



Town of Vienna

Charles A. Robinson Jr.
Town Hall
127 Center Street South
Vienna VA, 22180

Meeting Minutes Town Council Work Session

Monday, December 3, 2018

7:30 PM

Charles A. Robinson, Jr. Town Hall, 127
Center Street, South

Work Session

1. Regular Business

Council Members Present:

Mayor Laurie A. DiRocco
Council Member Tara L. Bloch
Council Member Linda J. Colbert
Council Member Pasha M. Majdi
Council Member Carey J. Sienicki
Council Member Howard J. Springsteen

Absent:

Council Member Douglas E. Noble

Planning Commission Members Present:

Walter Basnight
Sarah Couchman
Michael Gelb, Chair
Steven Kenney, Vice-Chair
Mary McCullough
Andrew Meren
David Miller

Town Staff Present:

Steven Briglia, Town Attorney
Edgar Marmolejos, Computer Technician
Mercury T. Payton, Town Manager
Cindy Petkac, Director of Planning and Zoning
Marion Serfass, Director of Finance
Carol S. Waters, Deputy Town Clerk

- A. [18-1109](#) Fairfax County Economic Development Support Fund Project Proposal - Economic Development Strategy and Market Study

Attachments: [TOV Eco Strat Market Study Proposal EDSF proposal](#)

The Town Council Work Session of Monday, December 3, 2018 began at 7:30 p.m. Town Manager Mercury T. Payton thanked everyone for attending and announced the agenda topics. He noted that the items regarded an opportunity for jurisdictions and entities within Fairfax County, Virginia to receive some funds for certain approved projects. (The Fairfax Board of Supervisors had created the Economic Development Support Fund, or EDSF, in 2016. If nominated by a member

of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors or the County Executive, projects are eligible for consideration of a 50% funding contribution from Fairfax County.)

Finance Director Marion Serfass addressed the Mayor, Council, and Planning Commissioners. She commented that the Town is at an interesting stage in its commercial development, as MAC (Maple Avenue Commercial) projects have been proposed, but there are a lot of vacancies both on Maple Avenue and in the rest of the commercial district. According to Finance Department research based on Town business license renewals in 2018, out of 1095 renewals there were 68 vacant properties on Maple Avenue and 138 total vacant properties in Town. This represents a vacancy rate of about 13%. Recent data for Fairfax County indicated a vacancy rate of about 16% in the County, which they consider a historically low number. However, seeing vacancies on Maple Avenue has created some concern and the Town of Vienna has already taken steps to guide and improve commercial development through the Church Street Vision Project and the Maple Avenue Corridor Project. Ms. Serfass stated that in order to direct and engage commercial development to keep the Town vibrant and interesting, to keep the Town economically sustainable, and to shift a little bit of the tax burden from the residential sector to the commercial sector, management feels that it is time to invest some resources in economic development. Ms. Serfass also stated that management feels strongly that the first part of their plan should be to develop an economic development strategy. They would like to do a comprehensive real estate market analysis of the Maple Avenue corridor and other areas in Town that are designated as mixed-use, office, industrial, and employment centers. If the County approves, Vienna could receive half of the cost for that from the Fairfax County Economic Development Support Fund (EDSF). Ms. Serfass disclosed that the Town of Herndon had received a 1.2 million dollar contribution from Fairfax County for a joint commercial project.

Ms. Serfass spoke of meeting with the Directors of Economic Development from both the City of Fairfax and the Town of Herndon to discuss their economic development sustainability programs. Both municipalities began their programs with studies, and also used groups of volunteers from the community, council, and their planning commissions that worked together with a consultant to develop their plans. She announced that Vienna is considering a very similar approach, and that Vienna is the only locality among small localities in this area which does not already have someone devoted to economic development. The Finance Director produced a chart showing the organization, member composition, mission statement, and other details of Leesburg, Fairfax City, Falls Church, and Herndon's Economic Development bodies. She added that those economic development advisory committees all have a staff person who reports to the chief executive, or Town Manager. Ms. Serfass suggested that because Vienna does not really have any internal resources, they feel that the study would be best accomplished by hiring a consultant who could help develop an overall strategy and prepare guidelines for a market study. The goals of this effort would be to assist current businesses operating in Vienna and also to work with landlords and businesses to fill the vacant locations and to meet the needs of residents. The Town of Vienna could apply for an EDSF project to hire a consultant to prepare an economic development strategy and market study, and possibly be reimbursed 50% of the total project cost by the County of Fairfax.

The Town Manager and the Mayor had recently discussed the economic development proposal with Catherine Hudgins, who is the Fairfax County Supervisor representing the Hunter Mill District. As reported by Ms. Serfass,

Supervisor Hudgins seemed to be in favor of the proposal. Ms. Serfass narrated that she had contacted the County Executive's office earlier this day, and was told that if everything went according to plan, Vienna could chat with them about their plans in December, Supervisor Hudgins could get the nomination going in January, Vienna could go to the Board of Supervisors in January or February, and it could be approved in March or April. Ms. Serfass further advised that Fairfax County will adopt their budget on May 7, and then probably funds would be available July 1, 2019.

The group discussed more details about funding the proposed economic development plan and market study. The Finance Director had estimated the total cost for the plan and market study to be about \$100,000.00, so, the Town would request \$50,000.00 of that from the County of Fairfax. Ms. Serfass indicated that she and Mr. Payton would probably act as project managers.

The Mayor and Council Members suggested some edits for the EDSF proposal. Council Member Noble, absent from this work session, had already submitted his suggested changes. The Mayor recommended that the proposal also be shared with the Town Business Liaison Committee to garner their feedback. The Finance Director agreed and assured the Mayor that she would also send revised drafts of the proposal to Council for them to look over. Council Member Sienicki recommended that the market study recognize the Town's proximity to the Merrifield Mosaic District, as well as Tysons. She also requested that the proposal be rephrased to state things in a more positive manner. Council Member Sienicki and the other Council Members indicated that they would forward their edits to Marion Serfass. Mayor DiRocco indicated that she would like to see some specific references in support of local small businesses. Council Member Sienicki suggested that support be put in as a goal. Council Member Springsteen suggested including commercial rental rate information. Planning Commissioner Michael Gelb suggested that the market study also include the impacts of Oakton and Reston.

Mayor DiRocco asked what things could be done to help prepare for unforeseen changes in market conditions, or to allow for flexibility when changes do occur. The Finance Director suggested to make that one of the market study objectives. The Director of Planning and Zoning concurred that it is an important point to consider.

Mr. Payton noted that staff was looking for direction from Mayor and Council as to whether they wanted to move forward and submit this EDSF proposal to the County. Several Council Members and Planning Commissioners commented that it was a good idea. Mr. Payton said that the decision to submit the proposal to Supervisor Hudgins would be on the next regular Council Meeting agenda, on January 7, 2019.

B. [18-1108](#) Fairfax County Economic Development Support Fund Project Proposal - Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Update

Attachments: [TOV Zoning Subdivision Update - Fairfax County EDSF Project Proposal 12-03-18 Process to evaluate...](#)
[EDSF Nominated Projects](#)

Planning and Zoning Director Cindy Petkac relayed that in talking to Supervisor Catherine Hudgins and others with Fairfax County, they learned that updating the

Town's zoning ordinance would fit in programming support for the County's Economic Development Support Fund (EDSF). Ms. Petkac reminded Council that the need for a zoning and subdivision ordinance update had been discussed previously at work sessions and as part of the budget process. Council had approved some consultant monies towards that effort, and Ms. Petkac had originally hoped to start early next year. Ms. Petkac noted that the draft EDSF proposal which was provided for this work session was primarily focused on the benefits of doing the code updates from an economic development standpoint. But obviously, she stated, there are other benefits to doing those updates besides economic development. Supervisor Hudgins was supportive of going forward with this EDSF, Ms. Petkac reported. Staff had estimated a cost of around \$220,000.00 to do the zoning and subdivision updates. Ms. Petkac added that if they really wanted to make sure that there was ample opportunity for community engagement and input, that cost could be closer to maybe \$240,000.00. Ms. Petkac suggested setting this up as a \$120,000.00 EDSF request from the County, with the Town putting in the money that is budgeted for this project this year and asking Council for more money next year.

Council Member Springsteen asked for clarification that the code would be updated and cleaned up, and brought into 2019. Ms. Petkac responded in the affirmative. She then went on to say that Vienna's commercial zone districts currently have just a general category for retail, including sales, to basically cover everything; however, the norm now is to be very specific as to what those commercial uses are, such as to differentiate between smaller local serving commercial uses and larger ones, by square footage. Ms. Petkac also said that in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Council had talked about the importance of aging in place and providing other housing options for people to stay in the community, but assisted living is currently only allowed as a conditional use in the Maple Avenue Commercial Zone. Ms. Petkac stated that Vienna's code has some uses that are very outdated and some uses that are not defined.

Town Manager Mercury Payton said that in their conversation with Supervisor Hudgins, she seemed encouraged by both of these EDSF proposals because she sees it as something that would impact the economics of the Town, which would impact the economics of Fairfax County. Instead of doing funding of bricks and mortar projects that may have a finite use or may not work at all, they see these projects as something which would replicate itself over and over, over time. Finance Director Marion Serfass remarked that for every dollar in real estate taxes that Vienna brings in, Fairfax County brings in five times that much.

Council Member Pasha Majdi questioned whether the County's interests and the Town's interests were aligned here. He stated that he was against significant increases in housing density in the residential sector, and if that is going to be a recommendation that comes out of this study because it is increased revenue for the County, then we are going to have a problem.

Ms. Petkac responded that it is not the intent; it is not a goal in the Town's Comprehensive Plan to increase density in the single family detached residential zone districts; it is a goal to preserve the neighborhoods and focus on development of the commercial sector. Ms. Petkac also said that the subdivision ordinance is very dated, and the Town has not implemented state statute requirements as it relates to the subdivision regulations.

Planning Commissioner Sarah Couchman stated that they were just trying to get the money to perform the study. She said that the Town would be able to choose the

contractor, so the County really would not have any influence over the process.

Planning Commissioner Michael Gelb said that they were just pointing out that Fairfax County likes for Vienna to develop economically because it benefits Fairfax County, but it was still on Vienna to try to direct the nature of that development. He said that Vienna was just trying to convince them to provide the funds.

Mr. Payton confirmed that the zoning code update would be town-wide. As he said, we are looking at updating the entire code to make it make sense, flow together, and to bring things up to date.

Planning Commissioner Mary McCullough remarked that she thought it was fantastic that this need was being addressed, and it was a drastic need for Vienna to get the code up-to-date. She also acknowledged that Staff had figured out a way to save the Town a substantial amount of money to get the work done.

Commissioners Gelb and McCullough thanked everyone, and added that the Planning Commission would have to spend years going over every paragraph, and instead now there will be an entire evaluation and recommendation for a twenty-first century code.

Council Member Linda Colbert said that this would make things clearer for the citizens to understand, and make it easier for citizens to work with Staff and the Planning Commission.

Ms. Petkac added that updating the code would provide better transparency. She said there have been a number of zoning interpretations and determinations that have been made over the years which have not been codified. She expressed that they want to make it easy to understand the rules and to clarify what is allowed and what steps need to be followed.

Council Member Majdi said that this could be positive because professionals would come in to look at the whole thing together. However, he said, it could be negative if Council had to vote on ideas piece-meal, or if it was a gigantic package that overhauls the entire code and you might support one provision but not another.

Ms. Petkac said that she had been through this process before with the City of Fairfax. She explained that the code would be organized into modules or sections, there would be meetings and work sessions to review those pieces, and when there was general consensus on one piece, then they would move on to the next piece. She said when the whole thing comes together, it would be looked at collectively. They would see how it all fit together, they would have work sessions and public hearings, and yes, it would then be an up or down vote on the entire thing. Ms. Petkac suggested that the key is to do regular code maintenance. She said that staff can keep a tally of things that may not be working as intended, and if they are not working they can be changed. She reiterated that it should be a continuous effort to monitor what is working and what is not working and make amendments as necessary.

Town Attorney Steven Briglia reported that the Town was already incorporating some interpretations which the previous zoning administrator, Mr. Gregory Hembree, saw a need to update. Mr. Briglia said that a number of those could be incorporated in the code. One of them is the calculation for height in a residential zone, which is different than Fairfax County. Mr. Briglia said that the Town's

method is more restrictive, so 35 feet is taller in Fairfax County. Mr. Briglia said that another issue is the Town's subdivision ordinance; the way we apply it, we still have a lot of reference to preliminary subdivision plats, but that would only be used if the subdivision is 50 or more houses.

Mr. Payton asked whether Council Members were comfortable with going forward with this EDSF proposal to Fairfax County. As the next step, Council will see this again at the regular Council Meeting of January 7, 2019 and will vote whether or not to submit the proposal.

New Business:

Planning Commissioner David Miller asked if he could share some recently learned information on a different topic. The Town Attorney reported that that would be fine. Mr. Miller explained that it was an update on a piece of business that was before the Planning Commission two weeks earlier. A re-subdivision had been proposed on Cabin Road, and there had been some discussion as to whether the existing log cabin house involved in the re-subdivision might have some historic significance. From what he had been told, the cabin's history was not quite as rich as they had thought. Also, the house was reportedly not in good shape.

2. Meeting Adjournment

The Town Council Work Session of Monday, December 3, 2018 adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m.

Mayor Laurie A. DiRocco

Signed / Dated: _____

Attest: _____
Deputy Town Clerk

THE TOWN OF VIENNA IS COMMITTED TO FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT STANDARDS. TRANSLATION SERVICES, ASSISTANCE OR ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS FROM PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ARE TO BE REQUESTED NOT LESS THAN 3 WORKING DAYS BEFORE THE DAY OF THE EVENT. PLEASE CALL (703) 255-6304, OR 711 VIRGINIA RELAY SERVICE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED.