

Long Range Planning Committee Meeting
February 4, 2019

Attendees: John Beale, Chris Bruch, Pat Burda, George Canty, Tina Coplan, Karen Elkins, John Freedman, Dedun Ingram, Joel Rubin (Town Council liaison), Steve Seidel, Deborah Vollmer and 18 Town residents in attendance.

The meeting started at 7:01 p.m.

BETHESDA MARKET PLAN PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Chair Pat Burda presented an update on the Bethesda Market Plan to the committee and 18 Town residents attending.

Pat reported that Foulger-Pratt has dropped out of the original partnership so Bernstein will be taking on the FWCM alone. Also, the County has tentatively expressed interest in using its bonding authority under the Parking Lot District to help provide county funds to help offset the developer costs to underground parking on Lot 24.

Bernstein Management Corp., responding to community concerns, has in its most recent presentation to Town officials show plans that reduce the extension onto the county-owned parking lots by about half; reduced the height of the proposed new pavilion from seven to two stories, each floor containing 7,500 square feet; and moved the glass building toward Wisconsin Ave., to line up with the rear of the adjacent building (this would allow approximately 12-feet of additional park area along the back of both buildings).

Pat also reported that the developer presented its new plan at the County Historic Preservation Commission's January meeting. The Commission members, while not taking a final vote on the project, did express concern about placing parking under the Farm Market. They also voiced concerns about repositioning the Farm Market 13 feet closer to Willow Lane, as proposed in the Bernstein plans.

Questions and Comments

Residents asked about entering and exiting the underground parking. Entrance would be on Leland, with egress onto a narrowed Willow Lane.

Discussion followed about Lot 10, and the benefits of developing townhouses there, or leaving it as surface parking. When a vote was taken, a solid majority supported building new townhouses along with a mandatory greenway.

Responding to the question of maintenance for a new park on Lot 24, Pat responded that it would likely remain the County's responsibility.

Safety for bikers was also discussed along Willow Lane and the unresolved solution of a tunnel under Wisconsin Ave.

The Planning Board is expected to review the Bethesda Market concept plans at the end of March. Pat encouraged those attending to send their thoughts to the Town Council before its next meeting on February 13, 2019.

LRP MEETING

A committee meeting followed. The following points were supported by a majority of committee members as recommendations for the Town Council:

1. The committee remains concerned about the overall size of the pavilion in relation to the park, and recommends further reduction in building scale. A separate consideration to have no pavilion whatsoever received one vote.
2. The committee supported the developers' proposal, over objections by the Historic Preservation Commission, to allow parking under the Farm Market building, which would necessitate moving the historic building temporarily off site to expedite underground parking construction.
3. The committee favored using the current development opportunity on Lot 24 to integrate improvements on Lot 10.

In a different area, following up on an earlier discussion about light pollution caused by search lights proposed on top of a Bethesda high-rise, John Freedman reported that the Design Review Panel indicated that won't happen.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.