



Town of Vienna

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

Meeting Minutes Town Council Work Session

Monday, May 15, 2017

7:30 PM

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

Work Session

1. Regular Business

Present:

Mayor Laurie A. DiRocco
Council Member Linda J. Colbert
Council Member Pasha M. Majdi
Council Member Douglas Noble
Council Member Carey J. Sienicki
Council Member Howard J. Springsteen
Council Member Tara Voigt

Town Staff present:

Mercury T. Payton, Town Manager
Steven Briglia, Town Attorney
Patrick Mulhern, Planning and Zoning, Director
Michael D'Orazio, Planning and Zoning, Planner
Hyojung Garland, Planning and Zoning, Deputy Director
Frank Simeck, Planning and Zoning, Senior Zoning Inspector
Michael Gallagher, Public Works, Director
Christine Horner, Public Works, Civil Engineer II, Water Quality Engineer
Carol S. Waters, Legislative, Deputy Town Clerk

A. Joint worksession with the Planning Commission to review a proposed concept layout for a Stanley Martin Mixed -Use project of Follin Lane

Vienna's Planning Commission Members in attendance included Walter Basnight, Sharon Baum, Laurie Cole, Sarah Couchman, Michael Gelb, Mary McCullough and David Miller. The Town Manager opened the work session at 7:29 p.m. and called it an informational session to receive proposals, ideas and concepts.

Andrew Painter, a zoning attorney, spoke on behalf of Stanley Martin to present their ideas for developing a 9.1 acre property at 901 Follin Lane, near Navy Federal Credit Union. Reportedly, that building's 225,000 square feet of commercial space had been vacant and the owner had been advertising to lease it since September of 2016, with very little response. As Mr. Painter narrated, millions of square feet of office space is being constructed right now in Tysons and that makes it very hard for single use office buildings surrounded by neighborhoods to be marketable. They also have to compete with office space in the Dulles Toll Road Corridor and the Route 66 Corridor. He noted that across the street from 901 Follin Lane there is a very large office complex with thousands of employees inside its own complex, which includes a coffee shop, a gym, and a dry-cleaner for the employees, like what would be found in a small, mixed-use lifestyle center. Mr. Painter recounted that the owner of 901 Follin had approached Stanley Martin (said to be one of the largest project

development companies in Northern Virginia) several months ago and they had been trying to figure out the best use for that property and what would fit for Vienna. They proposed to build a very nice, stacked town house condominium unit. They estimated that it could fit somewhere between 180 and 200 units, each ranging in square footage from 1,500 to 2,400 square feet, some with roof decks on top for outdoor living. Mr. Painter stated that the homes would be well apportioned and the community would be well amenitized, with some active recreation opportunities adjacent to the property. According to Mr. Painter, they envisioned something that would fit in architecturally but sort of act as a transition use, with a small amount of retail along the front. He mentioned that visiting the Cameron Station Project in the City of Alexandria, up on Duke Street, or Chatham Square in Old Town Alexandria would provide a visual example. He stated that the units would be priced somewhere between the high \$400,000s and low \$600,000s.

Discussion followed in regards to the amount of property taxes which could be generated by the proposed residential units versus the higher costs of law enforcement, trash collection and other service costs generated. It was also reviewed that new homes in Vienna cost around 1.5 million dollars; there is very little market for less expensive homes.

Mayor DiRocco pointed out that Vienna's comprehensive plan did not show any changes in use of the area of Stanley Martin's proposal. She said that area is a really nice office use and the Town would prefer to see it continue to be office use. The Mayor went on to express her appreciation for sharing the proposal and the information on the market place right now. A Council Member remarked that he was very reluctant to change the comprehensive plan and that it would be a slippery slope and a never-ending battle once one modification was made. He also opined that the residential project would create a need for one or two more full time Vienna police officers.

A Planning Commissioner expressed concern that this project would destabilize the current way that the area is used, beginning an unfortunate slide towards redeveloping that whole area for town houses. She added that it was not what she wants to see in that area. Three Council Members also indicated that this was not the right place for the proposed project. It was said that Maple Avenue would be the right place.

A second Planning Commissioner spoke of the Commission's commitment to review the Comprehensive Plan more often than the periodic five year requirement, because they wanted it to be a living and breathing document. She stated that she was interested to learn more about the proposal and thought it was unfortunate that it was turned down so fast. Another Council Member agreed and expressed her curiosity about this project, and noted that the location seemed OK to her. She further remarked that although the benefits of having a wider range of housing prices in Town had been acknowledged, it is only 1.5 million dollar homes that are being constructed. She said that there is nothing to allow people to age in place or for millennials to come to town. Another Planning Commissioner voiced support for the proposed project, but added that it could benefit from more green space and recreational space. Yet another Planning Commissioner said he thought the timing might be wrong for this project, but suggested that the Town take a step back and figure out if Vienna is receptive to town houses, because this would seem like a good place to try.

A Council Member referenced the potential negative impact on Vienna's schools, if the proposed residential development went in.

The Mayor expressed appreciation for everyone's feedback. The Stanley Martin team was thanked for their presentation.

Recommendations: No Council action required at this time.

B. Potential Project at Mill Street and Church Street

Consideration of a proposed project at Mill Street and Church Street began at 8:20 p.m. with the introduction of representatives from the Mill Street Development Group. They shared conceptual drawings of a redevelopment massing study which would include the Concord Masonic Lodge on the corner of Mill Street and Church Street, N.E. Part of the proposed project would be a subterranean parking garage. The ground level would be retail and storage offices. Parking on the ground level would either be specifically slated for the retail or other use, depending upon what the Town asked for, representatives reported. They also planned an elevated garage and a typical sized storage facility above.

Setbacks along Mill Street and along the project itself would be something to consider, the representatives indicated. In order to make a viable parking garage, they said they would need about 121 feet and the site is only 137 feet deep. Assuming that Mill Street would be the front of the building, they reported that it would require a 15 foot front yard set-back and a 10 foot rear-yard set-back, which would only leave 112 feet. Since they consider that to be an inefficient size for a garage, they would be looking for approximately nine feet of over-all depth variance. They further noted that the Mill Street section would allow on-street parking, with which they could possibly create a buffer for pedestrians with parallel parking and trees to make it more pedestrian friendly and less dangerous than it currently is, with 90 degree parking and cars backing out on Mill Street.

Questions and answers regarding the variance and the effect on residential property owners followed. Mill Street Development Group representatives related that the amount of variance which they would end up needing would vary at different points. The alley, which only runs behind those homes on a portion of the site, was also discussed. The alley has an entrance from Church Street.

The representatives from Mill Street Development Group related that they want to help create and maintain an historic feel to that Church Street area. So, although the corner of Mill and Church Streets is zoned C1B by-right, they plan to create a storage building that looks more like an historic building. One Council Member voiced enthusiasm for this idea and called it an opportunity for "place making" in the middle of historic Church Street. The developers also recounted that their project would result in quiet tenants without night clubs or things to create noise later at night. Council noted that at a later date, the space could be converted to different uses and change to something else that might not be as quiet. Council further observed that the proposal includes a very large blank wall on the back side, against residential property. Mixed opinions were offered as to how many people would want to walk that far for a parking garage. Council also remarked on the height difference which would result between the new project and the existing shops, however, the existing zoning in that area allows for a height of 45 feet.

Showing the conceptual drawings of the proposed project, the developers recounted that the second floor area represented about 129 parking spaces that they are attributing to the commercial tenants. There were about 30 spaces on the ground level which they want to reserve for the retail tenants. Below grade there were