

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

WETA (SP #106-3) Meeting #1

March 2, 2020 | 7-9:00 p.m.

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Devanshi Patel (Chair), Elizabeth Gearin (Co-Chair), James Lantelme, James Schroll, Jane Siegel, Sara Steinberger.

This was the first SPRC meeting for the WETA site plan amendment application.

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Devanshi Patel, with introductions and a brief explanation of the purpose of this SPRC.

Staff introduced the application, and a presentation on background to the requested site plan amendment and phased development site plan amendment. The Applicant presented the proposed site plan amendment, focusing on the proposed agenda items: Architecture (especially compatibility with the existing building), Green Building, Transportation, and Construction staging and phasing. The applicant also stated that this project will be in conjunction with an internal renovation of the existing building.

COMMENTS From SPRC members to Applicant or staff

- Which direction does the rooftop garden face?
 - Applicant: The garden will face north but there will be views to the east and west.
- Would highway noise disturb potential users? We would like to encourage the rooftop space to be used as much as possible. Look into transparent screening if necessary.
- Is the walkway next to the proposed large media screen meant to be a viewing area? If not, should there be one?
 - A: The walkway is the path from the garage to the building entrance, we are not encouraging or intending gatherings of any size. The screen is meant to provide some visual interest on the street which has little activation.
- Will there be a public viewing space of the studio?
 - A: No public viewing space for the actual studio production. The public is invited in guided tours though.
- Is the visitor bike parking area covered?
 - A: Yes, there is a roof over the off-street visitor bike parking.
- Statement of security concerns over some guests are in the TV studio.
- Any way to get VDOT to repaint the pedestrian bridge? And improve the view from the Shirlington Road/highway ramp since Campbell Avenue is one of the major entrances to Shirlington? Artwork or signage that states that greets people to Shirlington?
- What's the interim plan for the ground floor design while you pursue a media screen?
 - A: The glass will be transparent, and the design will still be that of a storefront. We could perhaps have static artwork or similar if the media screen doesn't work out.
- General support from members of SPRC for a media screen, mention of NPR building in DC.

- Applicant was asked about use of shuttle system.
 - Applicant stated that they will soon be losing the parking at the 27th Street site, so that for the remaining time that the 27th Street building is still being used, employees will park in the garage in the Shirlington site and be shuttled to the 27th Street site.
 - Applicant stated that they had difficulty attracting younger employees who reverse commute, due to distance from Metro and bus-only service.
- SPRC discussion about calls for better reverse commute bus service. Suggestions that Shirlington businesses band together and create a Metro shuttle. Suggestion for scooter parking area to encourage use of scooters, but not as a replacement for shuttle.
- Will the glazing be bird-friendly?
 - A: Yes.
- The applicant was asked about the planned renovation of the existing headquarters building.
 - A: The building renovation will not be a complete gut rehab, but systems will be updated.
 - Staff stated they were working with the applicant to maximize the sustainability of the project but there were challenges in adding on to an existing older building and the unique nature of the television studio use.
- Will the roof be available for community space?
 - A: They would like to.
- Were doors added to the handicapped accessible route from garage to entrance? It seems to be a step backward from previous.
 - A couple doors were added in the passageway. Everything meets ADA requirements.
- How long will the construction last?
 - A: Construction will begin 3rd quarter, this year. The addition construction will be 12-14 months. The entire project, including the renovation of the existing building, will be 26 months.
 - A: Construction routes would come off the 395 exist adjacent. Most of the materials will be kept on site. A row of the parking garage on each level will marked off.
 - A: There will be a construction liaison for the project. His/her contact info will be shared with the community. The applicant will also participate in the required community meeting before construction.