

PLANNING COMMISSION FOCUS GROUP NOTES – MARCH 11, 2020

MEETING DATE	COMMUNITY GROUP/ADVISORY BODY	COMMENT
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	How do we walk the line of considering an application on the new comp plan with no zoning ordinance; yet, at the same time we are writing one? Are we creating a de facto zoning ordinance by dealing with one application that will then apply to all others? Transition Policy Area P1 and P2, whole new policy area. Those specifically, we are going to see soon. Existing zoning does not match vision. What do we do?
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	10 zoning ordinance topics. As we break these down, would it be helpful if we divide them up? Will we talk about them like silos? As ZOAG takes those topics, can we be there to speak to it from Planning Commission perspective? Or if we are interested in the topic, can we be there?
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Agriculture and rural districts do a good job of protecting. They are direct. Give us an opportunity for a variety of uses that make Loudoun unique. Exciting and has been a big draw. Horse industry pays a lot of taxes and would like to continue being hospitable to them.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	In agriculture and rural districts, in the details there are a lot of flaws but the intent is there.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Tested and known. Been around a while.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Overcomplicated. A lot of overlap and gets confusing for applicants/ public. Rely upon staff to explain. Would be nice if it was simpler to understand. Not easy to navigate. Public does not understand public. What opportunities have we missed because it is so cumbersome?
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Don't think applicants care what zoning districts are. Do we need to look at the viability of commercial districts? Not rezone commercial districts to residential. Gone so far down the road that applicants just don't care. Change our zoning districts too easily. Should have stuck to our guns with the Transition Policy Area. ZMOD very common word in our vocabulary.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Speaking about good friend, Kim Hart. Do not do a good job facilitating that type of development - multifamily deals. Give developers all the tools that they need through this process. Zoning, incentives in order to be successful. Incentives drive the price down on per square foot basis. That's how it's done.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	What things do we need that are not reflected in zoning? Mixed-use, residential/commercial together. Some of the things we need for the community. Way people live, society moving in a different way. Protecting "jewels" of county. That is a challenge.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Can we build more flexibility within the districts themselves for the creative and innovative ideas? Principal targets like housing or better recreation and kind of building a menu of items to allow for more flexibility.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Expand uses in districts and make them broader, more flexible. Mix of uses. Standards developed by applicant to make project work. That sort of flexibility would go a long way. No clear vision - have kept adding uses over time - a lot of districts are alike. A lot of redundancy. Create districts with clear vision statement, purpose, guidelines. Give us discretion to look at flexibility within those guidelines.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Rezoning is plan implementation. Not so much Zoning Ordinance. The District implements or it doesn't and we support changing it...really how much the Board and Commission want to implement the plan determines the rezoning's. Identified that during Comp Plan review. Zoning Ordinance simply needs to implement that. Reason for a lot of ZRTDs and SPEXs because how Zoning Ordinance is done. Less legislative applications will take place.

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3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Zoning Ordinance has been a fearful ordinance. Put hard boundaries and hard numbers that are arbitrary a year later.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Redevelopment districts that have been established - VHDA. How does that connect with conversation around Zoning Ordinance Rewrite? Tax credits. Incentivize, facilitate that kind of development. Highest invested use with all of these tools.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Overall caps. Developers have the ability to shift the way they build out based upon the market. Still have proffers. Might work for some of the newer placetypes. Around metro etc. It's a tool. For example, Fairfax Station.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Have not really had an emphasis on redevelopment. Think we need to spend a lot of time working on that and not just the built environment. Natural environment, reuse, restore - sense of community. Devote time and study to that. Trails, sustainability.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Compact structures, multi-level buildings. Increase height allowed in certain areas - where the metro is coming in. If building on flight path, how high can you build? And cost may be prohibitive to building that high.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Predictable, uniform. Documented - here is what you can do / cannot do. It provides limits.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Very tiny distinctions between uses in districts. Convenience store, gas pumps, car wash. Seems kind of unnecessary. But because it is so prescriptive, cuts down on ambiguity. Clear cut. Very detailed and clearly stated.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Twin Creeks application randomness of some of the things that were permitted or by special exception. Why was it ever permitted to have industrial type chemical uses along our water source? Did anyone ever look at that? Why is a dry cleaning plant there? It should have never been there. No one stopped to look at where these parcels are. Cannot have this inside Goose Creek. Kept seeing these kinds of things come up.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Battlefield Parkway - two corners in town, 1 corner in Transition Policy Area, 1 corner in Rural Policy Area. need to focus on uses that make sense in those areas. Haphazardness and randomness. Look at the uses. Make sure we are protecting everything we need to be protecting.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Loudoun Mutual, MC Dean. Noxious uses, abhorring. Seeing this come up quite a bit in our time here. Too many inappropriate uses within the classification.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Not enough from standout of being in a different world. Possible we might need another gas station out there. Are the uses in the right areas?
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Making it less inclusive and allowing new uses by interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance Administrator.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Water supply, natural elements - how do you see that playing in? Overlays. It's oh yea... Put them in as priorities. Ways to restore or recapture lost assets in Districts and uses.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Major/main arterials nice to have large setbacks. Route 7, even Route 9. Like the idea. Not crowded and congested yet. Way to keep that, it is useful. iFly - sure there was a reason why it had to be so close. The way it came out...just doesn't flow. Preserving landscape that still allows for us to move people through region. Not like Rockville Pike. Dislike that we have gone away from that on our main arterials. Give into it.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Can mitigate smaller setbacks by extensive berming or buffering. Can accept loss with iFly for larger buffer and screening. Meadowbrook in Leesburg - berming they are doing.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Setbacks for houses. Property owners come in and ask for it to be more narrow. Too many spaces at daycare centers. Make a decision based upon that application.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	What is the initial intent of some of these things? Why were they set. Making a change isn't necessarily a good thing. Fire Marshall?

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3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Regarding setbacks, don't have context. Need to explain why. Don't necessarily need to have a number. Numbers appear arbitrary and easy to change. Need more context in the ordinance.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Standards are not being followed closely. No investigation into that. Need clear guidelines.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Sets standards to protect our health and welfare. Attempting to do that. Sets a baseline at least, a good guide.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Lighting and noise standards are not achieving intent. Difficult to enforce or achieve or just doesn't go far enough.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Opportunities for misunderstanding or conflict. For example, a winery. Not allowed to serve any food. Serve wine but not food. Not able to show a profit. Why talk so glowingly about a rural economy but then do not provide the tools for the business owners to be successful. Those two things go hand in hand. Restrictions with number of events and hours of events. So much to start with to overcome.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Ok with restrictions on wineries because of common shared road. If you have 10 houses that share one road and the winery is the last house, complaints have been that the neighbors do not want drunks driving by while children are playing outside. Even if you have two or three glasses of wine, you will feel it. The intent is to be drunk.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Lack of logic in standards. Why, if you are a winery, you can have x number of events but if you are a brewery, you can have this number of events. It's more context. These facilities can be really large. Can accommodate hundreds and hundreds of people at a time.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Some can't get sufficient performance standards to get it off the ground. Need to have contemplation. What are viable standards?
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Not up to us to pick winners and losers. For example, market requires low budget hotel on Route 28 but voted against because low budget or a Sonoco gas station instead of a WaWa or Sheetz. It is up to use to have standards and guidelines that say this is what we are willing to accept. Too stringent of performance standards. Imposing economic and business development tools on people that is not on us. Performance standards will affect the market, scale of the use etc.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Land use decision, economics...Compatibility within neighborhood. Performance standards as they exist right now speak to economic piece more than they need to. We do not need to dabble in that. Economic Development can tell us the viability of it.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	But we do have a role to make sure it makes sense and is consistent. Allow wine and food then allow all of them to have it. Do not pick winners and losers.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Hours of operation may impact, compatibility factor. For example, people who have lived in a home in Leesburg for 3 decades, do not want to hear music at 3am. If on rural road, may have some restrictions etc.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Here in Loudoun County take the development process very seriously. We own it and are proud of it. Developers should have their ducks in a row before they come forward.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Last minute changes by applicants. Sometimes big changes and staff do not get to study it. Should not make a decision on that until staff get to study it and give their input. Make our own judgment and disregard staff. If staff say we need more time then that should be enough for us to say yes. Give them more time and not rush through it. Do not force staff to make a decision right there. Late hearing, everybody tired, and just get it through. We should stop that completely. Wait for answer, better judgement.

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3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Even if developer has ducks in a row, process takes a long time. 6 weeks for preapp mtg, another 2 weeks to accept. Easier to go to Prince William. Data centers that want to increase height, 6-9 months. Referrals, round 2 referrals, advertise meetings. Is that business friendly? Modify that process where necessary. It could take a year before the applicant gets an answer. Just want to get before Board. Are we understaffed?
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Article 6 has timeline for applications. Should timelines be in ordinance. In terms of Board wanting to manage and modify process, it makes it more complicated and drawn out. Other jurisdictions do not put their process/timeline in ordinances. Would make it more flexible, easier for our Board to redesign a process if it wasn't in ordinance.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Public finds out about something when it's far down the process. Hard to give voice. Make it easier for people to find out about things. Even how we describe things like not using acronyms.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Maybe public input earlier in the process and then again for public hearing. publish earlier about the case so public can prepare for the public hearing.
3/12/2020	Planning Commission	Rural Policy Area is by-right. Is there a way for Planning Commission to review subdivisions? Clusters?