

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
February 11, 2008
2:00 PM
Building A Large Conference Room

PRESENT:

Mr. Chris Henderson
Mr. Jack Fraley
Mr. Reese Peck
Mr. Richard Krapf

ABSENT:

Mr. George Billups

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. David German, Senior Planner
Ms. Kate Sipes, Senior Planner
Ms. Leanne Reidenbach, Planner
Mr. Jose Ribeiro, Planner
Ms. Terry Costello, Development Management Assistant
Mr. John McDonald, FMS Manager
Ms. Tara Woodruff, Director of Accounting
Mr. Richard Drumwright, WAT Planning and Development Director
Mr. Bill Porter, Acting Development Manager
Ms. Mary Jones, Supervisor, Berkeley District

Mr. Peck called the meeting to order at 2:00. A motion was made by Mr. Fraley to approve the October 19, 2007 minutes with a second from Mr. Krapf. The motion carried 2-0 with Mr. Henderson and Mr. Peck not voting. A motion was made by Mr. Fraley to approve the January 31, 2008 minutes with a second from Mr. Krapf. The motion carried 2-0 with Mr. Henderson and Mr. Peck not voting.

FY09 CIP Ranking

Mr. Peck cited Virginia Code §15.2-2239 which describes the relationship between the Planning Commission and the capital improvement program.

Mr. Fraley stated that it has been policy to accept the estimates given by the Department heads for the CIP projects submitted. He stated that in the past the Policy Committee's role has not been concerned with the financing aspect of the projects.

Ms. Jones stated that it has been her experience that it was difficult to consider ranking without the cost associated with the projects.

Mr. Fraley stated that the committee should consider the availability of funds when ranking the projects.

Ms. Sipes explained the CIP ranking process and staff's role. She stated that staff's goal today was to determine on which projects the committee wanted additional information and staff would schedule presentations from those specific departments.

Mr. Fraley asked for Mr. McDonald's rankings as was requested last year. He also stated that staff's rankings are based on the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Fraley then suggested moving on the ordinance changes since there were members of the public present for those cases. The committee agreed.

Amendment to Section 24-56 of the Zoning Ordinance: Accessible Parking Width Reduction

Mr. Jose Ribeiro gave an overview of the Better Site Design process and the Recommended Model Development Principles for James City County that resulted from that process. He stated that Principle #8 of the Recommended Model Development Principles was based on the reduction of the overall imperviousness associated with parking lot by, minimizing stall dimensions, incorporating efficient parking lanes, and using pervious materials in spill over parking areas. Mr. Ribeiro stated that the Local Site Planning Roundtable recommended lowering the accessible parking stall width to meet the ADA requirements. He stated that the James City County code current dimensions are 9 feet wide by 18 feet in length. ADA minimum requirements are 8 feet wide by 18 feet in length. He stated that Section 24-56(Highways, Streets, Parking and Loading) would have to be amended to allow the said reduced width.

Mr. Ribeiro stated staff finds that the reduction of the width of the accessible parking spaces, while in keeping with the recommendations for Principle #8 of the Recommended Model Development Principles for James City County, does not promote the reduction of impervious surface associated with parking lots in a substantial way, particularly give the fact that only a few number of accessible parking stalls are required for residential/commercial developments. He also stated the Peninsula Disability Services Board has opposed the revision of the code to reduce the width of accessible parking spaces since it could compromise the safety and mobility of handicap drivers.

Mr. Henderson asked whether this change constitute a compact space.

Mr. Fraley stated that this is just addressing handicap stalls.

Mr. Krapf agreed with staff and finds that the stakeholders and staff have made valid points against the reduction.

Mr. Sam Tollett, Vice-Chair of the Peninsula Disability Services Board, spoke against the reduction. He also stated that the Board is currently working at the State level to change the width from 8 feet to 9 feet. He spoke about his experiences getting in and out of handicap stalls.

Mr. Fraley made a motion to accept staff's recommendations and keep the 9 foot width requirement as is. Mr. Henderson seconded the motion. In a voice vote the motion was carried.

A citizen did pose the question as to whether there was enough ample handicap parking in general in the County.

Mr. Peck answered that the Policy Committee was not looking at the County as a whole, but that would be an issue for another time.

Amendment to Section 24-236 of the Zoning Ordinance: Front Setback Reduction, R-1 District

Mr. Ribeiro stated that Principle #11 of the Recommended Model Development Principles for James City County suggested that incases when open space development is not possible, relax setbacks to achieve greater flexibility of design, minimize driveway lengths for housing, reduce grading areas, minimize land disturbance for construction, and promote the efficient use of land. He stated to implement this principle; the Roundtable recommended reducing the minimum front setback from 35 feet to 25 feet in the R-1 and R-2 residential zones. Staff notes that front setbacks are already at 25 feet for the R-2 districts, therefore this proposed amendment to the ordinance is only pertinent to the R-1 district.

Mr. Fraley stated that he felt consistency among the districts was good. He did question how this would cause flexibility in design

Ms. Shereen Hughes, spoke as a member of the Better Site Design Committee. She stated that there is a lot to think about when reducing setbacks. She felt that other issues needed to be taken into consideration at the same time, such as adjacent properties, parking, width of roads, etc.

Mr. Krapf suggested considering reducing setbacks but having certain standards attached.

Mr. Fraley suggested having a set of performance standards. He also had a concern about when setbacks are reduced, there is more building area, therefore it may not address the issue of the principle originally was intended to.

Mr. Fraley felt that staff needed to work on the amendment as far as adding some performance standards, and approaching it from a more comprehensive view.

Mr. Krapf would like to see some of the comments that Ms. Hughes made addressed in the amendment. He also suggested maybe having it as a permitted reduction as opposed to mandated.

Mr. Henderson asked how many lots would be affected.

Mr. Ribeiro stated that out of approximately 5,000 lots zoned R-1, approximately 400 lots are not developed at this time according to County records.

Mr. Henderson asked about other zoning districts and whether it would be beneficial to take a comprehensive look at all of them.

Mr. Porter stated that if the committee wanted to look at all the districts, it was important to look at the intent of all of the districts as well. He also stated this would be a large undertaking.

Mr. Fraley made a motion to refer this back to staff, with a second from Mr. Krapf. In a voice vote the committee agreed.

FY09 CIP Ranking

Mr. McDonald presented the fiscal information that he handed out to the committee members and staff. He stated that there was a significant decrease in revenues due to several factors, such as decreased construction, no real estate reassessments scheduled until 2009, and a decrease in state revenues.

Mr. Fraley mentioned that a request for a new library was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. He also asked about the Greenspace/ PDR program.

Mr. McDonald further discussed Greenspace/PDR funding.

Mr. Henderson asked for a balance sheet with reserves, which Mr. McDonald agreed to provide

Mr. Krapf felt the committee was digressing and his concern was to focus on the ranking.

Ms. Sipes asked if the committee wanted staff to differentiate maintenance projects from other capital projects.

Mr. Fraley stated that this is the way it has been done in the past. He also mentioned that the committee has relied on staff's ranking and the department rankings.

Mr. German explained that last year there effectively four sets of rankings for each project: department rankings (provided on the applications), staff rankings (based on the Comprehensive Plan), Policy Committee rankings from the previous year (if the project was repeated), and the ranking provided by Mr. McDonald at the committee's request.

Mr. Peck asked to see the ranking formula used by staff, which was then distributed by Ms. Sipes.

Mr. Fraley asked what the difference was between "tier levels" and "rankings" for the School District projects. Mr. McDonald explained that the School District employs four different tier levels to categorize projects, and that rankings are provided by school staff for projects in the first two tiers. He noted the rankings did not reflect School Board input.

Mr. Fraley suggested having the Fire, Police, General Services, and Parks and Recreation Departments come in for presentations.

Mr. Peck asked whether JCSA should also present.

Mr. Porter explained that JCSA is an enterprise fund and that its revenues are not generated from tax revenues.

Mr. Peck asked for clarification regarding the term "non-departmental" projects.

Mr. McDonald stated these accounts traditionally represent County money spent with no resulting asset created. He stated that these are typically transportation, bikeways, trails, and underground utility projects.

Mr. Krapf suggested adding the School District to the list of presenting departments, and also suggested a limit of thirty minutes for presentations, to include questions and answers.

Mr. Peck asked when the committee would receive staff's ranking.

Mr. German stated staff would make every attempt to get it to the committee by February 19th.

Mr. Peck inquired as to how the ranking is used during the budget process. His concern was that he did not want the committee to do anything that would not add value to the process.

Mr. McDonald stated that the Planning Commission ranking is identified when the capital budget is submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

In closing, Ms. Sipes reminded the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for February 14th at 2 p.m. in Building A. Mr. Krapf made a motion to adjourn with a second by Mr. Fraley.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

A. Reese Peck

Reese Peck, Chairman