

**ARCA MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES
DISCUSSION OF VORNADO'S RIVER HOUSE PROPOSAL
JULY 16, 2015**

President Arthur Fox called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. 102 persons present.

Informational Items

1. Recognition of John Marr, former ARCA president and prominent citizen activist who died earlier in the year. Arthur Fox presented a plaque in his honor to Nancy Swain, on behalf of the Marr family, who will be in town for his burial at Arlington Cemetery later this summer. Nancy will present them with the plaque on that occasion.
2. On behalf of LCOR, Josh White provided an update on plans to replace the “paperclip” building at 400 Army-Navy Drive. The county board approved the site plan in January 2015 for two 20-story residential towers: the south tower will have 300 apartments (15 affordable) and the north tower will have 150 condominiums, with a shared courtyard, entrance and amenities. Old South Eads Street will become a one-way, limited access, private drive deeded to the County but maintained by LCOR.

LCOR anticipates receiving a demolition permit in late summer or early fall. For pedestrian safety, the sidewalk along Army Navy Drive and Old Eads Street will be shut down during demolition. and pedestrians will be directed down S. Eads and along 12th Street. Given that the below-grade parking garage will be reused, there will be no need for pile drivers. Construction hours will be 7:30 to 6 pm weekdays and, if needed, 10:00 to 5:00 on weekends.

Action Item

3. ARCA officer election for 2015-2016. Following slate elected unanimously:

President: Arthur Fox

Vice Presidents: Lisa Gammon, Meredith Dodge, Brenda Pommerenke

Secretary: Elizabeth Wirick

Treasurer: Bob Hyde

Communications: Maggie Gaffen

Traffic and Transportation: Sue Super and Kris LeBras

Discussion of Vornado's River House Proposal with County Staff Member Anthony Fusarelli

Vornado is currently seeking county permission to build an additional 1084 residential units plus ground floor retail along Joyce Street on the River House property. The plan includes an additional four 6-story buildings, one of which would contain 150 affordable housing units.

Mr. Fusarelli is the County-designated “Ambassador to 22202” and a senior member of the County's Planning Division staff. His phone number is 202-228-3548 and his email is afusarelli@arlingtonva.us.

Summary of Mr. Fusarelli's presentation

Mr. Fusarelli's entire power point is available at [link].

GLUP change: Vornado is requesting an amendment of the County's General Land Use Plan (GLUP) for the River House property, changing it from Medium Residential to Low Office Apartment Hotel. The GLUP Map's legend for Medium Residential includes three different zoning districts: RA 7-16 (37 units per acre), RA6-15 (48 units per acre), and RA-H (72 units per acre).

Process: Previously, the County has considered only four other GLUP amendment requests. There is no prescribed process applicable to amendment requests. It is likely that this request will be considered by a Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) of the Planning Commission working in concert with Planning Division staff to evaluate Vornado's request to determine if it is within the "realm of reasonableness" in light of the changed character of its surroundings. That process could involve between 2-4 LRPC meetings after which staff would draft a memorandum to the full Planning Commission, and then to the County Board with findings and recommendations. However, Mr. Fusarelli stressed that staff had not yet determined for this particular amendment request the exact procedure that would be followed given its magnitude. In previous cases, the process did not include a comprehensive analysis of the prospective impact the requested amendment could have on the County's infrastructure or traffic congestion.

Upzoning: The GLUP change would not, standing alone, give Vornado a right to build the additional 1,084 residential units, plus retail. Hence, Vornado is seeking to up-zone the property from RA6-15 to CO-1.5 which would allow it to increase the property's density from 48 to 72 residential units per acre, and allow retail along Joyce Street. Fusarelli explained that if the County Board were to approve a recommendation to permit the requested GLUP amendment, this up-zoning request would then be considered by a Site Plan Review Committee of the Planning Commission, concomitant with its review of Vornado's specific architectural renderings showing the proposed design, layout, uses, height, density and massing of its proposed buildings. And while the CO-1.5 zoning classification does allow tall commercial office buildings, if the owner of the River House property were at some point in the future to seek to replace any of the existing buildings with new buildings of different heights, density or uses, it would first have to obtain County Board approval to do so.

Timing: In the coming weeks, staff will develop the GLUP study process, its scope and details, most likely in collaboration with the LRPC chair. That process is not likely to get underway until September or October and is expected to take from three to five months. The public will be able to attend meetings, submit statements, and testify before the full Planning Commission and subsequently before the County Board at the end of the process. The earliest the County Board would likely consider and vote on the GLUP study results would be in late 2015 or the beginning of 2016.

ARCA RESIDENT CONCERNS

Residents expressed a variety of concerns with Vornado's proposal, including:

- **Infrastructure:** The most frequently expressed concern related to the stress this development would put on the neighborhood infrastructure. Residents repeatedly stated their belief that the GLUP study needed to evaluate the impact of the additional residential density particularly on potential traffic congestion and public transit capacity, as well as school crowding, water and sewer, not just in the immediate future, but in light of the eventual construction of all new development already approved for construction by the County in PDSPs and Sector Plans. Speakers were worried that the very few entrance and egress points will eventually become impassable during rush hours, Metro service at Pentagon City is already overloaded during rush hours, Oakridge Elementary School is already overcrowded, close single family neighborhoods are experiencing flooding and sewer backups as well as overflow parking from existing River House residents
- **Absence of Holistic, 22202-wide Planning:** Residents urged the County to conduct a study of the community infrastructure and an examination of all the development authorized for zip code 22202 so that the pressures on our infrastructure are viewed in the context of the entire neighborhood and not parcel by parcel. Arthur Fox reported that ARCA has for some time been asking the County to study how much density our "limited-access fortress" in 22202 can accommodate. Mr. Fusarelli repeated that infrastructure issues generally come up during the site plan review process rather than during the GLUP amendment process, but residents expressed concern that these issues need to be addressed much earlier in the overall development review process.
- **Affordable Housing:** Residents questioned why all of the affordable units had to be concentrated in one building, and why that building had to be sandwiched between the existing southern tower and Joyce Street on a precious, narrow strip of green space. Members also noted that LCOR's new apartment building on Army-Navy and Eads will include affordable housing units integrated in with market rate apartments which they though would be more inclusive and socially preferable. Several residents questioned why Vornado would receive extra density for building affordable housing.
- **Timing:** Residents also noted that given the scale of Vornado's development plan which is unprecedented in terms of a GLUP study, three to five months is not an adequate time to genuinely study and report on the issues.
- **Residential/Commercial Use Boundary:** Several residents reminded Mr. Fusarelli that the River House parcel was designed to be the transition from the residential to commercial areas. Several residents questioned whether any proposed upzoning has placed this much density and commercial zoning directly adjoining a single family home neighborhood.
- **Neighborhood Conversation Plan:** One resident pointed out to participants that ARCA's Neighborhood Conservation Plan, adopted in September 2013, explicitly calls for the River House zoning and its GLUP designation to remain as is in order to serve as

a transition from Pentagon City's CO-2.5 commercial character and high density to the lower density adjoining residential neighborhoods.

- **Future Uses:** Despite Mr. Fusarelli's assurance that any future commercial development of the River House property would have to be approved by the County Board, residents expressed concern that with the up-zoning and change to commercial, a future owner could more easily develop the site more densely and with more commercial activity.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Wirick