Hughes in support and Commissioner Ciotti opposed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlington County Planning Commission
Christopher J. Forinash

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Forinash", with a stylized flourish at the end.