Long Range Planning Committee, Meeting Summary

February 28, 2019; 7-8:30pm

2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Rooms C/D

Subject: Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study Process Revisions

(Meeting #3)

Planning Commission Members in attendance: Nancy Iacomini (Chair), Daniel Weir, Jim Lantelme, Jane Siegel, Elizabeth Gearin, and Kathleen McSweeney. Staff members in attendance: Margaret Rhodes, Kelsey Steffen, Tim Murphy, Nick Rogers, Cliff Hogan, Jennifer Smith, and Bob Duffy. Members of the public in attendance: Scott Pedowitz, Tad Lunger, Bismah Ahmed, Alysia Yi, Arthur Fox, Don Schlichtmann, Kelechi Arusobi, David Kinney, and Farrah Terbali, and Evan Pritchard.

Welcome

- Welcome and opening remarks provided by Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) Chair.

LRPC Discussion on the Special GLUP Study Process Revisions Proposal

CPHD Planning Director, Bob Duffy, made an opening statement about Arlington County’s General Land Use Plan (GLUP) and the importance of Special GLUP Studies. Staff then gave a presentation on the proposed process revisions. After staff’s presentation, the LRPC discussed the proposed changes. Comments and questions were then posed by members of the public. Comments and questions from commissioners and members of the public included:

1. The Two-Tier Process
   - A commissioner asked about the details of the tier one review process and what sort of analysis would be completed by staff prior to the first LRPC meeting.
   - Another commissioner asked when the fees would be assessed during the review process.
   - There was then a question about the process revision goal of predictability. The commissioner wanted to know how the revised process would increase predictability for both staff and applicants.
   - The next key discussion brought up by a commissioner was about what would happen when the LRPC and staff do not share the same opinion regarding whether an application should be considered for a Special GLUP Study.
   - A commissioner then asked who the letter of determination would come from at the end of the initial review phase. Would it be from CPHD or the LRPC or both?
   - The commissioners stated that a detailed layout of the two-tier process and the steps within each tier would be helpful for them.
   - There was also a comment from a commissioner that the two-tier process would provide additional certainty to the applicant about when the study would be initiated by staff.
A commissioner then asked, knowing what we know now about previous Special GLUP Studies, could we have foreseen an issue ahead of time with certain studies if the proposed review process and selection criteria had been in place?

A commissioner commented that in a previous study, the applicant would have likely been better served by the process now proposed by staff.

The commissioners agreed that they were in support of the proposed two-tier process, however they would like to see more detail about how each tier would be executed by staff.

2. Timeline

A commissioner commented that they liked a timing option that included batching of applications (as opposed to a rolling option), however they had concerns over the length of the timeline.

Another commissioner asked if staff had considered a tri-annual review.

A commissioner then suggested an edit to the bi-annual review. He suggested that staff remove the 90-120-day timeline for getting to the initial review LRPC meeting and only state the desired submission and related LRPC dates. He also suggested staff change the LRPC review months from September/October to October/November.

A commissioner then asked if the two-tier process allows a lower entry fee for applicants to be considered for a study.

There was also a question about whether applicants would be able to submit missing items after the initial application.

The next discussion amongst the commissioners was about the County Board’s ability to allow for an out-of-turn Special GLUP Study. The question was about the potential questions of consistency and fairness in the overall Special GLUP Study workload for staff. However, one commissioner stated that it is, after all, at the County Board’s discretion to determine the studies that will be completed and in what order.

The discussion by the commissioners circled back to the two-tier process and the details for each of the two tiers. A commissioner commented that some discretion should remain in the process and that as time goes on, refinements can be continuously made.

A commissioner then commented that a long process of review does in fact make sense. A Special GLUP Study is a small-scale sector or area plan and it is no small matter.

3. Consultants

A commissioner commented that if a consultant is used to complete a Special GLUP Study, the client must be the County and the County must maintain ownership of the work product.

Another commissioner commented that hiring a consultant steps away from the intent of the Special GLUP process and gives the consultant control over the study, as opposed to having the study being led by the County.

A commissioner then added that they would be fine with the consultant idea if it was through an on-call contract with the County.

A commissioner stated that if an applicant hired consultants for the more technical aspects, such as the modeling and transportation analysis, it may be okay if the scope is determined by the County.
Another commissioner stated that the nuances may be different if the modeling and transportation analysis are presented by a consultant.

4. Criteria
   - A commissioner asked if the Neighborhood Conservation Plans could be a way to determine if a GLUP change proposal aligns with local sentiment.
   - The other commissioners expressed concerns about relying on Neighborhood Conservation Plans, as they are accepted plans and not adopted by the County Board. There was also a concern that the plans are not necessarily representative of a community’s opinion as they are not typically developed with the same level of community input as other plans and policies and some have not been updated in many years.

5. County Board Policy
   - A commissioner stated that it may be best to keep changes to the Special GLUP Study process at the Planning Commission and staff level to allow for greater flexibility and more nimble changes in the administration of the process. However, she then stated that some amendments to the County Board Policy regarding GLUP studies could be helpful if they addressed very broad aspects of the process proposed by staff.

Public Comment on the Special GLUP Study Process Revisions Proposal
   - One member of the public commented that the GLUP is the foundation of Arlington’s land use planning efforts that it should continue to serve the public interest. He also stated that this process change should make sure to involve the community and not move too quickly.