

VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

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Approved Minutes **Friendship Heights Village Council Development Committee** **Wednesday, July 10, 2024**

Council Development Committee members present: Bobby Pestronk; Michael Mezey; Cheryl Tyler.

Others present: Mayor Melanie White; Jason Goldstein; Elza Hisel-McCoy and Atara Margolies (Montgomery County Planning Department); Alfred Muller; Peter Gertzeiker; Jim Brodsky; Marietta Ethier; Dan Dozier; and Cameron Moody.

At 6:01 p.m., Mr. Pestronk called the Friendship Heights Village Council Development Committee meeting to order. He referred to the meeting agenda.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Tyler moved, Mr. Mezey seconded, to approve the minutes of the May 29, 2024, Council Development Committee meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Discussion of Friendship Heights Sector Plan Process

Mr. Pestronk introduced the Committee's latest involvement in the Friendship Heights Sector planning process concerning Montgomery County, the Village, and the community.

Ms. Margolies confirmed she would be the lead planner for the Sector Plan. She added that the Montgomery Council approved the Sector Plan to begin the process in FY2025 (middle of fall of 2024). She distributed a handout of the Sector Plan process, which can be found on the Planning Department website. She stated that sector plans are not considered a Master Plan, which incorporates lots of neighborhoods in a particular larger region.

Mr. Pestronk asked Ms. Margolies what would be the Sector Plan's established boundaries. Ms. Margolies didn't know the specifics at this point, but at a minimum, it would include the downtown area of Friendship Heights. She further added that the Planning Department staff will make a recommendation to the Planning Board to establish the Plan's boundaries and scope of work. The Planning Board will then decide the boundaries and statement of work for the Sector Plan. The community can make comments online, to the Planning Department staff, and to the Planning Board (submit testimony). Mr. McCoy added that the scope of work includes planning areas where only properties within those areas can be rezoned.

Ms. Tyler asked for confirmation regarding the pre-scope of work and how the Sector Plan's boundaries would be established. Ms. Margolies replied that there are 6 to 8 planning disciplines in every sector plan (land use/zoning, housing, etc.). Issues are generally very different. The pre-scope work will involve a group of 10 or so people, mostly planners, getting background info on the Friendship Heights area, and can take a bit of time. A post-scope will define the areas of the Sector Plan, pre-scope will entail community engagement and staff/Planning Board considerations.

Mr. Pestronk asked the Planning Department representatives for a copy of the Land Use Article to post on the Village website under the Ad Hoc Committee for Development section.

Mr. Mezey added that there has been skepticism from members of the community about Montgomery Thrive 2050 and what can be done through the Sector Plan. Ms. Margolies replied that it's an overarching policy recommendation that casts a wide net. Not everything will be actionable and will be on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Pestronk asked about the future of the probable five properties within the Friendship Heights area concerning the Sector Plan's authority to rezone those areas. Ms. Margolies responded that the Planning Department takes a look at what's on the ground and determines what is the "highest and best use" with respect to zoning. There are always a few properties that do not meet this standard, and then what kind of recommendations could get that property to that point? Sometimes that has to do with zoning. Zoning is now approached differently for Friendship Heights than it used to be, which happens during the public engagement thought process. Downtown is ¼ of the size of downtown Silver Spring, which has over 1,700 sites. They have a list of opportunity sites that doesn't encompass every site. The Friendship Heights Sector Plan will get to know every block because the area is so much smaller.

Mr. Pestronk confirmed with Ms. Margolies that there is public engagement during the Planning Board review process. Once the Planning Board approves, the County Council reviews and holds another public hearing, followed by public work sessions between Planning Department staff and the County Council, then again for the full County Council, and then the County Council votes. Mr. Pestronk confirmed that the general orientation of the process has already been completed.

No other action was taken by the Development Committee. The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Bobby Pestronk, Development Committee Chair