

December 3, 2014
Reinventing Oakland Mills Task Force Meeting
Minutes

Attendees: Virginia Thomas, Bill McCormack, Kay Wisniewski, Tawania Williams, Jervis Dorton, Paul Verchinski, Jonathan Edelson, Sandy Cederbaum, CeCe McCullough
(Mr. Avery was absent due to a County Transition Team meeting.)

10 residents attended.

Ms. Wisniewski stated that tonight's meeting agenda was to discuss the pages 6 – 13 of the Draft Master Plan 2/Community Plan (MP2/CP). Based on the recent Village Center Market Study it is evident that we need to attract a critical mass to support our village center in the future. Oakland Mills will need to add amenities to attract people to our center. Included in the MP2/CP are examples of amenities such as a new large scale ice hockey area, 50 meter pool and water park.

Master Plans are “working” documents and need to be revised over time. The MP2/CP does not bind the community to anything.

Committee Review of Pages 6 - 13

Page 7- refers to Bridge Columbia and will be revised as the board and Friends of Bridge Columbia formulate their response to the Bridge Feasibility Study results. Comments however should include that the board supports the best Bridge Columbia possible.

Page 8 – A few bullets will be reworded.

Mr. Engelke said that the HC Planning Board had passed the Multi-Use Path and that the board should request that safety and lighting improvements begin as soon as possible. This is something that can be done right now. This will be added to “simple improvements”.

It was also noted that County Executive Kittleman will hold a public budget hearing on December 17, 2014.

Page 9 – remains unchanged

Page 10 – This section was rewritten and addresses upgrading the housing near the village center in a positive way. Discussion focused on the need for a County wide comprehensive housing policy. Mr. McCormack currently sits on the County Executives Housing Transition team and said he was going to request a county map showing all of the below marked and subsidized housing locations including all Federal, State and County owned units/properties. There is no current housing plan for the County.

Discussion followed on the need for a County wide focus on redevelopment through the Department of Planning and Zoning. Mr. Engelke sits on the County Executive's transition team for DPZ and will make sure that this is discussed.

Page 12 – Committee thanked Jonathan Edelson for rewriting the section on Education and Advocating for Schools in the Oakland Mills Cluster. Page 12 will remain unchanged.

Jervis Dorton led a discussion focusing on Bubble Designs he created depicting what could become of the village center and surrounding properties. Key to his drawing was a vehicular connection between Oakland Mills and downtown, a public transit/pedestrian crossing, village center shops relocated to front on Stevens Forest with on street parking, a variety of new housing options, extension of Thunder Hill Road straight through to Stevens Forest Road, option to close Santiago between Thunder Hill and Interfaith Center parking lot which would change traffic flow and increase usability of the Interfaith Center parking lot. Suggest looking entities to purchase village center from current owner for the purpose of building a new sports complex. Suggested creating a village square by the two Barns.

Group thanked Mr. Dorton for the bubble diagrams and asked him if possible to do a few more diagrams. Diagrams will be incorporated into the MP2/CP.

Mr. McCormack and Ms. Thomas discussed their recent meetings with representatives from Aimco – owners of Grand Pointe and Grady Management – owners of Autumn Crest. Both complexes voice a concern over the past year of drop in the quantity and quality of potential renters. Autumn Crest had to increase rental incentives and lower the rent. Both inferred that the current downward trend could be connected to the sale of Verona to the County. Discussions however were very positive with each of the owners interested in the potential for their property. Properties have a great value due to their proximity to downtown Columbia. It was noted that we need to work with the County to sell the Verona complex to a developer who could make better use of the property. It was also noted that there is a 40% yearly rental turnover rate.

Mr. McCormack thanked the board/staff and residents for their efforts during this reinventing process.

The board will continue to have ongoing conversations with developers in an effort to “sell Oakland Mills.” This will take people with money to “buy in.” Everyone needs to keep the conversation going and talk Oakland Mills up! Create a buzz.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.
Sandy Cederbaum, Minute taker

Next Meeting: Monday, Dec. 15, 7:00 p.m. at The Other Barn