POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
February 7, 2011
6:00 p.m.
County Complex, Building A

1) Roll Call

Present	**Staff Present**
Mr. Reese Peck, Chair	Mr. Allen Murphy
Mr. Tim O' Connor	Ms. Tammy Rosario
Mr. Jack Fraley	Ms. Leanne Reidenbach
	Mr. Scott Whyte
Absent	Mr. Luke Vinciguerra
Mr. Al Woods	Mr. Brian Elmore

Mr. Reese Peck called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2) Old Business – Streetscape Policy

Mr. Scott Whyte stated the County had received applications proposing street tree placement too far from the road. He stated staff proposed restricting the distance between the road and street trees, calculated using a percentage of the distance from the right-of-way to the building envelope, while retaining some flexibility. Another new clause states all agencies will work together to implement the new standards.

Ms. Tammy Rosario stated the streetscape policy is specifically noted in R-1, R-2, and Cluster Overlay district ordinances in order to achieve higher densities.

Mr. Allen Murphy stated the policy is applied to other districts only during the legislative process and through proffers.

Mr. Jack Fraley stated the ordinance should be clear on when and where to apply the streetscape policy, as well as types of acceptable trees. He stated the County should develop a list or graphic illustrating acceptable tree types, arrangements, and sizes.

Mr. Whyte stated the policy currently encourages the use of large, deciduous shade trees.

Mr. Fraley stated the ordinance reflects a one-size-fits-all approach. He stated it should be expanded beyond residential districts, with varying requirements, like setbacks. The expanded policy should have clear guidelines.

Mr. Murphy stated staff can develop an approved tree list with an administrative variance attached if an applicant wants to deviate from the list.

Mr. Tim O'Connor asked about the relationship between street trees and sidewalks.

Mr. Whyte stated there is a conflict between the streetscape, sidewalk, and utility policies. He stated trees should be keep as close to the road as possible to maintain streetscape policy goals. Trees

and sidewalks should be complementary, since some root systems can damage sidewalk. Some types of trees with shallower roots could be encouraged when installed near sidewalks.

Mr. Fraley stated he preferred that design guidelines accompany an ordinance update.

3) New Business – Development Standards zoning ordinance updates

A. Sound Walls

Mr. Fraley stated staff should consider sound wall design guidelines to reduce monotony, including different colors, setbacks, and landscaping.

Mr. Whyte stated the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) regulates landscaping inside its right-of-way.

Mr. Fraley stated VDOT only regulates sound walls when certain thresholds require their purchase and placement.

Ms. Rosario stated staff would discuss with the County Attorney's office what power the county can exert over private sound walls inside VDOT's right-of-way.

Mr. Fraley stated any attempt to regulate sound walls must go through VDOT.

B. Lighting

Mr. Fraley stated Fairfax County issued an illustrated outdoor lighting standards guide for lighting, signage, and landscaping. He stated Fairfax also writes performance standards into their ordinance. The County should adopt a similar guide or at least consolidate guidelines into a single ordinance.

Mr. Peck stated ordinances give citizens public notice of changes and the ability to comment on standards. He stated stand-alone guidelines are less predictable, more subject to modification, and result in less citizen input.

Mr. Fraley stated performance standards give staff and the applicant more flexibility than an ordinance.

Mr. Murphy stated the Board could adopt a design guidelines booklet along with the ordinance changes recommended by the Commission

Mr. Peck stated there should be a venue for public comment when guidelines are changed.

Ms. Rosario asked if the Committee was comfortable with ordinance changes on energy efficient fixtures and expanding the ordinance to buildings, walkways, and canopies.

Mr. Fraley stated he agreed with staff conclusions. He stated illustrations would be helpful.

C. Timbering

Ms. Leanne Reidenbach stated staff recommended consolidating the timber ordinances and updating them to reflect any new state laws or best management practices (BMP)s. She stated there is no timbering setback or buffer required for parcels zoned A-1 and outside the Primary Service Area (PSA).

Mr. Fraley asked if the same rules should apply to R-8 zoning outside the PSA. He also mentioned that there have been discussions about requiring buffers on A-1 properties outside the PSA.

Ms. Reidenbach stated there were very few R-8 properties outside the PSA. She stated staff would review that change. She also noted that in the late 1990's an ordinance requiring buffers in A-1 outside the PSA was proposed but not adopted due to public input.

Mr. Peck stated certain county-promoted corridors were still required to meet the setback requirements to maintain view sheds. He stated the economic impact applies equally to commercial and agricultural property owners. He also asked whether land owners could clear within stream buffers.

Ms. Reidenbach stated that timbering restrictions within the buffer would directly reduce the profitability of those properties. She stated a previous County attempt to create A-1 timbering buffers met heavy resistance. Timbering operations with an approved state forestry management plan may clear without stream buffers. As part of their management plan, timberers must replant within a certain time or convert the land to pasture. She noted that York County requires buffers along all roads and streams.

D. Pedestrian Accommodations

Mr. Luke Vinciguerra stated the zoning ordinance currently requires sidewalks in front of any development requiring site plans. He stated staff has developed a draft master plan that targets pedestrian accommodation in high population areas and areas of future growth.

Ms. Rosario stated staff would like input on both pedestrian ordinances and the master plan map itself.

Mr. Fraley noted staff recommended Development Review Committee (DRC) approval of sidewalk waivers. He stated the DRC should review sidewalks changes like master plans, with minor changes handled administratively. The differences between major and minor changes should be defined.

Mr. Murphy stated it would be expeditious to review as many sidewalks as possible administratively.

Mr. Peck stated the Commission should defer to staff except during exception cases.

Mr. Peck stated the sidewalks along Monticello Avenue required users to repeatedly cross the street. He asked if the ordinance would deal with dangerous sidewalks and gaps in that area.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the sidewalk requirement is only triggered when the County receives a development plan. She stated the the ordinance changes would give applicants less flexibility in areas targeted for sidewalk expansion. New public streets would be subject to VDOT's SSAR standards, with similar standards being adopted for private streets.

Mr. Murphy stated once a street is accepted by VDOT, the County has no mechanism to require sidewalks.

Ms. Rosario stated the master plan also helps focus limited county dollars for improvements. She stated the plan differentiates between different types of pedestrian accommodations – sidewalks and multiuse paths.

Mr. Fraley asked how the County would adopt the master plan.

Mr. Murphy stated the master plan would move forward with the zoning ordinance. He stated the Commission would recommend approval of both the ordinance and map to the Board.

Mr. Vinciguerra stated the County's reduced sidewalk requirements would reduce the amount of streets needing future sidewalks by 50 miles. He stated staff recommends double sidewalks within Community Character Areas due to area densities and aesthetics. This would allow pedestrians to feed into major corridors going through the CCA.

Mr. Peck stated the Monticello Avenue pedestrian accommodations should be extended past Powhatan Secondary entrances.

Mr. Tim O'Connor asked how the master plan fit with the schools no longer providing transportation to students living within half a mile.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the plan includes sidewalks along frontage roads within a half-mile radius of all schools.

Mr. Vinciguerra stated that new developments would be required to internally connect to any adjacent school, park, or recreation area.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the plan represented a long-term focus for areas where the County would like to incorporate sidewalks. She stated the County would have to wait for development in areas, including the corridor between Norge and Lightfoot, unless it wanted to begin a CIP sidewalk program. Certain sidewalks will be disconnected for periods of time. Sidewalks within the right-of-way are maintained by VDOT.

Mr. Fraley stated he would like additional time to review the master plan. He stated it would be dangerous and difficult to place sidewalks along News Road.

Mr. Peck recommended a multi-use path along News Road.

Ms. Reidenbach stated staff also looked for 'cow paths' or self-made trails around the County to help determine where pedestrians need additional access.

Ms. Reidenbach stated the master plan includes sidewalk spurs along Brick Bat and Lake Powell to feed into the schools there. She stated the plan attempts to pull people off the road and onto sidewalks near Rawls Byrd.

Ms. Rosario stated the County can apply for HRTPO or federal funds for sidewalk funding.

Mr. Vinciguerra stated staff had not developed a total cost for all sidewalks in the plan.

Mr. Fraley stated he had concerns regarding the Brick Bat and Lake Powell sidewalks.

Ms. Reidenbach stated staff recommends construction standards as part of the ordinance update. She stated multi-use trails would be constructed of asphalt and 8 feet wide. Sidewalks would be constructed of concrete and 5 feet wide. Staff has removed the ability to install gravel or mulch trails. Soft trails have proven too difficult to maintain.

Mr. Fraley stated the sidewalks policy is inconsistent with school site selection policy. He stated schools are being sited to rely on busing. He stated there should be a distinction between schools inside and outside of the PSA.

Mr. Fraley asked staff to consider providing a multi-use path rather than sidewalk along Neck-O-Land due to the high number of pedestrians and bikers and Colonial Parkway access. He asked about the public input process for the master plan.

Ms. Reidenbach stated staff had contacted the HTBAC and Williamsburg Active Alliance biking groups about the Committee meeting. She stated neither had responded. This was considered part of the ordinance update so the same input opportunities were available.

Mr. Vinciguerra stated many Class A cyclists will continue to ride in the road regardless of roadside paths. He stated SSAR would require internal connections and either single or double sidewalks based on lot sizes within a development. Staff's recommendations for private streets would mirror this requirement.

Mr. Vinciguerra stated staff also proposed eliminating internal sidewalk requirements in office parks with private streets. He stated SSAR would apply if public streets were built.

Mr. Fraley stated he would like staff to reconsider the business park sidewalk elimination. He stated the various uses in an office park, such as McLaws Circle, should be intermingling. He asked staff to clarify Attachment #4 to point out where requirements would be changing.

Mr. Vinciguerra asked when developments should not trigger sidewalk requirements.

Mr. Peck stated that if the County wants to quickly implement its sidewalk plan, then it should always ensure site plans comply with the pedestrian accommodation master plan. He stated he felt this would be a Board decision.

Mr. Fraley noted the trigger should be set low to encourage sidewalk construction.

Ms. Reidenbach stated other counties grants sidewalk waivers or alternative in circumstances where disproportionate costs for the sidewalk would be incurred by the applicant. She stated in these instances, owners often contribute to a sidewalk fund, which staff has included in this ordinance proposal.

Mr. Murphy stated that staff would want to define "disproportionate." He stated it may be unfair for a business with a minor site plan and lots of road frontage to be required to install the full sidewalk.

E. Private Streets

Mr. Vinciguerra stated staff does not recommend any changes in the function of the private streets ordinance. He stated staff does recommend consolidation of private street ordinances into a single central ordinance.

Mr. Fraley asked about the origins of the private streets policy.

Ms. Rosario stated the private streets policy was an administrative guideline.

Mr. Fraley stated private streets are not currently held to VDOT standards, lacking geometric specifications, sight distances, and stormwater infrastructure dimensions.

Mr. Murphy stated staff could add clarifying language to private street construction standards.

Mr. Vinciguerra stated staff was working with the County Engineer to include basic geometries in the ordinance.

Mr. O'Connor stated the lack of minimum geometric standards could result in fire and garbage trucks having difficulty navigating neighborhoods.

Mr. Fraley stated some basic geometric standards should be included in the ordinance. He asked if cul-de-sacs and dead end roads fit with the County's vision for connectivity, sustainability, and character.

Mr. Peck stated he would like to discuss the hierarchy of County ordinances, guidelines, and policies with the County Attorney. He stated understanding the legal status of each type would help the Committee steer changes into appropriate categories.

F. Parking

Mr. Fraley stated the County should be more aggressive in obtaining shared parking agreements and they should be drafted with more action-oriented language. He stated the County should set minimum parking requirements rather than maximums. Medical parking requirements are driven more by number of examination rooms rather than square footage or number of practitioners. Staff should review the medical building parking criteria based on examination rooms.

Ms. Rosario asked the Committee to make any minimum parking standards applicable at the site plan level, such as number of seats in a church.

Mr. Murphy stated that the staff proposed a parking maximum to address issues of sustainability and felt it would encourage shared parking. He stated an administrative waiver revision could be added for circumstances warranting additional parking.

Mr. Fraley, on reflection, agreed that a maximum standard would encourage shared parking.

Mr. Fraley asked staff to review restaurant parking criteria as well. He stated applicants providing offsite parking should be allowed reduced parking requirements.

4) Adjournment

Mr. Fraley moved to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Reese Peck, Chair of the Policy Committee