

**Special Committee on the Downtown Bethesda Plan**  
**Thursday, January 12, 2017**  
**7:00pm, Lawton Center**

**Attendees:** Barney Rush, Tina Coplan, Pat Burda, Deborah Vollmer, John Freedman, Steve Seidel, Quynh Tran, Mike Gravitz, Jean Shorett, Dedun Ingram, Mona Saferty, Melanie Mansfield, and Ceciley Baskir.

The minutes from last month's meeting were approved with minor amendments. The committee welcomed new Town Council member Ceciley Baskir who will now serve as the liaison between the committee and the council.

**1. Status of sector plan comments from Bethesda communities:** The comments of 14 area communities and CBAR have now been completed and are about to be transmitted to Council President Berliner and others. The nine-page letter presents the consensus views representing communities and associations of approximately 10,000 households. The comments address key issues of concern to the Town including the impact of the plan on parks, schools, traffic and building heights surrounding residential communities. A detailed appendix showing specific changes in the plan to address these concerns has also been prepared and will be passed on to county officials.

**2. Update on recent meetings with county officials:** Barney described a number of recent meetings that Scott and he had with county officials. These include sessions with Council members Katz and Reimer, county council staff working on the sector plan, and County Executive Leggett. At these meetings key issues of concern to the Town were discussed including: heights of buildings surrounding the Town; designating the county parking lots as parks; and staging of density increases. Upcoming meetings have been scheduled with Council members Nancy Navarro, George Leventhal, Nancy Floreen and Tom Hucker.

John Freedman also reported on several meetings with county council officials and staff that he attended that have been organized by CBAR.

**3. University of Maryland traffic analysis:** John Freedman reported that the initial preliminary results were just received from the town-funded study being conducted by University of Maryland on traffic impacts of the plan.

**4. Meeting on Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks:** Tina Coplan and Quynh Tran reported on a meeting organized by Hans Reimer which focused on the sector plan's proposed bikeways. The meeting attracted a large number of area residents many of which stressed the urgent need both for safer bikeways and pedestrian walkways. Proposed comments on this section in the sector plan prepared by Tina, Quynh and Ken Rubin emphasized the need for quality over quantity in advancing bikeways. At the opening of the meeting, Council members

Leventhal and Reimer made clear their full support for funding the second tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue for the CCT bikeway.

**5. Sector Plan Outreach Coordinator:** Mike Gravitz updated the committee on efforts to enhance community outreach activities. CBAR has initiated a fundraising effort to support this activity and within the last few days an outreach coordinator has been hired. Her initial focus will be on expanding the number of civic associations supporting our efforts. Continued fundraising is needed and committee members were also urged to provide substantive and volunteer support to her efforts.

**6. Design Guidelines:** Dedun Ingram described her continued efforts related to input on the design guidelines being developed to accompany the sector plan. She reported on a meeting with Planning Department staff on their current thoughts and timing for developing the guidelines. Their current plans are to finalize the guidelines after the plan has been adopted by the County Council.

**7. Historic Preservation Update:** Deborah Vollmer reported on the recent vote by the County's Historic Preservation Committee to allow the move of the community hardware building to make way for new development at the Apex building site. Three town residents have appealed this decision with a hearing scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**8. Next steps and committee meeting:** Much of the above efforts are leading up to the first hearing on the sector plan before the PHED committee on Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>. A hearing before the County Council on the zoning text amendment containing the Bethesda Overlay Zone has also been scheduled for January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Our next committee meeting will be held on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.