

Douglas S. Wright, Jr., chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., on Wednesday, January 30, 2013, in the Council Chamber, Second Floor, City Hall. Also present were commission members M. Brubaker, D. Miller, J. Stone, R. Thomas and J. Wheeler. The following staff members were present: K. Maher, Planning Director; S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator; A. Rohrbaugh, Planner; and D. Calhoun, Secretary.

REGULAR MEETING

Roll Call

Mr. Brubaker called prior to the meeting to report that he was planning to attend the meeting but would be late because he was held up in traffic on his way back to Hagerstown from Annapolis.

Approval of Minutes: December 12, 2012 - Regular Meeting, and January 9, 2013 - Workshop Meeting.

December 12, 2012:

MOTION: (Miller/Wheeler) I make a motion to approve the minutes as submitted.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (ABSTAIN - Thomas, Wright)

January 9, 2013:

Ms. Wheeler pointed out a typographical error on page 8 (“eras” should be “areas” in the fourth line of the second to last goal).

MOTION: (Stone/Thomas) I move for approval as corrected.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

Washington County Hospital - Draft Redevelopment Concept Plan.

Meritus' consultant, Sean Davis of Morris & Ritchie Associates, provided a presentation on their analysis of the site and market conditions and the initial redevelopment concept plan that was first presented publicly in November.

Lippman, Frizell & Mitchell's Market Analysis

- limited residential opportunities at this location because there are many other more suitable opportunities in the community.
- limited office opportunities because the costs of construction would push rents above the market of the downtown.
- limited retail opportunities because of all the competition at the suburban edges.

Consultant Team's Identified Opportunity Areas

- Gateway feature -- install a welcome sign at the McDonalds point where the Dual Highway splits.
- Block north of East Washington Street -- fill in empty lots with smaller retail opportunities which also provides a stronger street edge; combine interior parking lots to get better efficiencies and serve all surrounding uses in the block.
- Block between East Washington and East Antietam Streets -- three-story, 45,000 square-foot office building on East Washington Street and a two-story, 44,000 square-foot office building on East Antietam Street; use existing parking garage for both; add new surface parking in the in-between spaces.
- 6.5-acre former hospital site -- public park along South Cannon Avenue where the topography constraints and retaining wall exist; two-car, rear-garage townhouses on the balance of the site; townhouses would respect the housing character across King Street, but be set back slightly off the road.
- Small parking lots at Mill and East Baltimore Streets -- more infill townhouses.
- Large Mill Street parking lot -- two single-story office/warehouse flex buildings.

The Consultant team believes these proposals are market driven, realistic, and take site constraints into account. (Mr. Brubaker arrived.)

Mr. Davis then fielded comments from the audience. The consultant's response to questions from the audience are noted in *bold/italics*.

Public Comments Related to Housing

- What market would you seek for the townhouses? *Workforce "entry-level" housing, not "move-up" buyers; too few units for a national home-builder.*
- Would the homes be owned or rented? *Feel homeowners take better care of the houses.*

- Will three-story townhouses on a hill be out of scale for the neighborhood?
- A residential development like Hamilton Park, which was built as workforce housing for home ownership, was expressed as a good model. Regular townhouses that look identical can be boring. Suggest fewer houses with more space around them and different designs with room for owner to personalize features.
- How would the townhouses be built? To suit or speculatively? Concerned that speculatively built homes could result in a conversion to rental and subsidized situations. *A builder would build "a stick" (a block of six or so units) of townhouses as a certain percentage is put under contract and hope to sell the rest as the stick is being built; process would be repeated stick by stick until complete.*

Public Comments Related to a Park and Green Space

- How useable would a park on a hillside be? *They did not plan for the area in question to be an active park because of the topography.*
- Suggest creating a pedestrian greenway feature that links this area to the downtown by making East Antietam Street one way and narrowing the travel lanes to allow for a green pedestrian way on the south side of the street; create a greenway loop that runs down to Memorial Boulevard and back around to the downtown.
- Agree with the pedestrian greenway idea and that warehousing would not be suitable.
- How about a park on the hospital site? *If the community wants this site to be a park, it would need to gain Mayor and City Council support and inform Meritus of that desire; consultant would not propose a publicly owned use unless that desire was relayed to them.*
- The proposed green space on the old hospital site does not seem useable. *There is a very nice active park at nearby Hager Park, so they did not think to propose such a use here.*
- Why not a park on the old hospital site? *Meritus cannot give the land away; need a viable plan to accomplish it and desire for that use expressed to Meritus by the City.*

Public Comments Related to the Offices and Warehousing

- Do you think there will be any takers for the warehousing space, since there is an abundance of vacant space around the area? *These would be smaller, more affordable options than what is available along I-81.*
- Where would the tenants be coming from for office buildings? Would you draw from other office buildings and thus create additional vacancies? *The consultants are talking with office developers to determine viability; not thinking of speculative office development, but single users that are recruited to the site.*
- Have a problem with the warehousing idea, because truck traffic in the neighborhood would be an issue.

- Are you trying to compete with other office medical and Venice motel lot? *Consultants believe the Venice site would be more suitable for retail opportunities.*
- Agree with the pedestrian greenway idea and that warehousing would not be suitable.

Other Public Comments

- Why isn't there a Greyhound Station in Hagerstown?
- Believe Hagerstown is "the Golden Triangle" formed by I-70, I-81 and the city. Believe "if you can't make it here, you can't make it anywhere."
- Suggest moving the Hagerstown Police Department (HPD) to this area and parking the cruisers in the parking deck; convert the HPD building on North Burhans Boulevard back to a train station and Greyhound station.
- Will the buildings be in the style of the downtown or would they be modern, contemporary in style? Will the townhouses be brick like surrounding homes? *Consultants have talked about design issues but have not written any design guidelines.*
- Have you considered an assisted-living facility on the old hospital site? *The site would work for that but not sure that this idea was studied.*
- What is the timeframe for this ^{proposed} development? *Five to seven years.*
- If the plan is approved, what would be the next steps? *Not looking for plan approval from the Planning Commission at this point. Once redevelopment concepts are finalized, would need to determine if zoning needs to be changed to allow for the proposed uses.*

Planning Commission Comments

- Like the heritage park idea for the hospital site which staff members have discussed. Believe that idea has merit. (Thomas) Miller
- Agree with the heritage park comment. (Miller) Thomas
- Think the consultant proposal is a pretty good use of the land. Like the opportunities for jobs. Believe it is important to use our infrastructure to maximize job opportunities. (Wright)

City Council Member Comments

- Who would be responsible for maintaining the parking deck? *They envision a condominium ownership situation between the two office buildings and they would own and maintain the deck.*

Meritus Comments

- Meeting with developers in coming weeks and will share public thoughts with them.

**Planning Commission
MINUTES - Regular Meeting**

**January 30, 2013
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

Planning staff advised the public that there would still be time to comment after this meeting using Meritus' WordPress internet site, emailing the City, using the City's Facebook page, or even tweeting.

Adjourn: It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

2/13/2013
Date

DC Calhoun
Debra C. Calhoun - Secretary