

**Planning Commission
Town of Front Royal, Virginia**

February 21, 2018

Present: **Deborah Langfitt, Chairman**
 Douglas Jones, Vice Chairman
 David Gushee, Commissioner
 Connie Marshner, Commissioner
 Cee Ann Davis, Commissioner
 Joseph McFadden, Commissioner

Staff: **Jeremy Camp, Director**
 Darryl Merchant, GIS Analyst/Planner/Surveyor

The February 21, 2018 meeting of the Planning Commission for the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was called to order by Chairman Langfitt at 7:00 p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Debbie Langfitt was elected Chairman and Douglas Jones was elected Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

There were no speakers.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Davis moved approval of the meeting minutes as written, seconded by Commissioner Marshner.

VOTE: Yes – Davis, Marshner, Langfitt, Jones, McFadden, Gushee

PUBLIC HEARING:

- **FRREZON-000661-2018** – Rezoning Application, submitted by Warren Memorial Hospital (Valley Health), to conditionally rezone 147.039 acres from the R-S/A-1 Districts to the MCD (Mixed -Use Campus Development) District.

Mr. Camp explained that this was a request from Warren Memorial Hospital to rezone approximately 147 acres. The property is currently zoned R-S and A-1 Districts and the applicant is proposing to change it to the Mixed-Use Campus District (MCD). This zoning district is specifically intended for the development of large tracts of land, principally for non-residential purposes.

The subject property is located on the east side of Leach Run Parkway, south of the new middle school property and northeast of the planned development referred to as Swan Estates. The applicant has submitted an application that includes a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, a Wetland and Waterway Evaluation, a letter and data addressing traffic impacts for the traffic study and a Rezoning Impact Statement. The applicant has also submitted the required concept plan, as well as a set of proffer statements. A third rendition of those proffers was handed out at the Planning Commission meeting. The applicant's property is within the Towns Urban Development area and is also designated as a possible future site for a hospital in the Comprehensive Plan. This rezoning application also includes two (2) small pieces of property, which is currently in the negotiation stages with the Warren County School Board and the hospital. If this transaction goes forward those properties would also be rezoned to clean up the zoning line between the two uses.

The Concept Plan submitted by the applicant illustrates two phases of development. Phase I includes a replacement hospital and a medical office building. If the rezoning application is approved, all the future development would be required to comply with the concept plan. Phase I also includes a mechanical yard, maintenance storage facility and a heliport. Phase II will have an access road where they would complete the loop and provide associated parking for that site.

If the application is approved, the applicant will be required to submit site plans and all applicable permits required by law in order to move forward with the proposed development.

In the far north of the site the applicant has reserved a large area for conservation purposes and there are four (4) outlying land bay areas around the perimeter of the southern part of the property. Currently the concept plan does not propose any uses but does designate those areas as possible future development sites. If the rezoning application is approved by the Town and the applicant would like to develop those areas in the future, they will be required to resubmit a new concept plan which would require the same review process.

The Staff Report provided to the Planning Commissioners included an analysis of the application, including a review of the impacts as well as the comments on the second rendition of the proffer statement dated February 9th. As mentioned, there was a new

submission of the proffers dated February 14th that was distributed at the meeting. These proffers included minor changes from the second rendition. The original proffers were reviewed in detail during the January 31st Planning Commission work session and the applicant has been working with Staff to improve those proffers over this period. Since the original application the applicant has increased the maximum amounts of funds offered for traffic signalization at the main intersection of the hospital. This has been increased to \$300,000 which exceeds the Department of Energy Services current estimates for a traffic signal at that location. In addition, the applicant has added language, so that they will contribute their fair share based on traffic for the cost of a signal on Oden Street which is shared with the middle school site. According to the traffic study for the Leach Run Parkway a signal would be needed at that location in the long term but does not specify exactly when that would be required. There will need to be an analysis and study done to move forward with that process. The applicant has proffered those additional funds for the secondary entrance on Oden Street for Phase II of the development. With these changes to the proffers, Staff believes the applicant has better mitigated the impacts discussed at the January 31st work session. Staff recommends that a favorable recommendation be forwarded to Town Council from the Planning Commission.

Mark Merrill, President and CEO of Valley Health System stated they operate six (6) hospitals in the northern Shenandoah Valley including Winchester Medical Center, Warren Memorial Hospital, Page Hospital, Shenandoah Memorial Hospital and two hospitals in Hampshire County and Berkley Springs, West Virginia. Warren Memorial Hospital was built in the late 1940s and early 1950s and has served the community quite well. There are some limitations and Valley Health believes the current hospital will not meet the long term needs of the community of Warren County and Front Royal. They have been studying this project for several years with the desire to replace the facility to serve the contemporary needs of the community. The Board of Trustees has approved the project and anticipates it to be roughly a 100-million-dollar project and take seven (7) years to complete.

Floyd Heater, President of Warren Memorial Hospital spoke and thanked the Planning Commission for entertaining their application. With the investment the Town and County has made in roads, bridges, schools and housing developments increasing in the community, the new location will serve them well. When the hospital opened in 1951 it was totally geared toward inpatient care. Today, about 75-80% of patients that come to the campus are coming for an outpatient exam, procedure or some type of outpatient service. Much of the proposed campus design is focused on convenient, accessible, and a patient friendly experience. It will largely focus on ambulatory care. It also proposes a 36-bed private inpatient unit, which is very important. Mr. Heater noted they have applied with the state for a replacement facility. Valley Health expects their decision by June 10th. The proposed hospital is subject to the state's approval. The campus will promote wellness and healing and will include walking trails. The intended design is to

be a place welcoming to the community. There is a proposed medical office building that will be adjacent to the hospital. This will give them the opportunity to bring the physicians in the community onto the medical campus. They have recently recruited two new orthopedic surgeons to the community, a general surgeon, vascular surgeons, gastroenterology and a whole array of new specialties have come into Warren County over the last several years and they will continue to build on that. The age 65 and over population will increase about 45% over the next 10 years.

Commissioner Marshner asked if they intended on building an on-site daycare facility for the employees.

Mr. Heater said that is not in their current plan. They are focused on the current medical needs and modernization of their operating needs.

Commissioner Davis asked if they had received input from the public safety community with regards to their design.

Mr. Heater said they did receive input from the public safety community. They had a feasibility study team which included county government and the EDA. Group meetings were held monthly with emergency services.

Craig George, Valley Engineering in Harrisonburg, Landscape Architect explained the topography of the project and the design of the proposed structure.

Vice Chairman Jones asked what the preliminary plans were for Parcels A, B and C.

Mr. George said that as of now, the hospital has no plans for those particular parcels.

Mr. George was asked to discuss the potential road from the loop road to the HEPTAD commercial district.

Mr. George explained the connections and topography challenges of that area and future roads.

Commissioner Davis said several Commissioners questioned if there would be assistance for patients in accessing medical care areas after leaving the parking area.

Mr. George showed areas on the plan that would be designated handicap accessible areas on the site. From a design standpoint they have not had an emphasis on shortening the distance from other areas of the parking facility to medical care areas.

Mark Baker, President of Facilities Management for Valley Health System said the plan for the medical office buildings to have full occupancy on or about the time the hospital is occupied.

Chairman Langfitt opened the public hearing.

Alexander Dumez, 157 Greenhill Court. He and his wife moved to Greenhill Forest in 1997. In the early 90s there was a proposal to put a cell phone tower on top of Greenhill. At that point, he was asked for an easement on his property towards the top of the mountain. He was reluctant. Mr. Dumez met Walter Duncan who sold him 3-acres for a great sum of money to prevent the cell tower from going on the property. He believes this is a fabulous project and asked if it might be possible to ask Valley Health to put the property that is set aside as a conservation area into an actual conservation easement. Mr. Dumez said he spoke with Mr. Camp who told him it would be in perpetuity for 99 years if it was put into a conservation easement through the state. He requested that Valley Health consider this particularly for the residents of Greenhill Forest so in the future nothing will be built up on the hill.

Rebecca Phelps, 57 Shenandoah Heights Road. She requested that the site plan map be put back on the screen and referred to Parcels A, B and C. Ms. Phelps said that she attended a rezoning hearing several years ago and at that time there was an agreement to have a 100' buffer on the perimeter of those parcels. Ms. Phelps asked what the size of the easement was around those parcels for this application.

Mr. George stated there was a proposed 50' buffer on the perimeter.

Ms. Phelps stated that her house is adjacent to that land and she does not feel that a 50' buffer is sufficient for her and her neighbors and again referred to the previous 100' buffer that had been discussed at a previous public hearing several years ago.

Christopher Bussell, 102 Valley Road. Mr. Bussell thanked the Planning Commission for giving them the opportunity to speak and thanked Mr. Camp for the timely letter that was sent out regarding the public hearing. In addition, Mr. Bussell thanked the applicant for attending the meeting and explaining the proposed project. Mr. Bussell referred to the letter he had received from Staff and referred to the different "phases" mentioned in the letter. He asked for clarification of "Areas A, B, C and D" and what did it mean to designate those areas as "possible future development". What will that authorize Valley Health to do going forward without coming back to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Camp explained that those references are areas that the applicant has designated on the plan that might have the potential for future development. The 50' buffer is required by code, however in reality there is a much larger buffer there that includes those land bay areas. Staff recognizes that in the future another application may come forward for

development of those areas, but they are not on the table currently for consideration. The areas are recognized as developable areas. Another application would require the same process of review that the current application is going through.

Mr. Bussell asked what it meant to designate the undefined area at the “top” of the plan as natural resource conservation. What does this mean from a legal, planning and development standpoint?

Mr. Camp stated that it is an area that cannot be developed. The applicant intends on conserving that area and has no plans to develop that now or even in the long term because of the steep terrain which makes it unfeasible for development. Legally the applicant could come forward and revise the concept plan to show development of this area. This would require the same process of review as the current application.

Mr. Bussell asked for an explanation of the phrase “future development would need to conform with the concept plan”.

Mr. Camp explained that this is the first step in the process. The development of a concept plan and the rezoning application. Steps would include a site plan where engineering would be involved. Mr. Camp said it would be his responsibility to review this to make sure it is consistent with what the intent of the plan is. This is defined in the Town Code that there cannot be anymore than a 25% change in the size of any of the buildings. Mr. Camp gave some examples of significant changes that would require the application to come back to the Planning Commission and Town Council for review.

Mr. Bussell thanked Valley Health for their investment in the community. He suggested that Valley Health and the Planning Commission amend the proffer designating the “top area” that is outside of parcels A, B, C and D that is not currently described as a natural resource conversation and amend the proffer to designate that tract as a conservation easement. Mr. Bussell would also like Valley Health to consider amending the proffer to double the size of the buffer along the entire property line and the exterior property line east of Leach Run Parkway from 50’ to 100’ and provide additional buffering to the residents in the neighboring community.

There were no additional speakers. Chairman Langfitt closed the public hearing.

Vice Chairman Jones moved to forward a recommendation for approval to Town Council for Rezoning Application #661-2018, submitted by Warren Memorial Hospital, for the conditional rezoning of approximately 147 acres to the MCD District, including approval of the Concept Plan and Proffers, seconded by Commissioner Gushee.

Commissioner Davis asked if it would be appropriate to fulfill the intent of this to include data proffer revised 2-14-18 to be attached as the correct proffer.

Commissioner Gushee stated that could be added to the motion, seconded by Vice Chairman Jones.

Vice Chairman Jones expressed that he was happy to have a state of the art medical facility as part of Front Royal. The Planning Commission recognizes and appreciates the possibility of this coming to Front Royal and look forward to the implementation of the project.

VOTE: Yes – Davis, Marshner, Langfitt, Jones, McFadden, Gushee

CONSENT AGENDA:

There were no items on the consent agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

There were no items for new business.

OLD BUSINESS:

There were no items for old business.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Camp said the monthly report was in the Planning Commission packets as well as a document titled "Commonly Used Planning Agenda Terms". This was requested by Commissioner Davis and there was a consensus for Staff to bring forward a document to the Planning Commission for review. It was drafted from a document similarly used in Frederick County as suggested by Commissioner Davis. This could be included in future agendas and be a good reference for the public.

COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS:

Commissioner Marshner asked which lot on South Street the Dunkin Donuts was proposing their location.

Mr. Camp explained it was at the property to the right of "Spelunkers".

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Marshner moved, seconded by Commissioner Davis to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Yes – Langfitt, Jones, Gushee, Davis, Marshner, McFadden

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Connie L. Potter
Sr. Administrative Assistant