

Marymount University Task Force
Meeting 5 | July 19, 2006
Meeting Notes

In attendance:

Michael Foster, Task Force Chair, Planning Commission
Peter Fallon, Transportation Commission
Anne Wilson, Donaldson Run Civic Association
Maxine Nagel, Donaldson Run Civic Association
Christine Smith, Old Dominion Civic Association
Pamela Gillen, Old Dominion Civic Association
David Parker, St. Mary's Church
Peter Judge, Washington Golf
Loretta Seigley, VP Academics, Marymount University
Chris Domes, Marymount University

Abby Denham, WCLEW
Ernest Ulibarri, DCS Design
Robert Kohler, Wells

Jill Griffin, Arlington County, CPHD
Robert Gibson, Arlington County, DES

Will Anthony, Neighbor
Vaughn Collins, Neighbor
Jean Lewis, Neighbor
John Manning, Neighbor
Pam McGuyer, Neighbor
Litsa Mikhalensky, Neighbor
Cate Mueller, Neighbor
Ken & Marie Robinson, Neighbors

The meeting started at 7:15 p.m.

Opening

Michael Foster welcomed the group and reviewed the charge of the task force. He stated that while not all of the points raised throughout the discussion were consensus points there were several key elements that there was general agreement. These included the recognition that parking for the university has been a longstanding challenge – that this project fulfills commitments made by the university previously about solving its parking issues. This project complies with the regulations set forth by the Zoning Ordinance for S-3A districts. Pedestrian circulation – particularly tying this project to the main campus – is important. Noise and lighting management will be necessary to maintain compatibility within the neighborhood. Finally, Mr. Foster stated that density and height still needed to be worked through with the neighborhoods.

Mr. Foster concluded that the focus of the meeting this evening was transportation – in the context of parking. He asked the applicant to go through its presentation and respond to the questions raised to date.

Robert Kohler (Wells and Associates) provided a power point presentation on the project. This included an overview of the site, access points, parking utilization (numbers of parking spaces), the numbers generated from the traffic impact analysis, and a parking management plan.

Mr. Kohler presented the area improvements – both by Arlington County and by the university. Following the improvements suggested – Mr. Kohler discussed the pedestrian circulation around the site.

Pamela Gillen asked clarifying questions about the trip generation numbers. She suggested that a one-page summary sheet would be helpful in the future to understand the proposed traffic generation and parking counts.

Mr. Kohler detailed the AM and PM peak trip numbers for both the general vicinity and the university. The hours are slightly different. Peter Fallon asked about the overlap of the two peaks or whether the numbers were segregated. Robert Gibson explained that the trips may actually be over counted, but would be further analyzed. Methodology was explained to achieve the most accurate count.

There was general discussion about the counts on a typical day. The original counts were completed on a Wednesday. The university has stated that Tuesdays and Thursdays are typically “worse” days, with more students enrolled in class. It was explained that the parking lot would fill – just at an earlier time during the day.

Mr. Kohler explained the operations of the Marymount shuttle running between the main campus, the satellite parking at Mt. Olivet, the Ballston campus and the Ballston metro station. Christine Smith asked about the percent of students riding the shuttle – the information is not kept. Anne Wilson asked for clarification about the schedule during the weekend – the headways increase from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

Mr. Kohler explained that 26th Street/31st Street has seen increased traffic since 1991. There was an increase in general traffic – and the amount of isn’t entirely attributable to the university.

There was general discussion about the various Levels of Service (LOS) at the surrounding intersections. There was a question about the stacking of vehicles to the intersection of 26th and Yorktown. This is something the university is trying to address with the additional parking spaces. Generally – this is about the absorption rate into the parking garage. It was suggested that a control gate could be moved further into the garage to address the issue. Mr. Fallon suggested the creation of a no standing zone, to prohibit cars from idling on Yorktown Blvd while waiting for a garage space to become available.

Mr. Fallon noticed that the LOS slide indicated a reduced LOS but recognized that the analysis did not incorporate the improvements as suggested. Ms. Wilson asked about the summary LOS. Mr. Gibson responded that staff and the applicant are looking at ways to mitigate the change in the LOS.

Ms. Gillen asked about the LOS if there was no traffic signal. Mr. Gibson responded that Arlington County is trying to work with VDOT to get the signals through. He anticipated that construction of the Marymount garage would take, at a minimum, 1.5 years and suggested that the timing of the signalization would be within that same timeframe. Ms. Gillen raised concerns about construction on the site without any signal. Additionally, Ms. Gillen had concerns that the study indicated a “D” LOS with signalization. Ms. Gillen requested that staff look at the merging at the 26th and Old Dominion intersection.

Mr. Gibson stated that DES is working on that request as well as looking at accident information. Over the past five years there have been 30 accidents.

Mr. Fallon asked about the design of the pedestrian bridge and wanted to ensure that there are not any conflicts with the garage entrances, or support structures obscuring line of sight on Yorktown Blvd.

Mr. Foster asked for circulation questions.

Ms. Wilson asked about the entrances to the two garages. She wanted to understand how people leaving would make left hand turns. Mr. Kohler responded that he didn't think that there would be many left hand turns from the proposed parking garage. Mr. Foster asked if there could be a no-left turn sign. Mr. Kohler responded that he had concerns about "rethinking" the patterns of the traffic network.

Mr. Fallon asked if the two garages could be managed based on user group. The old garage could be used for faculty and the new garage for students. He also stated that traffic typically should be directed to the major arterial streets and not neighborhood streets.

Mr. Kohler responded that the TIA indicates only three vehicles turning left onto Yorktown. There was further discussion about limiting the turning movements. Mr. Kohler explained that there are implications with a right-turn only including safety, equalization of the distribution, and flow of traffic.

Ms. Gillen questioned the proposed striping on the roads with the arrows. Mr. Gibson explained that it was standard with restriping.

Ms. Gillen asked about the tandem parking spaces and how these were to operate. [28 spaces in the bottom level of the garage] Mr. Gibson stated that the applicant has indicated these spaces in the parking management plan. Chris Domes explained that these spaces would be for roommates or for valet parking during special events. Ms. Gillen stated her concern that these might be misused or underused.

Ms. Wilson asked about traffic calming on 26th Street. Jill Griffin explained the gateway treatment that has been discussed. Ms. Wilson stated that something more natural to narrow the street rather than concrete. There was discussion about a different type crosswalk at the location. The general location would be near the surface parking for the library.

Christine Smith asked about the removal of on-street parking along 26th Street near the University. It was noted that spaces between Old Dominion and Yorktown would be eliminated.

Mr. Fallon asked about the curb to curb dimensions and wondered if there could be any shift to improve traffic flow, line of sight, and pedestrian safety. He questioned whether there should be a free right turn lane from Yorktown to 26th Street. He also asked about any implication to the mulch pile's seasonal operations. Would the DES trucks still be able to make the necessary manures to access and exit the site?

A citizen participant asked whether all of the traffic would be rerouted to the new entrance rather than on 26th Street (where the current entrance is located). The applicant responded yes.

Ms. Wilson had two clarification points about loading and delivery operations. She asked about the depth of the loading dock and what type of truck could be accommodated. The loading dock is designed as a full loading dock. She also asked about drop-off points for Fed/Ex and

UPS. The university responded that there is a central drop-off for packages and a central mail room.

Ms. Gillen asked about parking for the "pizza delivery guy."

There was additional discussion about lane configuration and signalization. David Parker asked about flexibility after the project was approved to accommodate adjustments. Mr. Foster stated that there are typically reviews. Ms. Griffin explained the typical conditions and periodic reviews.

Mr. Fallon stated that certain elements (i.e. garage entrances) can not be changed after construction. Mr. Foster stated that operational issues could be reviewed and fine-tuned.

Mr. Fallon suggested that additional information is necessary. The presentation should be more straightforward – there was a focus on peak hours but the operations are different. He suggested that beyond the peak there should be a look at all day action. Finally, Mr. Fallon stated that it would be helpful to understand the turn-over of parking spaces – the number of users per space, which affects the number of vehicles on the local streets going to and from the University. Mr. Gibson suggested that it may be difficult to track the exact turnover of each space.

A citizen participant asked about access on Old Dominion. Mr. Foster stated that there was concern about the traffic flow and general safety/operations on Old Dominion Drive.

Ms. Smith asked whether the university was still short of spaces. The applicant responded that only 80% of the main campus parking need is captured. They want to encourage shuttle and transit use. Mr. Foster suggested that over parking could create a higher volume of traffic. Incentives should be kept for alternative means of transportation. Mr. Kohler also clarified that the numbers represent the peak demand.

Mr. Foster then asked for summary comments, thoughts and any outstanding issues. He stated that throughout the process there were areas of general, if not complete, consensus. However, Mr. Foster stated that these areas still needed work.

Mr. Fallon stated that he would like to see more about the street cross sections and intersections. Prior to the Transportation Commission he would also like to hear from the neighborhoods – NC plans, traffic calming, etc. to better evaluate how the project could fit in with the surrounding community.

Mr. Parker stated that the proposals for the transportation elements seemed to make sense. He stated that if the process seemed to be a good process. He thought that the evolution of the project has been encouraging.

Ms. Wilson spoke about the turning lanes and hoped that the three lanes on 26th would help the traffic to flow and get the cars down Yorktown. She stated that the number of seats in the large lecture room/auditorium seemed to have changed again. The numbers seem to keep changing from drawing to drawing. She wanted to clarify the scope of Donaldson Run's participation, the height of the extra floor for the dormitory use, and raise the concern about the proposed density on the site.

Ms. Gillen reiterated her concerns about the 26th and Old Dominion intersection. She suggested that it would be helpful for the neighbors to review the parking management plan prior to the

Planning Commission and County Board meetings. Additionally, she did raise a question about the vacant lot at Missionhurst being used for parking.

Ms. Gillen stated that the location of the parking garage is actually the design solution for opposing left turn movements.

Ms. Gillen stated that she would love to see parked cars on Old Dominion to provide a buffer and to slow traffic down.

Peter Judge stated that he supports the university and could not understand all of the concerns raised to date. The university is not adding to its enrollment nor is the overall class structure changing. He suggested that swim meets at Washington Golf generate a lot of traffic. He really doesn't see that much of a change. He stated that the net benefit is that the parking situation will be controlled better. He suggested that the assumptions used by the traffic consultants were very conservative. He stated that the improvements far outweigh any concerns.

Anna Lawson (a resident from 24th Street) asked about the improvements on Old Dominion from Lee Highway to 26th Street.

A citizen participant from Donaldson Run stated concerns about parking in front of neighbors and the need for zoned parking. The citizen also identified issues about the multiple uses of the building and the overall density; the heights – specifically the bell tower; and the need for precise information.

Mr. Foster provided a summary of the changes to date.

Ms. Gillen suggested that the height of the bell tower should be referenced to the church.

Another citizen participant asked about construction traffic.

A neighbor spoke on the traffic on 26th Street and the LOS. They also commented on the safety of the Yorktown/26th Street intersection.

Mr. Foster agreed that improvements to the intersections would be needed.

There was a comment of whether the two garages could be linked underground – beneath Yorktown Boulevard. Yorktown is a public road and typically the county does not prefer encroachments under the streets.

There was a question about a dedicated left-turn signal at the 26th and Old Dominion intersection.

It was suggested that lighted "Garage Full" signs be placed on 26th Street so that vehicles don't even need to turn down Yorktown.

In wrapping up – Mr. Foster indicated the need to provide meeting notes from the previous meetings and a summary draft letter. He stated that this was a shift from the task force meetings to the broader meetings. The Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) would provide broader discussion of the project.

The meeting ended at 9:35.