



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Subject:

Proffers Timeline Regarding Rezoning
BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

At a recent Town Council meeting, the Town Council Members Springsteen and Majdi requested the Town Attorney to provide background summary and overview of the timeline for zoning proffers.

OVERVIEW:

The Town Code Section 18-249.1, relating to rezonings, provides that the Town may accept proffers from a landowner/developer in a rezoning and/or amendment to the zoning map. The application for rezoning is submitted in accordance with the Town Code and Section 18-249.1 provides that any proffers be “provided such conditions are voluntarily proffered in writing by the owner prior to public hearing before the council”. Accordingly, while a landowner/developer may submit its proposed proffers prior to any review of the Planning Commission, it is not required by the Town Code.

Virginia Code §15.2-2303, provides that a zoning ordinance may include provisions for the proffers to address conditions related to the proposed zoning map amendment and (“t)he governing body may also accept amended proffers once the public hearing has begun if the amended proffers do not materially affect the overall proposal”.

Because proffers are voluntary and intended to address impacts of a rezoning that are directly and measurably related to the impact of a proposed rezoning, landowners are permitted to submit proposed proffer amendments even after a public hearing on a proposed rezoning. The Virginia Supreme Court in the 2010 case of *Arogas, Inc. v. Frederick County BZA*, 280 Va. 221, 698 S.E.2d 908, specifically ruled that Virginia Code Section 15.2-2285(C) permits this and the Virginia Code authorized the governmental body to make changes to the proffers that the prior landowners had submitted. The rezoning of the property that resulted was an amendment to the county's zoning ordinance. Code § 15.2-2285(C) enables local governments to consider comments that citizens or

property owners articulate during public hearings and to exercise legislative prerogatives to respond to those comments by amending proposed proffers. The Court held that “(t)here is simply no language in Code § 15.2-2285 that prohibits the county from amending the proffer after the public hearing has occurred”. In that case, the owners of the land also agreed with the changes to the amended proffer after the public hearing.

Relevant Town and Virginia Code Sections:

Town Code Sec. 18-249.1. - Conditional zoning and proffers.

As a condition to any rezoning or amendment to the zoning map, the council may suggest reasonable conditions, in addition to the regulations provided for the zoning district or zone by this Code, **provided such conditions are voluntarily proffered in writing by the owner prior to public hearing before the council** and provided further that:

- (a) The rezoning itself must give rise for the need for the conditions;
- (b) Such conditions shall have a reasonable relation to the zoning;
- (c) Such conditions may include a cash contribution to the Town in accordance with the Virginia State Code. Cash proffers may be used for any public improvements consistent with the Town's adopted Capital Improvement Plan and/or goals set forth in the Town's Comprehensive Plan to address transportation and other public facility needs and impacts;
- (d) Such conditions shall not include mandatory dedication of real or personal property for open space, parks, schools, fire departments or other public facilities not otherwise provided for in the Town's subdivision, site plan or other Town ordinances;
- (e) Such conditions may include payment for or construction of off-site improvements to address transportation and public facility impacts; not already provided for in the Town's subdivision or site plan ordinances;
- (f) Except for off-site transportation and public facility improvements, no condition shall be proffered that is not related to the physical development or physical operation of the property; and
- (g) All such conditions shall be in conformity with the comprehensive plan.

Virginia Code § 15.2-2303. Conditional zoning in certain localities. -

A. A zoning ordinance may include reasonable regulations and provisions for conditional zoning as defined in § 15.2-2201 and for the adoption, in counties, or towns therein which have planning commissions, wherein the urban county executive form of government is in effect, or in a city adjacent to or completely surrounded by such a county, or in a county contiguous to any such county, or in a city adjacent to or completely surrounded by such a contiguous county, or in any town within such contiguous county, and in the counties east of the Chesapeake Bay as a part of an amendment to the zoning map of reasonable conditions, in addition to the regulations provided for the zoning district by the ordinance, when such conditions shall have been proffered in writing, in advance of the public hearing before the governing body required by § 15.2-2285 by the owner of the property which is the subject of the proposed zoning map amendment. Reasonable conditions shall not include, however, conditions that impose upon the applicant the requirement to create a property owners' association under Chapter 26 (§ 55-508 et seq.) of Title 55 which includes an express further condition that members of a property owners' association pay an assessment for the maintenance of public facilities owned in fee by a public entity, including open space, parks, schools, fire departments, and other

public facilities not otherwise provided for in § 15.2-2241; however, such facilities shall not include sidewalks, special street signs or markers, or special street lighting in public rights-of-way not maintained by the Department of Transportation. The governing body may also accept amended proffers once the public hearing has begun if the amended proffers do not materially affect the overall proposal. Once proffered and accepted as part of an amendment to the zoning ordinance, such conditions shall continue in effect until a subsequent amendment changes the zoning on the property covered by such conditions. However, such conditions shall continue if the subsequent amendment is part of a comprehensive implementation of a new or substantially revised zoning ordinance.

B. In the event proffered conditions include a requirement for the dedication of real property of substantial value, or substantial cash payments for or construction of substantial public improvements, the need for which is not generated solely by the rezoning itself, then no amendment to the zoning map for the property subject to such conditions, nor the conditions themselves, nor any amendments to the text of the zoning ordinance with respect to the zoning district applicable thereto initiated by the governing body, which eliminate, or materially restrict, reduce, or modify the uses, the floor area ratio, or the density of use permitted in the zoning district applicable to such property, shall be effective with respect to such property unless there has been mistake, fraud, or a change in circumstances substantially affecting the public health, safety, or welfare.

C. Any landowner who has prior to July 1, 1990, proffered the dedication of real property of substantial value, or substantial cash payments for or construction of substantial public improvements, the need for which is not generated solely by the rezoning itself, but who has not substantially implemented such proffers prior to July 1, 1990, shall advise the local governing body by certified mail prior to July 1, 1991, that he intends to proceed with the implementation of such proffers. Such notice shall identify the property to be developed, the zoning district, and the proffers applicable thereto. Thereafter, any landowner giving such notice shall have until July 1, 1995, substantially to implement such proffers, or such later time as the governing body may allow. Thereafter, the landowner in good faith shall diligently pursue the completion of the development of the property. Any landowner who complies with the requirements of this subsection shall be entitled to the protection against action initiated by the governing body affecting use, floor area ratio, and density set out in subsection B, unless there has been mistake, fraud, or a change in circumstances substantially affecting the public health, safety, or welfare, but any landowner failing to comply with the requirements of this subdivision shall acquire no rights pursuant to this section.

D. Subsections B and C of this section shall be effective prospectively only, and not retroactively, and shall not apply to any zoning ordinance text amendments which may have been enacted prior to March 10, 1990. Nothing contained herein shall be construed to affect any litigation pending prior to July 1, 1990, or any such litigation nonsuited and thereafter refiled.

E. Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect or impair the authority of a governing body to (i) accept proffered conditions which include provisions for timing or phasing of dedications, payments, or improvements; or (ii) accept or impose valid conditions pursuant to subdivision A 3 of § 15.2-2286, subdivision 5 of § 15.2-2242, or other provision of law.

F. In any instance in which a locality has accepted proffered conditions that include pedestrian improvements, and the Virginia Department of Transportation has reviewed and not objected to the proposed pedestrian improvements during the processing of the rezoning, the Virginia Department of Transportation shall allow the proffered improvements to be constructed, except when such improvements will violate local, state, or federal laws, regulations, or mandated engineering and safety standards.

G. In addition to the powers granted by the preceding subsections, a zoning ordinance may include reasonable regulations to implement, in whole or in part, the provisions of §§ 15.2-2296 through 15.2-2302. (Code 1950, § 15-968.5; 1962, c. 407, § 15.1-491; 1964, c. 564; 1966, c. 455; 1968, cc. 543, 595; 1973, c. 286; 1974, c. 547; 1975, cc. 99, 575, 579, 582, 641; 1976, cc. 71, 409, 470, 683; 1977, c. 177; 1978, c. 543; 1979, c. 182; 1982, c. 44; 1983, c. 392; 1984, c. 238; 1987, c. 8; 1988, cc. 481, 856; 1989, cc. 359, 384; 1990, cc. 672, 868; 1992, c. 380; 1993, c. 672; 1994, c. 802; 1995, cc. 351, 475, 584, 603; 1996, c. 451; 1997, c. 587; 2001, c. 703; 2006, c. 450; 2008, c. 733.)

Virginia Code §15.2-2285. Preparation and adoption of zoning ordinance and map and amendments thereto; appeal. -

A. The planning commission of each locality may, and at the direction of the governing body shall, prepare a proposed zoning ordinance including a map or maps showing the division of the territory into districts and a text setting forth the regulations applying in each district. The commission shall hold at least one public hearing on a proposed ordinance or any amendment of an ordinance, after notice as required by § 15.2-2204, and may make appropriate changes in the proposed ordinance or amendment as a result of the hearing. Upon the completion of its work, the commission shall present the proposed ordinance or amendment including the district maps to the governing body together with its recommendations and appropriate explanatory materials.

B. No zoning ordinance shall be amended or reenacted unless the governing body has referred the proposed amendment or reenactment to the local planning commission for its recommendations. Failure of the commission to report 100 days after the first meeting of the commission after the proposed amendment or reenactment has been referred to the commission, or such shorter period as may be prescribed by the governing body, shall be deemed approval, unless the proposed amendment or reenactment has been withdrawn by the applicant prior to the expiration of the time period. In the event of and upon such withdrawal, processing of the proposed amendment or reenactment shall cease without further action as otherwise would be required by this subsection.

C. Before approving and adopting any zoning ordinance or amendment thereof, the governing body shall hold at least one public hearing thereon, pursuant to public notice as required by § 15.2-2204, after which the governing body may make appropriate changes or corrections in the ordinance or proposed amendment. In the case of a proposed amendment to the zoning map, the public notice shall state the general usage and density range of the proposed amendment and the general usage and density range, if any, set forth in the applicable part of the comprehensive plan. However, no land may be zoned to a more intensive use classification than was contained in the public notice without an additional public hearing after notice required by § 15.2-2204. Zoning ordinances shall be enacted in the same manner as all other ordinances.

D. Any county which has adopted an urban county executive form of government provided for under Chapter 8 (§ 15.2-800 et seq.) may provide by ordinance for use of plans, profiles, elevations, and other such demonstrative materials in the presentation of requests for amendments to the zoning ordinance.

E. The adoption or amendment prior to March 1, 1968, of any plan or ordinance under the authority of prior acts shall not be declared invalid by reason of a failure to advertise, give notice or conduct more than one public hearing as may be required by such act or by this chapter, provided a public hearing was conducted by the governing body prior to the adoption or amendment.

F. Every action contesting a decision of the local governing body adopting or failing to adopt a proposed zoning ordinance or amendment thereto or granting or failing to grant a special exception shall be filed within thirty days of the decision with the circuit court having jurisdiction of the land affected by the decision. However, nothing in this subsection shall be construed to create any new right to contest the action of a local governing body. (Code 1950, §§ 15-822, 15-846, 15-968.7; 1962, c. 407, § 15.1-493; 1964, c. 279; 1968, c. 652; 1970, c. 216; 1972, c. 818; 1975, c. 641; 1984, c. 175; 1988, cc. 573, 733, 856; 1989, c. 359; 1990, c. 475; 1991, c. 235; 1996, c. 867; 1997, c. 587.)