

**BRAC Advisory Group Meeting**

**March 17, 2010**

**7pm – 9pm**

**Beatley Library**

Roll Call –

Present:

John Komoroske, Chairman of the Planning Commission  
Jerry Dawson, Duke Realty  
Geoffrey Goodale – Vice Chair, Brookville-Seminary Valley  
Dick Somers, Seminary Park Community Association  
Dave Dexter - Chair, Seminary West  
Kathy Burns, West End Business Association  
Don Buch, Citizen at Large  
Nancy Jennings, Seminary Hill  
Dave Cavanaugh, Seminary Ridge  
Julie Edelson, Lincolnia Hills/Heywood Glen  
Kai Reynolds, JBG  
Stephanie Landrum, AEDP  
Gerry Chiaruttini, Beauregard Heights Civic Association

Not Present:

Colonel Moffatt, Fort Belvoir Deputy Garrison Commander for Transformation and BRAC  
Ronald Sturman, Seminary Heights  
Jayme Blakesley, Alexandria Transportation Commission  
Mark Benedict, Parkside of Alexandria

Washington Headquarters Service

Paul McMahon

City of Alexandria Elected Officials:

Redella S. “Del” Pepper, Councilwoman

Planning Commission Members:

Donna Fossum

City Staff:

Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning and Zoning  
Abi Lerner, Deputy Director of Transportation and Environmental Services  
Bob Garbacz, Chief, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services  
Ravi Raut, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services  
Leroy Baker, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

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Pat Escher, Principal Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning

Note: All presentations can be found on the City's web page: <http://alexandriava.gov/planning>

1. **Roll Call**
2. **Meeting Minutes** - Dave Dexter called the meeting to order and asked the group if there were any changes February 17 and March 1 minutes; having heard none, the minutes were approved.
3. **Resolution 2366** – Dave Dexter explained that the group had a one year time limitation granted by resolution 2322. Last month the Council approved Resolution 2366, extending the group's time for one more year.
4. **Public Art** - Dave Dexter introduced the next agenda item of public art on federally owned buildings. He indicated that the General Service Administration (GSA) requires all projects to allocate .5% of the overall project's budget to the design and construction of public art and hoped that the Department of Defense (DoD) would follow suit. Some of the most recent projects that have public art are U.S. Courthouse and the Mirant Power Plant, with budgets in excess of \$400,000. The Freedman Cemetery, Charles Houston Recreational Center and the City's new police facility have art budgets of \$300,000.

Dave then introduced Matthew Harwood with Alexandria Commission for the Arts. Matthew reaffirmed that as part of the National Capital Planning Commission review; the Commission noted "that the applicant has agreed to enhance the architectural expression of the North Parking Garage facade next to the Transportation Center by allowing wall space that can be used for public art." The north façade of the garage is very prominent and as it is a transit center, many will see it as they travel to/from and through the site. City Council also recommended that the DoD provide some public art on the site. Matthew provided numerous examples of different types of public art. He discussed that the public art could have a theme or message such as history. He showed examples of how the wall could depict the history of Alexandria starting with the Native Americans, tracing the City's history through Civil War and up to present day. Another theme might relate to the transit/movement or a theme that accentuates the beauty and nature of Cora Kelly and the Winkler preserves. A nature theme may enhance the three green screen walls that are to be located on the other sides of the building. He went on to described different types of public art such as murals, mosaics, inlaid tiles, cut steel and wind catchers. In Philadelphia, the increased public interest with the city's murals has led to the establishment of a mural bus tour.

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Dave Dexter inquired that if the DoD had set aside money for public art. Paul McMahon with WHS indicated that he would have that discussion with Jim Turkel with the Corp of Engineers, to get a funding status. Pat Escher indicated the City is just starting to enter into those conversations with the Army and the process will be open to the public for their input. Nancy Jennings said that perhaps the theme for public art could be patriotic.

Dick Somers, saying this was off topic but wanted to know the status of the transportation management plan (TMP). Paul indicated that the TMP is in process, meetings are being held and information is still being gathered.

5. **VDOT's Next Steps** – VDOT was not present. The group moved to next agenda item.
6. **City's Next Steps Response to the VDOT'S Alternatives** – Abi Lerner handed out a draft letter that Council will be sending to VDOT. The letter has two main points. First, VDOT should develop an access that incorporates the Advisory Group's adopted principles, one of which is that there should be no encroachments into the Winkler Preserve. The letter recommends that VDOT explore other alternatives. Additionally the letter informs VDOT that Council will be holding a public hearing on April 17<sup>th</sup> and may have some additional comments for VDOT's consideration after that meeting. This draft letter will be reviewed during the Council's March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting and then sent to VDOT prior to the March 25<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Don Buch stated that he believes that due to the federal process, VDOT will have to review Alternative D, regardless the City's position. He felt it was misleading to think the VDOT will not review this alternative.

Dave Cavanaugh indicated the VDOT's report had a chart which indicates that Alternative D complies with the groups principles with the exception of protecting the preserve.

Additional group discussion:

It was discussed that some of the groups' principles carry more weight than others. It was stated that VDOT did indicate that they were open to reviewing other options. It was felt that the VDOT process should not move forward without alternatives that protect the preserve.

All regional stake holders will have input into this decision. Fairfax County has written a letter in support of Alternative D. The mayor has responded raising the City's concerns.

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The City and County have agreed to work together to come up with a solution that will be satisfactory to both jurisdictions. The approach needs to be a regional approach and not site specific.

7. **Short Term Road Improvements** – Abi Lerner discussed the different short term road improvements that may or may help relieve the situation.

Improvements that staff concurs will help congestion are:

- a. Eliminate improperly striped lane markings at the Seminary and Mark Center Drive;  
I-395 Interchange Improvements
- b. Stripe three lanes at each intersection;
- c. Reconfigure NB I-395 off-ramp and;
- d. Provide additional signing for traffic going to I-395.

Improvements warranting further review:

- a. The removal of the islands at the interchange would be an issue that VDOT would have to review.
- b. Providing a full right turn lane on Seminary Road at the Beauregard Street and Seminary Road intersection would warrant additional study.

Improvements that staff did not think would help the congestion are:

- a. Retime signals;
- b. Stripe single lane on WB Seminary and two-lanes from SB Off-ramp;
- c. Limit # of left-turns at Mark Center Drive from WB Seminary Road to HOV and Transit only during peak hours;
- d. Convert channelized right-turn lane to continuous thru Seminary Road/Mark Center intersection and;
- e. Eliminate lane drop into rightmost dual left- turn lane and provide lane drop to channelized right turn lane.

Pursuant to the 2004 approval, the dual right-turn lanes at Mark Center Drive at Seminary Road have already been constructed.

It was thought that providing improvements to the off ramp and the interchange rotary would be beneficial and could possibly be funded by VDOT's maintenance funds. These improvements, however, need to be reviewed and approved by VDOT.

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Dick Somers - The City needs to work with other jurisdictions with regards to improvements to Seminary Road, west of Beauregard Street.

8. **BRAC Advisory Group and the Beauregard Corridor Plan** - Faroll Hammer wanted to discuss the Beauregard Corridor Plan and how it relates to the BRAC development. John Komoroske clarified statements he made during the March 2<sup>nd</sup> Planning Commission meeting. He was trying to explain to the Commission that the neighborhood was very upset with some aspects of the BRAC development. During his explanation he inappropriately used hyperbole, irony and humor and he apologized if he created the impression that the topic was not serious. Faroll continued stating the Beauregard Plan will look at transportation regionally and a draft plan will be completed by mid-summer allowing for community input and go to hearing in the fall. She wanted the group to give her feedback about the process. There are different approaches that are used during the process such as a charrette, breakout groups, or voting on aspects of the plan using dots. There are several stages for each plan such as identifying existing conditions, creating principles or visioning, brain storming all different kind of ideas and then testing those ideas. Once the ideas are tested they are evaluated to see if they are effective and should be incorporated into the plan or discarded as they have limitations or are not feasible.

The City is responding to the community input such as performing a SWOT (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities & **T**hreats) analysis as requested. A SWOT analysis is very helpful as it shows the communities priorities. Staff did not use the break out groups at the last meeting as staff heard that the community did not think they were effective.

Faroll wants to form a subcommittee to review the planning process and get further input from the community about the process and to discuss the April 10<sup>th</sup> Beauregard meeting. Some members of the group said that they have attended the meetings and didn't get a sense of the meeting's purpose and that they would like more presentations from staff so they would have something about which to comment.

Nancy Jennings stated that she was not comfortable about how the boundaries were established and that they focus on the commercial areas and areas were most people don't live. She felt that there has not been enough discussion about what the community wants. She said that some people say we need to fix the neighborhood's problems, but that doesn't mean constructing 25 story buildings.

Faroll stated that the boundary is not a fixed line and that redevelopment within the boundary could help fix issues out side the boundary. It is true that not a lot of the people

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present at this meeting live within the boundary, that is because those communities where most of you live are stable neighborhoods that will not redevelop in the near or distance future. The areas within the plan boundary are areas that either staff and/or the land owners have indicated potential for redevelopment opportunities. She asked members of the group or the general public to volunteer to form a Beauregard subcommittee. She requested that they send her an email or talk with her after the meeting. Kai Reynolds, Don Buch, Dave Cavanaugh, Dave Dexter, Geoffrey Goodale and Gerry Chiaruttini volunteered to work on the group.

9. **The Alternative Conceptual Interchange Improvements** – Abi Lerner described some alternative designs to the current VDOT access options to the Mark Center. The alternatives require enhancements to the I-395 interchange that may improve vehicular flow to the neighborhood, not just the Mark Center site, and adhere to the group's guiding principles. These designs are very preliminary and may change as the analysis continues. At this very conceptual stage, it appears that these alternatives may improve traffic congestion and warrant additional study.

- The first alternative would provide a flyover ramp from either the general purpose lanes or from the HOV lanes and remove the existing through traffic bridge. The 1st concept that takes the traffic from the general purpose lanes would remove more cars from the rotary portion of the interchange. The other option would take traffic from the HOV lanes. While this option will take fewer cars out of the interchange; it works better on a regional level. Both concepts would improve the congestion at the Beauregard/Seminary intersection.
- Another alternative would be to keep the existing through traffic bridge and add a lane to accommodate a ramp from the HOV lanes. Again, on a preliminary basis, this design may improve the traffic congestion in the area.

Both of these concepts would work with a direct access ramp into the south parking garage. It is believed that to improve the congestion, there will need to be several design options working together for overall congestion improvement.

VDOT has these alternatives and is performing their own analysis.

10. Next meeting the Army should give the group an update about the TMP.

**Meeting was adjourned.**

11. **Next Meeting Burke Library**

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