



MACHINE TRANSCRIPT • CORAGGIO CONSULTING

City of Fairfax City Council Meeting, Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Date Tuesday, January 14, 2025
Place City Hall, City of Fairfax, Virginia
Length 1h 16m (video)

- Official meeting video (city, Granicus): https://fairfax.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4045
- Agenda: https://fairfax.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4045
- Minutes: https://fairfax.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4045&doc_id=55388ffe-d371-11ef-a9e2-005056a89546

Machine transcript (speech-to-text) produced by Coraggio Consulting. Not an official county record. Names and numbers may be misspelled; check the video at the timestamp before quoting.

Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-13. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:03] Good evening. Welcome to the January 14th, 2025 meeting of the city council. This is the first regular meeting of the 2025-2026 city council. It also legally is considered the organizational meeting of the council. No specific action is required in that regard other than to acknowledge that the recently elected members of city council and the mayor have duly qualified to assume our positions. At the regular meeting of January 28, 2025, formal rules of procedure, which will include some slight amendments to previously adopted rules of procedure, will be approved

[00:00:42] by the City Council at the time. We will now begin the regular meeting. I appreciate everyone who is here in the chamber with us at our very first meeting. We are a new group. This is our maiden voyage, figuring out how to work together, so we are going to take it slow and be very deliberate, and I hope everyone will have patience with us as we move through the agenda on our first meeting. Starting with that, we are going to ask if you are able and so choose

[00:01:08] to please rise for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. We can move to the adoption of the agenda.

[00:01:42] Is there a motion to approve the agenda, Council Member Hardy-Chandler? I move to adopt the agenda as presented. Second. I have a motion by Council Member Hardy-Chandler and a second by Council Member Peterson.

[00:01:59] A roll call vote. Council Member Amos? Aye. Council Member Hall? Aye. Council Member Hardy-Chandler? Aye. Council Member Peterson? Aye. Council Member Bates? Aye. Council Member McQuillan?

[00:02:15] Aye. Motion passed unanimously. We will go to the initial general public comment. I have a total of 10 speakers who signed up by 5 o'clock this day, and our first speaker will be Mariana Fournier.

[00:02:29] Good evening. I'm Mariana Fournier. I live at 10134 Spring Lake Terrace. A belated Happy New Year to you all. Congratulations, Mayor Reed and Councilman Bates, on your re-election. To our new council members, welcome.

[00:03:01] The greatest task we have before us is to re-establish a bond of trust between the mayor, our council, and the citizens of this city. So let's begin.

[00:03:17] I'm not here to upset the apple cart, but to write it. I promise you I will only speak the truth as I have been able to ascertain it. I carefully read and researched your issue summary list. To this list, I believe it should be tabled until the council can meet with the stakeholder advisory group.

[00:03:42] Minutes of such a meeting should be publicly posted, including a list of all attendees. In regard to the small area design, Home Depot must be prominently included.

[00:03:57] It's the city's major source of tax revenue, and Home Depot owns the property that it currently occupies. I still strongly support the cancellation of the George Snyder Trail and the Country Club Hills Connector.

[00:04:16] Until next time, thank you for your time and attention, and have a good evening. Our next speaker is Dan O'Brien. Good evening, Mayor, members of the council, and ladies and gentlemen.

[00:04:37] First, congratulations to the mayor and the council on your recent election. Thanks for your very commendable willingness to serve. I've got two issues I want to talk about. One is partisanship, and the second one is the decision timing and, importantly, the lack of candid communication about the recent firing of the city manager, who I don't know.

[00:05:00] Both of these things have left a very sour taste in my mouth, and I think with this talented group, you guys can do better, and I recognize you weren't all sitting there when this happened. On partisanship, there are many things that are going well in this city.

[00:05:17] Vibrant economic, residential development that protects our future, safety, education, responsible environmental considerations, and a rich mix of cultural and recreational experiences. We have a lot of goodness here. As elected officials, those things, in your role in making them even better, are what voters want to hear about from you.

[00:05:44] Partisan issues, stuff of Supreme Court rulings and battles best fought at the Commonwealth and the federal levels are not what I want to read about or hear about in the city of Fairfax election campaign. You all know the Hatch Act considerations and how partisanship threatens participation by the full pool of talented people in our citizens, of our residents.

[00:06:10] So please be positive, be nonpartisan, be city focused, save party affiliation for partisan elections, and we don't have those in the city. I'm firing at the city manager. On December 2nd, the city manager came to our homeowners association, and he spoke very, very smoothly and responsibly, answered questions in writing and orally.

[00:06:37] Typical of our interactions with city employees, he was engaging, attentive, knowledgeable, responsive, responsible, respectful, and willing to do research. It was a very positive meeting.

[00:06:53] So as I watched your 10th December city council meeting from home, I was surprised to hear about the rumor firing that was going to take place that night of this relatively new city official who, from a resident's perspective, was doing a good job.

[00:07:10] So it's surprising to see a decision to fire a city manager made in a closed-slash-final council meeting that began at 10.36 p.m. with no public notification and no justification to the citizens.

[00:07:28] So I'm out of time to summarize, but I think you know my deal. Focus on the goodness. Fix this thing for the city manager. And congratulations, and thanks for serving. Take care. Our next speaker is Cezanne Zayada.

[00:07:44] Good evening, everyone. I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank the city, the city council and the organization for extending the kind invitation to the upcoming city council regular meeting this year and want to congratulate everyone here for this election.

[00:08:19] I'm proud of your work. I'm proud of your efforts. It is truly an honor to invite me and to participate in a gathering that plays such a role in shaping the direction of our city. I deeply value the opportunity to engage in discussions that impact our community and hear directly from the council and other attendants about important issues on your efforts.

[00:08:50] and proud of your work and your job. Truly, I want to be a member of you. I'm ready to help you. I participate in accessibility provided by sharing all your effort and all what you're doing.

[00:09:08] This transport is a great reminder of how governance should always inform the public. Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to being a part of this efficient event and contributing to the conversations that support the cross-sexuality of our city.

[00:09:31] You don't know me. I am from Sudan. I am from Sudan. My name is Sousan Ziada. I graduated in a degree of psychology and I am now currently working as projector manager in organization management.

[00:09:51] One of the most memorable moments of my life, shaking hands with President George W. Bush on July 4, 2008, during an event of Machiolo. This experience is something I will always share on me.

[00:10:11] During my university years, I participated in a field trip where I collaborated with the organization of UNICEF region and collected data for girls' education in my country, Darfur. This experience strengths on my commitment of the education and empowerment of marginalized communities.

[00:10:34] I have an honor of working in various roles, including the public department and Ministry of Social Work in Sudan. I have contributed to the social development and community welfare project. Additionally, I have trained 2,000 women from rural areas, providing them with the skills that are needed to be productive and support their families.

[00:11:01] Thank you so much. Thank you so much, and we hope we'll see you in the chamber again. Thank you. Thank you. Our next speaker is Philip Latassa. I speak tonight representing the Friends of Akateng Creek.

[00:11:19] We offer our congratulations to all the newly elected and re-elected officials here tonight. We also thank those members who have left the City Council for their years of dedicated service to this city. I now return to the issue that most defines the mission of the Friends of Accutane Creek, the defense of natural habitats in our watersheds.

[00:11:39] The serenity prayer asks for the courage to change the things we can change, the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference. The habitats of the Accutane Creek are threatened by many things we cannot hope to prevent. highway expansions, sewer line extensions, clearing of private property, etc.

[00:11:58] But one threat that we can and must prevent is optional conversion of our protected streamside floodplain habitats to asphalt pavement. We ask the City Council to agree that wisdom tells us we must suspend the George Schneider Trail, the Pickett Road Connector Trail, and all similar projects that would needlessly diminish our last remaining natural habitats.

[00:12:19] We would also call the Council's attention to the case of 10-270 Fairfax Boulevard, known as the Willow Woods Open Space, forming a link in the chain of protected habitat areas running along Accutane Creek from Chain Bridge Road to Face Park.

[00:12:35] This parcel was offered for sale at auction in December, but the sale did not go through. We urge the Council to take steps to protect this parcel from future private sale and development pressure. Thank you. Our next speaker is Val Morgan. Of course, I'm with Philip on that, but one different thing I want to talk about is the project in front of the City Hall that's been adopted, evidently.

[00:13:11] Partially landscape, partially granite, really. And there are these stairs coming up to a door that's not open, so it's an interesting expense. The landscape architects, for a quick background, don't have to know anything about plants.

[00:13:33] They just decorate with plants. And they'd love to sell you more plants so they can get more money, which is what they're doing, because the number of plants in this project is 2,700 plants. Eight trees, 1,156 shrubs, 1,569 herbaceous plants, and there's not a room for them.

[00:14:01] It was approved by the Board of Architectural Review, and they all admitted that they don't know anything about plants. And I don't imagine they took that plan with all of the circles and stuff and checked anything out.

[00:14:17] And then it was approved by council. I don't know if there are any plant experts there, but plant experts need to figure out what's going on and check this out. For example, on the west side, where the afternoon sun comes in, there's, I don't know how many, 40 Solomon's Seal shade plant.

[00:14:41] I decided to take my little thing that measures. I can't remember what it's called, and I measured a couple areas. One of them was 5x5x5x5, and they're going to put 51 plants in there, and you do the math on a plant that needs to be one foot apart and put 51 of them in a space that small.

[00:15:07] And the other one I measured is like 8x8, and they're putting in one inkberry holly that gets pretty big, like 6, 8 feet, and 10 dwarf yupon hollies, which need to get 3 feet.

[00:15:25] Ten of them weren't going to fit, maybe three. So I would like to know how many people calculated. I did two spaces, and there's no way. But it's been approved.

[00:15:41] And who else calculated all the other little areas? As far as I can tell, no one. And the plants do not want to be squished. I just don't understand how we're going to spend money as stupidly as this.

[00:16:03] And maintenance, it's not going to work. Our next speaker is Judy Frazier. Hi, good evening.

[00:16:20] My name is Judy Fraser, 3514 Spring Lake Terrace. Congratulations to you all, and thank you for stepping up to serve. I hope the community appreciates the sacrifice and the time that it takes to do the work you do well. My request tonight is on the George Snyder Trail, and I hope that you can promptly find a way to use those funds to improve multimodal access between 123 and the Wilcoxon Trail, which is the stated purpose of those funds, without causing environmental havoc and destruction.

[00:16:54] But also, I have some lessons for you all, especially who are new, about this whole process that as we've been at it for several years now, I have learned a few things. Number one, community engagement is not a checkbox. Real engagement takes time, can be messy, can be boring, can be irritating.

[00:17:14] But follow through on your promises for real engagement with the community. Number two, don't simply rely on comp plans or small area plans to justify an action. Use them as guides to sort, filter, prioritize, but don't think for a hot minute that just because something is in one of those documents that it has been approved by or will be acceptable to the community those plans are intended to serve.

[00:17:40] Be clear about goals of any project. The GST is honestly a mashup, and it shows. Number four, free money is not free. We have spent an inordinate amount of money, staff time is very expensive, council time is expensive and limited, and it's often spent trying to turn a bad idea into something a little less bad, not worth it.

[00:18:04] It's also blown a lot of community goodwill in the process. Number five, don't buy into the sunk cost fallacy. If and when necessary, cut bait. Number six, pretending a project has some kind of mandate or gravitas because a previous council signed on as bunk.

[00:18:21] You were elected by the here and now. Learn lessons from the others, but don't be beholden to them. Number seven, it's very obvious when elected leaders make stuff up. The pretense of the GST was intended to serve the disabled community is truly a disservice to that community.

[00:18:38] The claim was used to put a veneer of social equity on a project that is really intended to serve the Lycra latte set. Even when people with disabilities came to this council and pointed out the falseness, it was still continued to be put out to the community as such.

[00:18:57] I learned to never give up. I am grateful to the community that has not given up on this project, and I hope that you all join us in making sure that this project brings actual good to the community without causing senseless harm. Thank you again. Our next speaker is Trevor Milner.

[00:19:16] Good night, members of the Fairfax City Council, and congrats, and we wish you all the best wishes in your work going forward.

[00:19:37] I'm not here to repeat what many people have said over the past months about the virtues of our woods, both from an environmental point of view and from the emotional and psychological lift that it gives us as humans.

[00:19:56] I'm not even going to repeat the fact that the woods in question are less than 5% of the area of Fairfax City. But it filters out air, it prevents soil erosion, and it reduces the destructive power of water when there are flood conditions.

[00:20:17] No, and most of all, I'm not going to repeat the fact that these woods are living ecosystems that contain hundreds of species from the microscopic to large mammals and birds, all of them useful and important to human existence and health.

[00:20:41] What I want to talk about is the fact that in Fairfax City, we have the best of situations. We have a situation where we can have our cake and eat it. Ladies and gentlemen, we can have our woods, our beautiful, precious woods, and we can have bicycle routes as well.

[00:21:08] We can really have them both. We know that these bicycle trails and routes are important to reduce pollution. reduce the number of cars, and improve the physical fitness of our residents. In the case of the George Snyder Trail, we are in the fortunate position that we could have bicycle routes parallel to the woods ending in the desired location for a fraction of the cost that it will take to construct through the woods.

[00:21:44] This is simply done by utilizing paved, lightly trafficked roads adjacent to these woods. In summary then, we can have the best of both worlds where we have our woods without damaging them and at the same time have bicycle trails for less cost than the existing proposal.

[00:22:10] To achieve this, we need the technical people to re-examine the project whilst incorporating the many practical solutions, suggestions of our residents, and come up with the best proposal possible.

[00:22:27] Thank you. Our next speaker is Mary Milner. Good evening.

[00:22:45] My name is Mary Milner, and my person here is Laura, who will be assisting us for this event. Good evening to you, Mary, Madam Mayor, and members of the council and fellow people who are here this evening.

[00:23:19] I live here in Camry, Cambridge Station with my husband and having a place closed for about 24 years.

[00:23:40] Last year, I was diagnosed with brain cancer, so that's why I'm asking Laura to assist me to get the information out because I wanted to be the person who was explaining what I wanted to say, And so that's why we have her to assist me.

[00:24:15] Due to my disability, Laura will continue to read with more information so that it's not as difficult to explain the information over to you.

[00:24:33] And this is based on the Sonny George, you know, trail, and it has been very, very good for me, and so that's the reason I wanted to talk to you as well, not just to give it to someone else.

[00:25:01] And so she will content based on the information that I spoke to her about. Thank you. In a moment, my life went from a woman, wife, mother, grandmother, company executive at the peak of my career to being unable to carry out functions that were commonplace and natural to me in my job and everyday life.

[00:25:25] In the year of fighting this disease, the woods and forest alongside Cambridge Station on Ranger Road in Cardinal Road have been my refuge, my comfort, and my therapy. Most days, along with

Goofy, oh, that's not my husband, that's my dog's name, we walk through the woods. We have gone repeatedly on all the trails. Continue. With my agricultural and environmental background, I am thrilled to recognize all the various ecosystems existing in harmony and complementing each other. I know these

[00:25:59] woods well. I know some of the trees by name. I have seen the foxes and the deers there. I have seen and heard the many birds including the heron, the owl, the woodpeckers, and the blue jays, and the cardinals. These woods have invigorated me in the daily struggle and have helped me physically, mentally, psychologically, and emotionally. They inspire me and boost my spirits every time I walk there. In hearing about the plans to pave the bicycle roadway through these woods, I am unhappy.

[00:26:30] If this happens, it will mean the destruction of many trees and the disturbance of the habitat of the birds, small mammals, and plants that call these woods their homes. This makes me very sad. I therefore commit with you on member, with all the members of the council about the bike road as it exists.

[00:27:09] And we're hoping that the reassess that you're looking at to ensure that the George Swina Trail will work with you and look at the things you have to do to make sure that it works for everybody, all of us,

[00:27:46] because it's not just anybody, because I go there every single day on five different ones, and it really helps me to sleep, to do all sorts of things that she mentioned before.

[00:28:07] And I really wanted you to know that it is important to us, to some people, that we go in and we make a, it works really good for us.

[00:28:22] So thank you for listening, and we'll wait out for you to see, you know, what has happened in the next few days or months or years. Thank you very much.

[00:28:40] Our next speaker is Katie Johnson. Hi, I'm Katie Johnson, 10132 Spring Lake Terrace. I'm up here again. I feel like I've been here so many times, so I wanted to come up with something new.

[00:28:58] Why should we care about our trees? I'm quoting from the 2021 City of Fairfax Urban Forestry Program Evaluation Report. The replacement value of our trees, \$11.2 million. Pretty significant.

[00:29:14] I also come to present our petition. We have 2,729 signatures asking you, our city elected officials, to stop the destruction of the woodlands in our city for bike roads. I'm here tonight to ask you to consider a more appropriate and less environmentally damaging alignment of the George Schneider Trail.

[00:29:35] This 1.78 mile trail was originally approved as a \$200,000 stone dust trail. This trail already exists and is well loved. The current proposed alignment of the GST comes at the cost of a healthy, mature oak hickory forest, and that is incredibly special and worth taking care of and worth preserving.

[00:29:58] Our city's own urban forester has testified that the eastern portion of the trail is at capacity. 491 mature trees will be lost for the stream restoration that's about to start, another 600 for the George Snyder Trail. Our Tree City, USA, cannot afford to lose 1,000 trees.

[00:30:17] Please realign the George Snyder Trail. Cancel the Country Club Hills Connector Trail. The connections already exist. Pull the Pickett Road Connector out of the woods, put it closer to the sidewalks, and protect the Willowwood open space.

[00:30:34] It's continual. It's a green corridor. It's continual with three parks. I leave you tonight to think about six minutes. Six minutes is a time it takes two speakers here. six minutes. Six minutes is what it

would take a cyclist to ride 1.78 miles. Actually, two minutes, two miles. So six minutes is not worth a mature, healthy oak hickory forest. Thank you.

[00:31:02] Our last speaker under initial general public comment is Susan Cooler. For other speakers, there will be another opportunity after we do the consent agenda. Thank you. My name is Susan Kyler. I live at 9742 Cardinal Road. I've been here many times for the last couple of years talking about the George Steiner Trail. I'm not going to reiterate what the other speakers have said, particularly that Trevor and Mary and Judy and Katie and others have spoken. So I won't

[00:31:39] reiterate all that. We've gone over that for two years. I would urge you, please, to come up with a compromise on this, to realign the trail so that you use existing infrastructure as much as possible and you keep the trail out of at least the eastern part of the woods and then take a look at the western part to see if you can use existing infrastructure as well.

[00:32:02] So that's that. The only other thing I want to say is that I stand by my statement the last time about the firing for convenience of the city manager. I think it was capricious and arbitrary, and I think that the rumor mill is just swirling with all kinds of reasons that unspecified why people cannot support him, and yet most of you have not talked with him.

[00:32:23] So beyond that, thank you for serving. I'm really excited with this new council. Thank you. Bye-bye. We will move to the consent agenda. Thank you. Is there a motion to approve the consent agenda? Council Member Hardy-Chandler.

[00:32:40] I move adoption of a consent agenda for agenda item number 7A, consideration of the December 3rd, 2024 special meeting minutes. Agenda item 7B, consideration of the December 10th, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

[00:32:56] I move to approve the consent agenda items number 7A through B and the motion accompanying the consent agenda item as printed. Second. A motion has been made by Council Member Hardy-Chandler and seconded by Council Member Peterson.

[00:33:12] Are there any items Council would like pulled for additional discussion? Hearing none, a roll call vote. Council Member McQuillan? Aye. Council Member Bates? Aye. Council Member Peterson? Aye. Council Member Hardy-Chandler?

[00:33:28] Aye. Council Member Hall? Aye. Council Member Amos? Motion passed unanimously. We'll now go to the second general public comment, as we don't have any public hearings tonight. So if there's anybody in the room that would like to speak on any item, they can come forward.

[00:33:47] Hi, good evening. Congratulations to everyone on council, Mayor. It's nice to be here. I'm going to speak on the George Snyder Trail, as I have before, but I'm going to keep it brief, since I know everyone wants to move on.

[00:34:08] It's continuing to gnaw at me, the use of multi-use trails. Because as several people have pointed out tonight, maybe there's access to a multi-use trail for handicapped people.

[00:34:29] But are you going to take your grandmother in a wheelchair to a place where there's bicycles whizzing by? I think we can do a little bit better in this project by considering how we can save as much of the environment, the habitat, the wild animals, the ecosystems, as we can.

[00:34:54] One thing that I was thinking about today is how 20 years ago, when I went out to Burke Lake, I swore it off for the very reason of the bicycles, and I haven't been back since.

[00:35:12] Same with Old Dominion Trail when I lived in Vienna. And it just became impossible to have a nice walk with a dog. If you had kids or elderly people with you, it would be a harrowing experience to try to walk on a multi-use trail.

[00:35:32] So I hope we can look at this a little bit differently and also realize that even with the monies that have been offered to us from outside, There's probably going to be millions of dollars of overrun on this project.

[00:35:52] Anyhow, I agree with the woman who said a two- to four-minute bike ride through the woods does not compete with the benefits that pedestrians derive from having a trail through the woods to walk on without vehicles whizzing by.

[00:36:16] Another topic, Mr. Palco's sudden discharge by outgoing counsel. I don't know the man. I don't have a lot of history there, but I think as soon as possible, it would be nice to consider reinstatement.

[00:36:35] And I'm not going to have time to talk about the Ox Block A project. We attended the town hall. It wasn't a very great presentation, but it was helpful.

[00:36:51] but going forward i think we need to continue to look at the infrastructure around it we don't have a lot of infrastructure here thank you thank you appreciate your comments thank you sir can i get your name and street address no that's okay is there anybody else in the room that would like

[00:37:22] to speak they may step forward we can move on to items not requiring a public hearing there's only one item and that is a consideration of a resolution of the city council appointments to the Virginia Municipal League in Parence VML, Metropolitan Washington Council of Government in Parence COG, and other regional and city boards and committees.

[00:37:45] I will provide that staff report for you all. So at the beginning of every term, the city council appoint its members to serve on the Virginia Municipal League VML, Policy Committees, Metropolitan Washington Council of Government, COG board and committees, Northern Virginia Regional Commission in Parence and VRC, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, NVTC, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, NVT, NVT Planning Coordination Advisory Committee, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Potomac Watershed Roundtable, the City's Retirement Plan Administrative Committee, and the Fairfax Village and the City Advisory Board.

[00:38:23] The Mayor and Council selected the appointees of the above-mentioned boards during the retreat this past Saturday, January 11th. Staff is requesting Council to ratify the attached resolution approving the appointees as agreed at the retreat that concludes my staff report i can take any questions if there are any are there questions for staff okay seeing none is there a motion council member hardy chandler i move to adopt a resolution approving city council member appointments to regional and city

[00:38:56] boards and commissions for the city council term ending december 31st 2026 second motion's been made by council member hardy chandler and seconded by council member peterson is there any discussion on the motion. Seeing none, a roll call vote. Council Member Amos? Aye. Council Member Hall?

[00:39:17] Aye. Council Member Hardy-Chandler? Aye. Council Member Peterson? Aye. Council Member Bates? Aye. Council Member McQuillan? Aye. Motion passed unanimously. We will go to the work session. Okay. I will now recess the regular meeting to go into a work session. We will stay in the council chambers for the work session, so no one go anywhere. Our one work session item tonight is an introduction discussion of potential zoning ordinance amendments related to the small area plan i'll recognize paul nappy or planning chief to provide the staff presentation thank you mayor

[00:39:56] reed and members of council we appreciate you having us here for your first meeting as a council the purpose of this project is to review our zoning ordinance and determine where there might be discrepancies or other items that might be changed as a result of adopted small area plans It isn't uncommon for new policy to not be in sync with existing codes and standards.

[00:40:21] And so with four small area plans adopted so far, we felt it was time to look at our zoning ordinance and try to make things align better. The types of things we'll be looking at are not just differences in standards, such as dimensional standards, but also ways that we can use the zoning ordinance to improve implementation of the small area plans by providing clearer direction for private property redevelopment by establishing standards whereby developers are receiving benefits from the small area plans for their sites, but in return providing community benefits and making sure that those types of negotiations are happening consistently.

[00:41:01] So this would be a tool that will help us with these types of things in the future. This process began in the summer of 2024. The city retained a consultant, White and Smith, Planning and Law, and that consultant is with us here tonight for their presentation. They spent the last several months getting information, going out in the field, meeting with certain stakeholders, and so the purpose of the meeting tonight is to provide some general background about what this project is for White and Smith to share what they have gone through so far and share what they've heard so far.

[00:41:32] Going forward, they will start to prepare some recommendations for us. They're going to prepare multiple options, and we'll come back to you to discuss those before proceeding with a single path towards preparing actual amendments, and we'll come back to you for those as well. So I will turn it over to Justin Wallace with White & Smith for the presentation, but I'll be here also to answer questions along with Brooke Harden, Director of Community Development Planning.

[00:41:56] Thank you. Madam Mayor, members of council, thank you for having me today. i'm justin wallace with white and smith i'm with the consulting firm as part of this project and it's my pleasure to at least introduce you to the small area plan zoning implementation paul gave a little bit of an overview and i'm going to go into much more detail we're early on in the process as paul mentioned and we are here to seek your insights and make sure we're generally on track and we did share a summary of issues with you and

[00:42:35] you should have in your packet today and we'll go through that a little bit in more detail as I mentioned this is the potential zoning ordinance update to implement the small area plans there is an engagement page for those that are viewing and in the audience the project website is available on the engage Fairfax website, so you can find an overview of the project there. You can participate, ask questions,

[00:43:08] and so that information is available on the website. As I mentioned, my name is Justin Wallace. I'm with White and Smith Planning and Law Group. We are a small group of planners, attorneys, urban

designers. My background's in architecture as well. Mark White is our firm partner, and he's the project manager.

[00:43:30] His background's an attorney by trade, and he has clients throughout Virginia and deals with municipalities and local governments. Caitlin Cameron is also part of our project team. She sits on her local planning board and has a background in urban design, planning, and architecture as well.

[00:43:52] I myself, my background's in architecture, urban design, and planning. All that to say is that I hope that gives you a vote of confidence that we are excited to strategize and learn more about the issues that you are facing and how we can tackle those issues.

[00:44:08] We work with municipalities and local governments, and addressing development codes is part of our business. So that is what the mainstay of our business entails. We already said we're going to give a project overview, just a glimpse of where we've been, where we are and where we're heading and so i'm going to pretend that nobody knows about this project so forgive me if you do know about what i'm introducing about the comprehensive plan which

[00:44:44] was adopted in 2019 it has since been amended several times since then but a part of that is establishing the overall vision outlining goals and objectives for how the city wants to grow and what it wants to preserve uh over the next decade a big component of the comprehensive plan is its future land use map that includes the place types which are based off of various characteristics and development patterns in the city and what we are mainly focused on are these purple areas the

[00:45:23] activity center areas and so the comprehensive plan outlines five activity center areas and these are areas that anticipate more urban, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented type of development over time. And so that is, you know, there are five main activity center areas, Camp Washington, Old Town Fairfax, Pickett and Main, Fairfax Circle, and Northfax. After the adoption of the comprehensive plan, the city embarked on a series of small area plans, which are a more detailed, more nuanced

[00:46:02] approach to planning, to develop a set of policies that are tailored around specific characteristics, trying to understand the individuality of each of these areas in terms of the desired mix of land uses, what activities are desired there, the level of residential density, what types of building intensity, the overall character, how new street connections will work, how parcels will connect with one another, and what types of infrastructure

[00:46:37] improvements, such as stormwater, sewer, sidewalks, and considerations for parking, and what open space looks like in each of these areas. So as I like to point out the difference between land use policy and zoning, because I think it helps understand why we as a consultant are here.

[00:47:01] And so our task is to align the city's zoning ordinance with the land use, established land use policy. And so as I stated earlier, the comprehensive plan, the small area plan set the goal. They help you as members of council to make decisions when it comes to capital improvements, public investment, and private investment in these areas.

[00:47:25] But this is policy, and so it does not change the underlying zoning. the zoning ordinance should be a working document it should be updated from time to time to align with the policy documents and so the zoning ordinance is is rule is rule of law and it controls the physical development of different characteristics on a parcel by parcel basis such as what land uses are allowed the allowable density height setbacks landscaping and

[00:48:00] and so forth so some examples of what discrepancies or gaps there are between the policy that's in place through the comprehensive plan the small area plans and the city zoning ordinance so for example the city sets a single maximum height across all its zoning districts and whereas the small area plans contemplates varying heights and as they transition to neighborhoods that surround the activity center and so we

[00:48:36] want to look at that and make sure the zoning reflects appropriate transitions and height it's just one example and there are many other examples all the physical characteristics we want to evaluate and make sure that they align with those small area plans a little bit of background in public engagement as As Mr. Nabtee mentioned, we started in August, just at the tail end of summer.

[00:49:07] The consultant team came here. The city staff gave us a tour of each of the areas. We toured in person just to understand, observe the differences of each activity center area, understand what's on the ground today, and just get a sense of the challenges that each of these areas are facing.

[00:49:27] We also met with different members of the city staff and their leadership team and got a first preliminary insight into what they're looking for with a zoning ordinance update. In the fall, we held a series of technical meetings, and these were a deeper dive into by topic.

[00:49:50] And so we met with various stakeholders to understand, again, the challenges that development community, city staff, and others from the community have had interfacing with the city and with the zoning ordinance document.

[00:50:09] So that was very insightful to understand kind of consensus among the different focus groups. And so we gathered a lot of insight through those technical meetings. And then in November, we had our first community meeting, which was our first introduction to the community with the project, just bringing this project in front of the community and gathering some preliminary thoughts and where public sentiment is with regard to the zoning ordinance and what those needs are and challenges are.

[00:50:47] We are, as I said, at the tail end of phase one, which is our project discovery phase. So really just listening and understanding the core concerns, what consensus there are with the challenges that are being faced through the development review process, through navigating the zoning ordinance.

[00:51:08] And our next phase will be developing a report. And so that is the next big step that we'll be working on and coming back before you with more strategies and solutions.

[00:51:26] And so today is just a first glimpse at what we're looking at. And then eventually we'll be moving into the drafting of recommended or preferred strategies and recommendations. and then, hopefully, ideally, adoption at the tail end.

[00:51:44] The scope, our project scope, is to improve public investment and private development. We've been looking at trends in recent development, trying to understand the issues that the development community is facing and the public perception of those projects as well.

[00:52:05] We've been looking at common gaps and discrepancies as it relates to the various characteristics in the small area plans and understanding the community's needs and interests and values and priorities for each of the areas.

[00:52:22] And we'll be looking at how to balance that with market trends and understanding the needs of development. So that will be a delicate balance. So ideally, the resulting zoning ordinance would align with

policy.

[00:52:39] It will be clear, purposeful, and making the right standards easy. We'll be looking at the development review process, streamlining and making it effective and efficient, and clarifying and supporting the goals of what we've heard from the community thus far.

[00:52:57] So I'll touch on these briefly, and there's a written description in your packet that goes a little bit more detail. The report that we will be working on will dive into each of these areas and look at other communities, look at best practices, sound planning principles, and then present a series or set of solutions, strategies.

[00:53:26] And I think that we'll be having discussions with staff and then coming back before you with a more detailed look at these buckets or themes. So this just captures what we've heard thus far. One, as I mentioned, aligning with the comprehensive plan.

[00:53:46] When the zoning ordinance doesn't align or there's misalignment, it leads to inconsistencies and unpredictability. So we want to make sure that the zoning ordinance reflects what's in the comprehensive plan when it comes to activity centers and enabling mixed-use, walkable, pedestrian-oriented areas.

[00:54:08] When we think about reinforcing the distinctions of small area plans, each small area plan has unique qualities and characteristics, so we want to make sure that we set a framework that builds consistency but is flexible enough that it highlights the unique qualities of each activity center area.

[00:54:33] As far as mixed-use development, we heard quite a bit about the use of special-use permits special exceptions various adjustments that the development community is having to navigate around through the existing zoning ordinance so we'll be looking at setting a clear path for mixed-use development as as you would find in any community so we want to just promote a a clear path for mixed-use development as it relates to the city of Fairfax along with those

[00:55:09] Developments, we're seeing trending towards larger developments, more compact development, larger scale. And with that comes those infrastructure issues, such as access to meat, fire code, stormwater, all those issues that come with larger scale development.

[00:55:32] And so we'll be reviewing the development review process and the standards to make sure that they align and match with the needs of larger developments. We heard a lot about open space and what it means for urban development, so we'll want to understand a clear definition of what open space is and all the different types of open space and what value they bring to the city and we'll also want to understand

[00:56:05] how that relates to the city's zoning districts and bring consistency across the applicability of open space whether it's in an urban area or suburban area etc we also heard quite a bit about the city's policy for utilities and just having a clear policy in place as it relates to both the location of utilities and how it relates to street street street trees and other components

[00:56:40] that you typically find along the street so just understanding prioritization and hierarchy of utilities as it relates to streetscape elements an exciting and interesting task will be looking at incentivizing community needs and what that means is we heard a lot about sustainable development practices we heard a lot about environmentally sound development and resiliency and so given

[00:57:16] the the Virginia statutes we're looking at an incentive and instead of based zoning approach to that and so that could take various forms we're still looking at this but it could be in the form of a bonus program a tiered approach or a point system that would balance community needs and or their expressed desires with development needs so I think this is something that's been done in other communities in the area so we don't have to look too far for examples

[00:57:51] But it's something that we're exploring more to just focus on what we've heard that individuals want out of the small area plans. And finally, enabling flexible development frontage.

[00:58:08] We heard from different groups, we heard about some concern with the amount of non-residential area that's required along the ground floor. And so we're exploring different alternatives to that just to promote in our activity centers a more active and engaging street presence and what that could look like versus just a fixed static standard of requiring non-residential on the ground floor.

[00:58:40] So that is, again, something we're exploring, and this is just an introduction to some of the issues that we've heard thus far, and we'll be coming back before you with a clear understanding and with a set of different strategies.

[00:58:58] And so with that, I'm going to stop talking and turn it over to you. I'm here to answer any questions. And Mr. Nabatee and Brooke are here to make sure that we're in our scope and guidelines. And so I'll turn it back over to you. Thank you very much for the presentation.

[00:59:16] I will look to the council to see if there are questions. Council Member Amos. Two questions. First one is, would you also be looking at signage and adjusting those requirements, or how would that be? Would that be considered part of this? i don't think that's off the table sorry oh there you are yeah do you want to talk first about that um it's i would agree it's probably not off the table it's not necessarily within the anticipated scope um the the purpose of this effort is to specifically look at the recommendations that are in the small area plans um the small area plans don't really get into that kind of detail

[00:59:55] um but uh through this effort we i think are going to be we already recognize we're going to be identifying some other issues that are happening, and that could spiral into some kind of side efforts and that kind of thing. Cool, cool. And the only other question that I had, which will probably come later as we get more research underway, is really, I like the idea of the bonus density program.

[01:00:17] I think that's a clever idea. I would be curious on impacts of the fee schedule once you change mix use to buy right. What is the estimated revenue impact specifically for the city on that one? And that could come later. That's certainly something we can evaluate is just the impacts on if mixed-use development were to come by right, what impacts it has on the development fee schedules.

[01:00:46] That's something that we can at least consider in our report as we're thinking through it. Other questions? Council Member Peterson. Is the scope available for our review? I believe that is publicly available, yes.

[01:01:04] yes and the reason i ask i haven't seen it but just some basic questions around scope uh we have four small area plans correct are they being evaluated individually or are they being evaluated in aggregate how are you doing that um i you want to i would say both i think we're we're looking at the small area plans because they they each have their own unique qualities and old town you You can't compare Old Town with Camp Washington.

[01:01:40] I mean, they're just two separate contexts, and so we are looking individually at each area, ideally coming with a framework that works across all of the areas, but also reflecting the unique qualities of each area.

[01:01:56] So we're still looking at that, but to answer your question, we'll be taking into account each individual area as part of the evaluation. And within each of them, are you looking at a single scenario that came out of the small area plan process, or are you looking at a range of scenarios?

[01:02:20] Just so that I understand, when you say scenario, you mean different possibilities, different approaches. I think that's fair to say that we're evaluating various approaches, so different scenarios I think is a good way of putting it.

[01:02:36] And then we'll be coordinating with staff on what some preferred solutions are. So I think at this point, we are evaluating different options, different ways or approaches, strategies.

[01:02:52] And that will all be included in the report. Ideally, in the end, we will come up with a preferred set of solutions to present back based off our findings. So does that answer your question, Councilman? Yeah, thank you. You have a series of variables, if you will, that sort of define the approach in each of the small area plans, and those can shift.

[01:03:16] You can have one of the variables is the different mix of uses, and you can imagine some changes in the mix that would affect the zoning requirements that would result from that. So I'm just trying to get a feel for how broadly you are evaluating those potential variations in each of those and how much flexibility you have in the process to be able to take a look at things.

[01:03:40] Part of the reason I ask there is some of this is a little bit in flux still, right? Things are evolving, whether it's the design of the transportation system, like the intersection in the Fairfax Circle small area plan, whatever, And the question of whether you are casting a broad net at this stage in terms of how you're looking at all these options and whether there's flexibility after looking at the results of analysis to go back and do additional analysis if it warrants it based on feedback.

[01:04:11] I'm just trying to get a feel for how this is working so that it will be able to evaluate really a full set of things that may be of interest. If I could just follow up on what Justin said, I think that what we will hope to get out of this project will be partially guided by what we hear from the City Council and the Planning Commission and others, and that flexibility is something we have been hearing so far.

[01:04:36] So when they come back to us and we have a series of options of how we can move forward with amendments to the zoning ordinance, we'll look at how those different options will affect how we operate, and one of those things we'll want to look at is flexibility. So we want to make sure that the way the zoning ordinance is set up, if we do end up changing the small area plans or if things happen that causes things to be different, then the zoning ordinance will be able to adapt to those, whether it be to stay as it is or just have that flexibility built in or if we can make some simple amendments or that type of thing.

[01:05:08] And so we'll continue to seek feedback on that as the options are developed. My final comment and question is whether it's possible to be able to take a look at the scope now and if there are areas where we think that it's particularly helpful to be sure you are casting the net broadly, to have an opportunity to provide that input now before you actually do the evaluation process.

[01:05:35] You mean look at the scope of the zoning ordinance effort? The study. Yes. The evaluation of options. Yes. And we will share that scope with all the city council, and then we have future discussions we can continue to discuss that right thank you other questions councilmember hall the incentive community needs in exchange for demand for height thank you yeah i think out of all of the um the issues that we shared that will be perhaps the

[01:06:07] most challenging for us um because you know we are we heard a lot of a lot of different things We heard resiliency, we heard public art, we heard you name it. So I think it'll be important to really dive deep into what a framework and a zoning ordinance will look like.

[01:06:31] And whether that is through a bonus height program or a point system or some type of tiered approach where there's prioritization of both what the community is asking for and what the developer's needs are.

[01:06:47] It may not be height. It may be floor area ratio. It may be something that the market is suggesting a demand for. And so I think what we want to do is look at balancing the priorities for the small area plans with what the demands for the market is suggesting.

[01:07:10] And, again, we're still evaluating that, But I think that is an approach, an incentive-based approach that we're looking at. So hopefully that answers your question a little bit more. I think so. I do look forward to more information on it as we obviously move through the process, just to more further understand it myself.

[01:07:30] But I think that's good for now. Thank you. Any other questions from the dais? I mean, my only comment is that the small area plans are a concept, not a blueprint, which I think we've discussed many times, because the best laid plans of mice and men rarely work out the way we imagine that they will.

[01:07:48] We didn't think that Paul VI High School was going to be a residential development, and here we are. So I think it's important to look at zoning because it's come to my attention that single-use zoning came about in the 1920s. So this whole concept is really not that old.

[01:08:05] It's like 100 years old, this concept of use zone for specific uses. So much older cities, obviously, were laid out differently. So we got the feedback from our consultants that mixed use really is the way to further develop a limited amount of square footage in our city so that we have flexibility going into the future.

[01:08:29] And so I do think it's important for us to look at the zoning to see if it supports what we're looking at as far as the land use policy. And I think this council is up for learning more about it. But I do just want to say to everyone that there's always going to be flexibility.

[01:08:46] long after we're not on this council and after things start getting built in these small area plans, it may change how the next council or the community feels about it in two or five or ten years. So I think we have to be realistic about coming up with ideas and scopes and plans and realize that all of this really is subject to change. And as we start building out some of these plans, it might very much impact how we look at this issue in the future. So I appreciate everyone's engagement i think i thank you for the presentation this is this is the starting platform

[01:09:22] we need to start thinking about how we're going to look at zoning relative to land use i thought that was kind of like the thing that made the biggest connection for me tonight so thank you both very

much thank you okay i will now reconvene the regular meeting which is not going to look very much different than what we just did five minutes ago but having reconvened the regular meeting i am going to ask for the manager report out and then we will go to council comments so um ms zip do you have comments that you would like to make at this time just very briefly one

[01:09:59] if it is the will of the council to have a discussion on george snyder trail staff is prepared to give that presentation on march 4th at the work session does that this is the march 4th date does that work march 4th work session for george snyder trail okay fantastic okay council member bates um could we also include uh the um country club hills connector trail and picket road connector trail like we did last year as well i can check with staff i don't know what

[01:10:36] how much um conversation was going to be around the george snyder trail piece as well as the other items that we have on the agenda for that night is the first work session after the council receives the proposed budget so we do have some budget things that night if we can't add it to that night we can definitely add it to another one yes that's good amenable all right anything else

[01:11:05] perhaps support this point even if we just were to learn more about the timing associated with all of those projects it would be helpful okay so I will start with yes councilmember Hall I just want to verify that our urban forester Anna Safford will be hopefully able to attend that meeting I've spoken to her but we will ask her to it okay that would be great thank you if not I would maybe consider rescheduling it just but just hopefully hopefully she can attend

[01:11:45] Ms. Shinneberry if I can interrupt I know she's bringing the urban forest plan but it's not till the end of March because she said she wasn't gonna be available on march 4th so we can look at that we have we have work sessions pretty much every meeting so never mind we'll just work around guard everything i said okay we'll work around miss safford's schedule is what we'll do with that okay that's good councilman hardy chandler is it preferable to have the two parts or is it preferable to have it together i mean in terms of

[01:12:22] the volume of information that would be presented in those work sessions you mean anna safford's right um we can talk about it as a staff i've i've not been briefed on that yet so i'm not sure but that's a thing to think about if she's going to do the one thing possibly we can do the second thing we'll look at how many things there are that they're related so right they're related that could be a thing all right now i will go down start with council member mcquillen to see

[01:12:57] if you have any comments no comments thank you council member bates thank you no comments council member Peterson thank you none council member Hardy Chandler council member Hall sorry point of reference here is this comments our comments in general or on what we just spoke about any comments you want to make this is your time it's like your public comment that's what I thought just want to make public comments so whatever okay you could recite poetry if you wanted I will not do poetry this time maybe next time I just want to thank everyone for coming out tonight I'm sorry my parents were not able to come in from California but I'm very excited my sister flew in and surprised me I just want to thank everyone

[01:13:35] in the public for coming up and speaking taking the time out of the George Schneider trail is a big issue I'm very happy that we have a potential date to discuss it I also do want to thank everyone for coming out and speaking up about the city manager we've received a ton of emails about it and I'm going to be the one to point out the elephant in the room which is that I do support bringing back mr. Laszlo

Palco and I just want everyone to be aware that this as far as I'm concerned is not over I don't have enough sufficient information to agree with the decision that was totally made so just wanted that on the

[01:14:09] record thank you councilmember Amos working there we go all right I just have two comments first I'd also like to thank Melanie Melissa Casey for setting up the reception those cookies were awesome so greatly appreciate that I also want to thank former councilmember Miller for her comments earlier I also just wanted to thank the outgoing council including council members Lim Jim Ross, Steely, Doyle Feingold, and Greenfield.

[01:14:38] We greatly appreciate their service. Going to my planned comments, there we go. Specifically, I already spoke with my colleagues about this regarding the BACs. As I included in a prior message, I believe that there are certain boards and commissions in Fairfax County that would be better served with having city representation on them.

[01:14:59] Some of which would include the Veterans and Military Families Commission, Affordable Housing Advisory Council, Child Care Advisory Council, and trail, sidewalks, and bikeways committees. And if anyone had any addition to that, they have over 80, so yep. So after speaking with staff, we would like to address a letter to the Board of Supervisors for the consideration of adding city appointees to those commissions and others, however my colleagues feel.

[01:15:27] All right. Thank you. Good suggestions. So, at this time, I also want to add my thanks to those that have already been expressed to the people who put on the reception, to our city clerk for organizing the swearing in. I want to thank our Director of Elections, Ike, who actually made sure that our elections went smoothly and managed it all.

[01:15:49] I will point out that this is our second November election, which means that I think we had 73% voter turnout. We had more people in our city voting for their local offices than we've ever had in the history of the city. And that is remarkable.

[01:16:04] And I'm glad that our city is more engaged in choosing their elected representatives. And so thank you for this first meeting. Thank you to my colleagues on the dais. And at this time, I am going to go into a closed meeting to discuss personnel matters and for a consultation with legal counsel.

[01:16:25] So I'm going to read the motion. I move that the City Council convene a closed meeting under Section 2.2-3711.81 of the Code of Virginia to discuss personnel matters and under Section 2.2-3711.8 of the Code of Virginia for consultation with legal counsel for legal advice.

[01:16:42] All council members in favor of the motion, please signify by voting aye. Aye. Those opposed to the motion, please vote nay. The vote is unanimous in favor of the motion the City Council retired into a closed meeting at 8.17 p.m.



Coraggio Consulting · aguyonx.com