

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
Tuesday, January 26, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.
Olney Community Room, Olney, Maryland

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) members in attendance: Jim Smith-Chair, Bob Beard, Eileen Cahill, Mark Feinroth, Paula Kahla, Walter Lee, Helene Rosenheim, Joe Buffington.

Others present: Khalid Afzal MNCPPC staff; Jim Haddow, Hallowell; Howard Greif, Norbeck Grove HOA; Pam Saul, Sen. Rona Kramer's Office; Amy Marshall, Olney Theatre; Sally Sternbach, Rockville Economic Development Inc.

Call to Order/Acceptance of Agenda/Approval of Minutes/Announcements

Chair Jim Smith called the regular meeting of the OTCAC to order at 7:35 pm. The agenda was accepted with changes. The minutes of the November 24, 2009 meeting were modified than approved. Removed a report by Design Guidelines Subcommittee due to Nancy's absence, and added discussion regarding bus routes 52 and 53.

Under member comments, Walter Lee discussed the Olney bus routes. The 52/53 routes go throughout Olney to either the Glenmont or Rockville metro stops. The Y routes go to other destinations.

Guests: Discussion of Successful Public-Private Partnerships

Jim provided some background on why our committee is concerned with public-private partnerships and then introduced Amy Marshall, Managing Director of the Olney Theatre Center. Amy indicated that the Olney Theatre is managed under two entities of which the Olney Theatre Center is one. The recent development cost about \$10 million of which about half was borrowed. She indicated that the county was a large contributor and that even in lean times it's possible to get funding. A strategy is to go to county after securing contributions from private donors to get the county to provide some funding. That demonstrated the organization's ability to raise funds from private sources. Then go to State to get funding after securing county support. When going to the county, frame the project in terms of what it will mean to community (e.g. jobs). County provided the theatre center with >\$300,000 of \$4.2 million raised for recent development at the theatre center. The State, through Rona Kramer was able to get a \$150,000 bond bill done within a reasonable amount of time.

Jim then introduced Sally Sternbach of Rockville Economic Development, Inc. Their organization is chartered by the city of Rockville and is a 501(c) 3, the city approved the board and the city is the organization's only client. By being a separate organization they are outside the city's constraints for procurement, they are small and nimble, and they are able to raise money. They have a number of programs including running a business plan competition and post-doctoral fellowships.

Rockville's process to get the current downtown developed included:

- A failed 60s renewal which resembled a walled city with no anchor stores.
- They did 5-8 years of community discussions talking about the downtown.
- They created several large committees to attract residents, transportation, etc. This was similar to Silver Spring's process.
- The project started at a time when credit was available and the real estate market was good.
- They put out an RFP for a local partner that went to Federal Realty Investment Trust to do a mixed use development, Ross Development to do residential, DANAC for garage and streets.
- They formed a general development agreement that was a public-private partnership. This was the guiding document for construction.
- The project has 13 acres, 600,000 square feet of office, 180,000 square feet of retail owned by Federal Realty, 650 residential units. The city wanted some ownership of the units. It's currently 2/3 rental, 1/3 condo with some lease to own.
- Total development was \$300 million; city provided \$35 million including plaza and shell next to library. The county provided the library.
- The positive side to the partnership is that risk was shared and it brought in outside expertise.
- One struggle is that the city Department of Recreation and Federal Realty all have separate events and it's sometimes not as coordinated to an extent that they are getting the most for their respective investments.
- One lesson learned is that they needed a kick out clause in the event that a retail store would not inhabit the space. That happened and it creates a dead space on the street.
- They have 22 restaurants, 23 retail stores, many of the stores are small regional chains. The demographics are good in Rockville but many citizens are used to shopping in Bethesda.
- The development is one block off Rockville Pike so it doesn't get as much visibility.

Sally recommended that we speak with Silver Spring about the Civic Center. It is to be directed by a board. Contact is Silver Spring Regional Services Center, Susan Hoffman. Steve Silverman would be a good guest. Dave Dabney of Bethesda Urban Partnership would also be a good partner.

Sharon Dooley provided information on the possibility of the county discontinuing the Ride-On routes 52 and 53. They currently don't stop between Olney and the final destination the metro stop. Last fall we were successful at keeping the routes but it's up for cutting again. On Monday at 6:30pm there is a hearing at the Executive Office Building. Sharon circulated a petition that

we could sign. The committee agreed to send written testimony. Jim will get sample from Sharon and send it to the County Council prior to the hearing.

Subcommittee Reports

Outreach—Jim Haddow relayed the Freeman announcement about the “Fair Hill” name change and façade enhancements that began in late December. The tentative timeline is to complete all exterior work by early 2011 and new tenant openings by summer 2011. Bob Beard initiated a discussion of the pros and cons of getting involved in social networking sites to disseminate OTCAC information and monitor comments and questions regarding Olney Town Center. It was decided that we do not need to maintain our own site or formally participate in any existing social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), exchanges, blogs, etc. at this time.

Redevelopment Subcommittee — Mark Feinroth, Joe Buffington, Jim Smith met with Safeway officials on January 25th for a preliminary meeting on their redevelopment in the Olney Town Center. The store will go from 38,000 to 59,000 square feet. It will have some underground parking under the back of the store and more parking than they have currently. They are not considering mixed use and the front of their store will still be oriented to the parking lot instead of the street (Spartan Road). Joe indicated that they intend for a nice treatment along the Spartan Road side of the building including a “pocket park” over the current storm water drainage on the low end of the property at the back of the current store.

Jim indicated his surprise that the developer chose the normal method instead of the optional method that would get the owner higher density. Khalid surmised that there is not enough land-cost pressure in Olney for this developer to be interested in the higher density mixed use. Safeway does have mixed use at other locations around county including 5th and K in DC, City Vista, Wheaton, Old Georgetown and Bethesda.

Property Owners Subcommittee—Joe Buffington reported that there was not much activity in this subcommittee recently.

Website Subcommittee—Helene Rosenheim reported that she found out the solution to the problem that causes the type to get very small. She communicated how to change the right settings with the person who complained.

Pedestrian Safety Subcommittee—Helene Rosenheim reported that she’s asked Jeff Dunckel about the new pedestrian median on Spartan Road and hasn’t yet learned how that improvement was initiated and when it will be completed by the county.

CIP—Eileen Cahill reported Olney’s three CIP priorities to the Mid-County Citizen Advisory Board. She is trying to get the joint GOCA/OTCAC letter out. Eileen read the letter. After discussion on wording it was agreed by the committee that Jim would sign Eileen’s original version along with Sharon Dooley for GOCA and it was done.

Executive Report—The rules call for the new officer term to begin in May. For the last two terms we voted at the end of the April meeting and the new officers began in May. This year we don't have a meeting in April. Chair Jim Smith recommended that the committee begin receiving nominations for officers for the 2010-2012 term at the March meeting and then hold the election at the start of the May meeting.

The 2010 attendance requirement for committee members to remain in good standing will be to make 4 of the 6 meetings.

Jim reported having been in contact with Dorothy Kane and discussed the option of a short-term proxy from PROJECT CHANGE until Dorothy's health allows her to return to the committee. It was approved by consensus to allow a proxy.

Jim reported that the Olney Farmer's Market is still looking for a location and that he has been assisting to try to keep it in the town center.

Recommendations from Nomination Subcommittee on Vacant HOA Seat—Helene Rosenheim indicated that we have 2 nominees to fill the vacant HOA seat vacated by Mark Feinroth. She provided their applications. Both applicants were present. Helene discussed possibly extending the nomination period at the request of Environ HOA. Walter Lee moved to extend the period. After discussion the board voted 2 for and 5 against the motion.

Both candidates provided a self introduction after which the committee met in closed session and chose Jim Haddow for the position.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM

Recorded by Jim Smith