

Special Committee on the Bethesda Downtown Plan
Thursday, February 9, 2016
7:00 pm, Town Hall

Attendees: Barney Rush, Cecily Baskir, Tina Coplan, John Freedman, Steve Seidel, Deborah Vollmer

Meetings with County Council Members and Others

Barney reported on meetings that have been held with all County Council members at this point, and also on the meeting that Barney and Scott had with Marlene Michaelson, the land-use legislative analyst for the County Council.

There has been positive response to our position that buildings arranged in a “tent,” rather than a “bowl,” formation. There also seem to be shared concerns for focusing density where it is most needed, rather than to whatever developer applies first. There also seemed to be an understanding that heights along the edges are excessive in the plan.

Council member Floreen listened to the Town’s concerns for strong regulatory and design protections in the ZTA.

A meeting was also held with developer Tim Eden of Starr Capital, whose property is on the west side of Wisconsin Ave.

CBAR Joint Activities

At a meeting with the Town and CBAR, Roger Berliner was asked what it would take to advance the cause of converting parking lots into parks. He cited the need for a petition to show that support for this idea is broader than only the Town. A petition was drafted with the goal of obtaining 3,500 signatures by March 8. It is hoped that condo residents will boost the numbers.

At the CBAR meeting, President Berliner also showed support for staging, included in his letter responding to the letter on the consortium of communities’ concerns. Strategies for the Town going forward will depend on what happens at the upcoming PHED meetings.

Briefly discussing the recent PHED meeting on the ZTA, it was noted that four of nine speakers were from the Town. Others represented the church and Farm Women’s Market.

University of Maryland Traffic Study

A meeting to discuss the Town-funded University of Maryland traffic study was coming up the following day at 2:30 pm. The only meeting included in the cost of the contract was open to the public, and committee members’ questions were forwarded for discussion. However, the meeting’s main purpose was to provide an opportunity for Glenn Orlin, deputy administrator of the County Council, to question Dr. Lei Zhang, who headed up the study.

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.