

Indian Head Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
GoToMeeting
December 15, 2021

Chair Armstrong called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 5:30pm. Members in attendance:

Mary Armstrong, Chair
Anthony McFarland
Brian Israel
Thomas Gordon
Wayne Higdon
Thomas Hastings – Base Liaison

Staff in attendance:
Ryan Hicks, Town Manager
Mark Harman, Zoning Administrator
Andrea Brady, Town Clerk

Public Comment – Chair Armstrong opened for the floor for public comment, there being no comments
Chair Armstrong moved to the next agenda item.

Villages of Potomac: Preliminary Plan– Zoning Administrator, Mark Harman and Vice President of Elm Street Development, Doug Meeker spoke to the Commission about the Preliminary Plan. Mr. Harman explained that the preliminary plan is the base plan that outlines the framework of the project. The majority of the review is primarily a compliance aspect at this time. Once the preliminary plan is approved the next phases would go into greater detail including the aesthetics of the project. There are no engineering issues moving forward, right now there are primarily clerical issues that need to be addressed. Mr. Harman is comfortable moving forward should that be the will of the Commission. If the Commission does approve the project to move forward it would need to be contingent to all items in ARRO's review letter being addressed.

The developer, Doug Meeker gave an overview of the project. The subject parcel is located at the intersection of I.H. Hwy and Dr. Andrews Way, it is zoned TCMX. In 2005 the Planning Commission approved the final site development plan for the Villages of Potomac which included seventy-six condominium units and the subject parcel designated for commercial use. Site development including infrastructure for the commercial parcel was completed in 2008. Since 2006 the parcel has been marketed but there have not been any serious inquiries. The Urban Land Institute report prepared for the Town spoke about the need for additional housing to appeal to commercial developers to locate here. Mr. Meeker believes the best use for the parcel would be residential. The revised preliminary plan submitted to the Commission suggests developing five townhomes on the designated parcel. The exterior would complement the existing condominium buildings. Mr. Meeker feels this would add an economic benefit to the Town and increase a demand for future commercial development. Following discussions with the Villages of Potomac HOA, it was decided that the townhomes would be able to take use of the existing common areas as long as they contribute to the funds for maintenance.

Chair Armstrong asked about the preliminary plan map that indicates Stark Road on page one, and a few pages down it changes to Dr. Andrews Way. Chair Armstrong asked if this was a typo on the map or if this is a different designation for a road that was previously planned. Mr. Meeker stated that it was a typo. Chair Armstrong asked if the green electrical box that is currently on the corner would be affected. Mr. Meeker stated it would not. Chair Armstrong asked if there would be a change to residential from TCMX.

Mr. Harman explained that after an extended period of time when a development is not able to house a commercial element, often times the applicant will request to use the parcel as residential since it would currently be a non-usable property. The Commission would be approving the developer to develop the parcel into residential since it has not been a usable commercial area. Mr. Meeker stated that each townhome will have a 2-car garage and two off lot parking spaces.

Thomas Gordon, asked about the change to the site lines with the addition of the five units. Mr. Gordon asked if the developer considered fewer units since it appears that five will come to the edge of the property and potentially affect the view of traffic. Mr. Meeker stated five is the number they would like, and their engineer did look at the site distance at the intersection of Indian Head Highway and Dr. Andrews and Dr. Andrews and Kinosew Way and found the buildout would not affect the site lines at those locations. Mr. Harman explained that when ARRO reviewed the plan they also did not see any conflicts. Upon further review Mr. Gordon was able to see that the project would not affect the site lines.

Mr. Israel asked if the plans will be reviewed again after the Anchor Point project is complete. Mr. Israel is a resident of the Villages of Potomac and he expressed concerns over the potential impact on traffic for the Villages of Potomac residents. Mr. Israel feels the traffic has already been affected by the Anchor Point subdivision and is concerned this project could increase those problems. Mr. Harman stated from an Ordinance standpoint each project would be looked at separately. Preliminary Plan, Final plan, then Council review/approval of the final plan. Once constructed there would be an as built plan that would be submitted to ARRO and the Town which would then be reviewed versus the Planning Commission approved plan to make sure they match. Anything related to traffic patterns/studies would have been done as part of their previous plan. The current plan as submitted would not cause enough traffic to require an additional traffic plan. Mr. Israel stated this does not make sense from a practical standpoint though it does from an engineering standpoint. Mr. Harman stated the issue is the developer is required to meet the ordinance requirements, in theory the issues with traffic would have already been handled as part of the previous plan since the proposed number of units will not have a high affect on traffic. If traffic is found to be an issue following the project, it would have to be addressed at that time. Mr. Meeker added that a detailed traffic study was completed as part of the Anchor Point project and that included the current traffic from the Villages of Potomac neighborhood. Mr. Meeker does not feel the five additional units would tip the scales. Mr. Israel spoke about the current issues with traffic when the Anchor Point project is not complete, and he feels despite the study there will be an affect.

Mr. Gordon looked at the lot from an aesthetic standpoint and suggested the developer consider fewer units to make it look more inline with the condominium units. He spoke about the current trees adding value to the community and suggested having that greenery extend into that lot as well, which he feels may also cause a need to reduce the number of units.

Chair Armstrong feels the units are set back far enough not to impact the sight lines. Chair Armstrong spoke about the neighborhood already having a parking issue. Mr. Gordon agrees about the traffic and the sight lines, but when looking at the parcel he feels there should be room for trees to add to the parcel aesthetically. He feels to reduce it to four units would leave room for that type of greenery which would be good for the area aesthetically in the long term.

Mr. Harman stated that there is nothing from an ordinance standpoint that would prohibit the applicant from doing what they have proposed to do. Mr. Gordon agrees with not requiring the developer to maintain that parcel as commercial. Mr. Harman did state that there is not a change in use of the parcel since TCMX allows either use. Mr. Meeker added that this plan does not show the proposed landscaping, which would be part of the final plan submittal, and they are required to provide landscaping along both Dr. Andrews Way and Indian Head Highway.

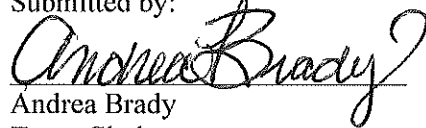
Mr. Hastings asked why the commercial property was set aside, and why 2% was set aside as opposed to 7%. Mr. Harman stated that the push is to get a tax base increase and get the areas that are currently dedicated to commercial up and running. Mr. Harman spoke about some of the reuse projects that have taken place in Town. The original thought was to require a small portion of commercial to try to help commercial development flourish, but that has not been the case in most TCMX areas. Mr. Harman spoke about how small businesses usually have higher pricing, and you will find that most people are willing to drive further for a discounted items. This has caused the philosophy to shift and a desire to find a best use for the vacant parcels in TCMX zones.

Mr. Gordon made a motion to request a preliminary plan with four units instead of the proposed five units. Brian Israel seconds the motion. Mr. McFarland agreed with the proposed motion. Mr. Meeker is willing to look into a four unit alternate and suggested if the Commission is willing to approve the plan contingent to the removal of the unit 1 this would eliminate the need to go back through the revision process. Mr. Harman stated that could be included as a contingency during the motion to approve. Following further discussion, the Commission unanimously agreed to rescind the previous motion.

Mr. Gordon made a motion to approve the preliminary plan contingent on all items listed in ARRO's review letter being satisfied and the removal of unit 1. Brian Israel seconds the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

With no further discussion, Chair Armstrong adjourned the meeting at 6:23pm.

Submitted by:



Andrea Brady
Town Clerk

12/15/21
Date