

Submitted September 10, 2025

Approved September 10, 2025

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING NO. 5-2025  
Wednesday, April 23, 2025**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session at City Hall  
and virtually via WebEx at 7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, April 23, 2025

**PRESENT**

Jaime Espinosa - Chair

Eric Fulton                      Suzan Pitman  
Shayan Salahuddin              Meng Sun

**Present:** Nicholas Dumais, Senior Assistant City Attorney  
Jim Wasilak, Chief of Zoning  
Jenny Snapp, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Development Services  
Manisha Tewari, Planning and Research Manager  
John Foreman, Development Services Manager

Chair Espinosa opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and introduced the members of the Planning Commission. He outlined the agenda for the meeting.

**I. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION**

**A. Annexation Petition ANX2023-00147**, to Conduct a Public Hearing of the Preliminary Annexation Plan for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Agency (WMATA) -owned Shady Grove Metro Station Properties and a Portion of the CSX Transportation, Inc. Property; Close the Public Hearing Record; and to Approve and Transmit the Annexation Plan to the Mayor and Council of Rockville

Mr. Wasilak introduced Manisha Tewari, who presented the staff report and Annexation Plan for the annexation of the Shady Grove Metro station. She noted that the annexation plan indicates that the area proposed to be rezoned is within the city's Maximum Expansion Limits and is recommended to be rezoned to the MXTD Zone. The Plan further indicates that the city can provide public services to the property to be annexed. She noted that a work session with a fiscal consultant will take place with the Mayor and Council in May prior to public hearings.

Commissioner Fulton asked about the scope of the consultant work to be accomplished, and Ms. Tewari responded that the Police Department has recommended that the city would have to hire an additional six police officers to serve the property, so the consultant will focus on the impact of this recommendation.

Commissioner Salahuddin noted that the brief book states that public services can be provided, so it is not clear why a consultant is needed. Ms. Tewari noted that the consultant will study how the

city may achieve the required level of service and the impact on the budget. He asked if WMATA would have the responsibility of snow removal on the property, and Ms. Tewari answered that WMATA would remain primary, but the city would be able to advocate for better service if necessary.

Chair Espinosa outlined the rules for public testimony and asked Commissioner Fulton to conduct the public hearing in person. John Becker, resident of the Americana Centre, spoke in support of the proposed annexation and questioned whether the multiple train tracks to the north of the site are included in the annexation proposal. Ms. Tewari clarified that the tracks are not part of the annexation.

Commissioner Pitman moved, seconded by Commissioner Salahuddin, to close public testimony on the annexation plan. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Sun asked how the train tracks would be maintained, and Ms. Tewari responded that WMATA and CSX would continue to maintain their respective tracks and the city would not be obligated to do so.

Commissioner Fulton stated that he is in favor of the annexation but does have concerns about the impacts on the city. Some of the immediate benefits include the city having three Metro stations within its borders and providing for the ability of adjacent properties to be annexed. He is concerned about whether there will be any financial return on the annexation in the near term that would offset the costs to the city. Commissioner Salahuddin expressed a similar concern in that the financial return would be more long-term; but the annexation would still be worthwhile.

Commissioner Pitman echoed the viewpoint that the annexation is positive for the long-term vision for the city, and Commissioner Sun agreed. She suggested that the recommendation memo could include both the short- and long-term implications.

Chair Espinosa stated that he supports the annexation for the long-term benefits of having a third Metro station in the city but does not see the need for a recommendation memo from the Commission since all have expressed support. He asked who supported a transmittal memo and who did not. Commissioner Pitman responded that she could go either way and supported Commissioner Sun's point that the Commission has short-term concerns but supports the annexation for the long term. Commissioner Salahuddin hopes that the Mayor and Council recognize the long-term benefit, but does not see the need for a memo.

Mr. Dumais stated that the Annexation Plan must be adopted by the Mayor and Council per state code, but the city code requires that the Planning Commission approve the Annexation Plan and transmit it to the Mayor and Council. He noted that the action ultimately is advisory in nature, as the final actions belong to the Mayor and Council.

Commissioner Fulton moved, seconded by Commissioner Sun, to approve and transmit the Annexation Plan as drafted by staff to the Mayor and Council. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Tewari clarified that the only train tracks subject to the annexation petition are the ones that are located between the east and west sides of the Shady Grove Metro station, and not those that are on the adjacent Transfer Station property.

## **II. WORK SESSION**

### **A. Work Session on the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite (ZOR) Project, Focusing on Development Review Process Improvements (FAST 2)**

Mr. Wasilak introduced the topic as the first in a series of work sessions on the ZOR project, and described the work sessions that have been held with the Mayor and Council, including one on the Comprehensive Map Amendment and the development review process, also known as FAST 2. He noted that John Foreman would be presenting the recommendations, as he is the lead in developing them. He outlined that the Mayor and Council has requested feedback from the Planning Commission for streamlining both the Project Plan and Site Plan process and summarized the state of the ZOR process.

Mr. Foreman outlined the Mayor and Council's guiding principles of housing production and affordability, economic development and effective and efficient service delivery, which inform the recommendations. He presented strategies to increase affordable housing and economic development that are recommended both nationally and locally and outlined the advantages that Rockville has in implementing these strategies, including a clear policy framework in the Rockville 2040 Plan.

Mr. Foreman presented other aspects of FAST2, including working with the Department of Public Works on changes to the city's road code, reducing permit review times, providing additional administrative approvals and streamlining changes of use. These are in addition to the recommendations being presented tonight.

The first recommendation is to streamline project plans such as Twinbrook Quarter and Shady Grove by combining the preapplication meetings, removing the Mayor and Council and Planning Commission briefings and that site plans following project plans may be approved administratively.

The next recommendation is to streamline the Planned Development (PD) amendment process, which follows the project plan process. Some of the same streamlining would apply, although the recommendation is to have the PD amendment go straight to the Mayor and Council, but that the Planning Commission would retain site plan approval authority. Mr. Foreman added that the purpose of the streamlining is to not have duplicate steps while retaining the overall review process.

Mr. Foreman described the proposed revisions to the site plan review process. In the more intensive mixed-use zones, site plans would be approved administratively if the site is not within 300 feet of a residential zone. An additional recommendation would permit certain uses, such as research and development uses in the MXE Zone, or for particular types of residential units, would require administrative approvals only. These recommendations would have the effect of providing housing more efficiently. He further noted that the projects would still have to meet all city standards.

Mr. Foreman noted that the Mayor and Council supported both the revised project plan and PD amendment processes, and they requested feedback from the Commission on the site plan revisions.

Commissioner Sun asked if there is a time limit on project plan applications, and about the pipeline. Mr. Foreman responded that housing units shown after 2030 are projections and do not reflect actual application approvals. He added that there is no time limit on taking action on applications.

Commissioner Fulton asked how the project plan process compares with adjacent jurisdictions, and Mr. Foreman answered that benchmarking is taking place but that process has just begun.

Commissioner Pitman stated that recommendations 3 and 4 for site plans represent the tension between people and buildings, and she understands why the Mayor and Council might be uncomfortable with certain uses receiving less scrutiny. She further asked if other options for streamlining have been considered. Mr. Foreman responded that senior housing would receive the same safety reviews whether the Commission or staff reviewed the site plan. He added that there has been a significant amount of discussion on various options for streamlining, and that those being presented are the best that resulted from those discussions. Commissioner Pitman added that she trusts the staff to completely review the application based on codes, but that the Commission and Mayor and Council have improved projects because of their reviews. There is a balance to be achieved between quality of life and technical requirements.

Chair Espinosa stated that he is fully on board with streamlining applications for more housing, but he wanted to acknowledge that people should be fully heard before a development is acted on.

Commissioner Salahuddin asked if the process was more complicated before FAST1, and Mr. Foreman responded that code amendments that addressed the review process are included in FAST2 but not in FAST1. Commissioner Salahuddin added that 18 months is too long to take for new housing to be approved. He expressed confidence in the city's administrative team in that every review is transparent and thorough, and that he supports reducing the amount of times that a project is before the Commission. Regarding notice and feedback, he expressed disappointment in the amount of public comment that the Commission receives and questioned whether there is a better way to accomplish notification.

Commissioner Fulton asked what the time savings is between staff and Commission actions. He agreed that the process should be faster, but also that there should be more eyes on development projects to maximize efficiency and quality of life. He would like short processing to be an advantage that Rockville has over other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Sun agreed with her fellow commissioners' opinions and supports streamlining the process. There can be short-term and long-term effects of development decisions. She felt that there should be more administrative approvals but it is not clear how that is determined. She noted that there are ways to enhance technical reviews through advanced technology, and that community input can be streamlined through training and technological enhancements.

Chair Espinosa asked about eliminating both area meetings, and Mr. Foreman responded that area meetings are beneficial so that issues may be aired early in the process.

The Commission discussed and considered each recommendation:

- Recommendation 1: Project Plan amendments – supported unanimously.
- Recommendation 2: Planned Development amendments – supported unanimously.
- Recommendation 3: Administrative site plan approval by zone – supported generally, with more information requested regarding time savings and criteria for approval, and whether residential properties outside the corporate limits would be considered when administrative approval would not be permitted.
- Recommendation 4: Administrative approvals for certain uses – supported generally, with attention should be paid to balancing equity, increasing supply and time savings.

Staff will bring back responses to the concerns at a subsequent meeting. Mr. Foreman noted that staff may have benchmarking statistics from Gaithersburg and Montgomery County. Commissioner Sun suggested that developers should be contacted, and Mr. Foreman responded that staff has met with the development community and incorporated that feedback into the recommendations.

### III. COMMISSION ITEMS

- A. **Staff Liaison Report** – Mr. Wasilak noted that the next Planning Commission meeting would be on May 14, with a project plan briefing for multifamily development at 41 Maryland Avenue. On May 28, he expects to present the Commission’s 2024 Annual Report draft. A mandatory referral concerning a new entrance to the Senior Center will also be heard that evening. In addition, a ZOR work session will be held that evening.
- B. **Old Business** – None.
- C. **New Business** – None.
- D. **Minutes Approval** – None.
- E. **FYI/Correspondence** – None.

### IV. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Pitman moved, seconded by Commissioner Fulton, that the meeting be adjourned at 8:47 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Commission Liaison