



CITY OF COLLEGE PARK ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
4500 KNOX ROAD COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND 20740
TELEPHONE: (240) 487-3538 • FACSIMILE: (301) 887-0558

ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
Approved Minutes of Meeting
January 15, 2015 – 7:30 P.M.
City Hall Council Chambers

<u>Members</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Mary Cook, Chair	_____x_____	_____
Lawrence Bleau, Vice Chair	_____x_____	_____
James McFadden	_____x_____	_____
Rose Greene Colby	_____x_____	_____
Christopher Gill	_____x_____	_____

Also Present: Planning Staff -Terry Schum, Miriam Bader and Theresheia Williams;
 Attorney – Sue Ford, Anna Owens, former Mayor

I. Call to Order: Mary Cook called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes:

Christopher Gill moved to accept the minutes of December 4, 2014. Lawrence Bleau seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

III. Amendments to Agenda: There were no Amendments to Agenda.

IV. Public Remarks on Non-Agenda Items:

Anna Owens, former Mayor of the City of College Park, spoke briefly on the history of the City and the formation of the Advisory Planning Commission and how the City interacted with the residents, committees, and the County during her tenure on the Council to create the City’s first comprehensive plan.

V. Meeting the Variance Criteria – Discussion with City Attorney:

Terry Schum informed the Commissioners that this is an opportunity for them to ask questions of the attorney about deliberating criteria or anything that might be helpful to them in making their recommendations on zoning applications.

Sue Ford stated that she thinks that the commission does a good job with their deliberating and decisions on the applications that are brought before them. She stated that the commissioners uphold the law and apply the criteria fairly. She stated that the Red Roof Inn’s Practical Difficulty Standard is an older case, but has been upheld and sited many times in recent variance cases and is appropriate to refer to in the variance cases that come before the Advisory Planning Commission.

Commissioners discussed the criteria for the City and County Fence Ordinances. Christopher Gill stated that both Ordinances can be confusing sometimes when trying to determine which one should be used for a specific case. Mary Cook stated that it would be helpful if staff could put together a sheet that would indicate were the City and County ordinance differentiate in their criteria.

Miriam Bader stated that staff is in the process of updating the Fence Fact Sheet, which will be distributed to the commission and will help them in the future to understand the criteria for the Fence Ordinance.

Terry Schum stated that if the commissioners feel that the language in the fence ordinance is not clear or hard to understand, they could take their concerns and issues to the Council and recommend amending the fence ordinance.

VI. Review and Discussion of the Advisory Planning Commission Powers and Duties:

The primary function of the Advisory Planning Commission is to conduct hearings with respect to applications for variances from the strict application of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance and departures and housing regulations appeals. The commission may also make recommendations to the Mayor and Council on development applications.

Sue Ford suggested that the commissioners read Section 15-19 of the City Code, Powers and Duties of the Advisory Planning Commission and Section 190-3, Powers and Duties of the City Advisory Planning Commission to Conduct Hearings, which outline the duties of the Advisory Planning Commission and procedures to follow when addressing activities referred to the Advisory Planning Commission by action of the City Council. She stated that if the Advisory Planning Commission will be making recommendations to the Mayor and Council with regard to solutions to community problems or analysis, they should work with the City Manager or Assistant City Manager on the issue and then adopt a position by resolution, which would be discussed at a regular council meeting with public notice and become an agenda item.

Mary Cook suggested that the commission discuss how much they want to be involved in issues other than zoning applications. Commissioners would like to be included in some of the meetings and worksessions with the Council so that they can be kept up-to-date on development issues. Commissioners expressed concern about not being informed about the different planning-related issues for review. Sue Ford informed the commission that it states in Section 15-20a of the City Code that "The City Manager shall refer to the Advisory Planning Commission for its consideration all of the aforesaid matters on which the City Council is requested or required to take official action." James McFadden stated that if the Advisory Planning Commission decided to be a part of other planning-related issues, it may require more than one meeting a month.

Commissioners decided to start circulating language through e-mail before the February meeting, indicating the things that the APC members are interested in being a part of and would like to talk more about. After that, a draft letter will be prepared for APC's review to submit to the Council.

Terry Schum stated that at the next meeting, staff will provide some examples under each category of Power and Duties in the Code of what developments and projects are currently underway.

Terry Schum stated that at the January 20, 2015 Worksession, one of the topics on the Council agenda is a discussion on City-Appointed Authorities, Boards, Committees and Commissions. There are 12 to 15 City boards and committees in the City. Some are created by charter and the code and some are created by resolution, some are paid, some are not. The one common thread is that there is a lack of communication between the boards and committees and the Council. There is an effort underway for staff to bring this to the attention of the Council and work with them over a series of worksessions to look at each individual board and commission. The result is to have each board, committee and commission meet with the City Council to make sure they are serving Council in the most optimal manner.

On the City's website under the City Council agenda for next week, you can access the proposed approach, schedule and a summary of all the existing boards and committees. According to the proposed schedule, Council will start meeting with individual boards and committees in April. Terry Schum suggested that in preparation for the meeting, it would be a good opportunity for the Advisory Planning Commission to have a position in advance to let the Council know what additional duties they want to take on.

VII. Involvement in Strategic Planning Process 2016-2021:

The City of College Park is in the process of preparing a new five-year Strategic Plan. This plan will guide City priorities and programs over the next five years. As individuals, there is an opportunity to weigh-in on the Strategic Plan. There is a brief survey for the City's Strategic Plan that can be accessed online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/CollegeParkCommunitySurvey. The survey will be open until January 27, 2015. The opportunity for the Advisory Planning Commission to weigh-in as a group is after the Council develops the draft vision mission goals, which will probably happen around March. There will be a two month period after the Council has approved the draft plan for groups to participate in "a meeting in a box." This is where anybody who wants to form a group and weigh-in with comments as a group can pick up the instructions and submit it.

VIII. Municipal Planning & Zoning Authority Legislation:

The City Council has worked closely with Bowie and Greenbelt in the past to support legislation that would expand municipal zoning authority. The City of Bowie is working on a bill that will allow municipalities to have the ability to be their own Planning Board and would not have to ask the County for permission. This bill will also give municipalities the ability to do their own planning. There are still a lot of details being discussed, so the bill is not out yet.

The City has hired a professional lobbyist, Len Lucchi, of the firm O'Mally, Miles, Nylan & Gilmore, P.A. to track legislation and promote the City's interests during the 2015 Maryland General Assembly session.

IX. Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance Rewrite:

The Prince George's County Planning Department is conducting a comprehensive rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. This project will transform the current zoning code to a more user-friendly 21st Century Zoning Ordinance for Prince George's County.

Terry Schum stated that she is on the Task Force Committee working with the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance Rewrite. She indicated that she has the analysis of the current code and recommendations of how to approve it, which will also be going out to the public for input. The City Council will be weighing-in on the draft plan, which is about a year away. Terry stated that she will have more information after the next task force meeting.

For more information and dates of upcoming listening sessions visit the County's website at www.zoningpgc.pgplanning.com.

X. Review of travel & training budget:

The current Advisory Planning Commission budget is very small and is limited to travel, training, supplies and dues. Over the past years, the budget has been cut by the Council because some of the items were not utilized. The annual conference proposed for the commissioners is the Maryland Citizens Planners Conference, which is always local and reasonably priced. This year two members will be attending the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference scheduled for the end of this January in Baltimore, MD. Terry stated that if the commissioners want specific training or know of a specific related conference that they would like to attend, let her know and it would be proposed to the City Council and they will make a decision. Review of the travel and training budget will be on APC's February 5th agenda to discuss any new items that should be added and how attending two meetings a month will impact the budget.

XI. Update on Development Activity: Terry Schum reported on the following:

The Hotel at University of Maryland – The City is waiting for the developer to come back with revised plans. The building will be lowered but the number of units will not be reduced. The site cannot be expanded, but it is being redesigned.

XII. Election of Chair and Vice Chair:

Lawrence Bleau moved to elect Mary Cook as Chair. Christopher Gill seconded. Christopher Gill nominated himself as Vice-Chair. Motion carried 5-0-0.

XIII. Other Business: There was no Other Business.

XIV. Adjourn: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.