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In Development

By Kali Schumitz

kschumitz@timespapers.com

A proposed change to the Fairfax County comprehensive plan could bring up to 200 new apartments for senior citizens to a nearly seven-acre piece of land near the Fair Oaks Fire and Rescue Station.

The housing complex could include both independent and assisted living and some medical offices off Fair Ridge Drive, off Route 50.

Last week, the Fairfax County Planning Commission approved a change to an adjacent 35.5-acre piece of land formerly owned by Dominion Virginia Power to allow office and retail space and a church. Representatives of Atlantic Realty, which is requesting the plan changes, have said the retail portion will include a Harris Teeter grocery store.

County staff oppose the senior housing because the current comprehensive plan calls for office uses on that site. In addition to the fire station, the land in question is near existing offices, a hotel and a neighborhood of single-family homes.

In considering the placement of senior housing, the staff report states, it is important to consider that many seniors have limited mobility. The area proposed for senior housing is too far from public transportation and community services, such as a grocery store, according to the report.

Planning commissioner Ron Koch (Sully), who supports the change, said this issue has been addressed by the adjacent plan change that will bring the grocery store and other retail services.

“There is a tremendous need for that kind of housing here,” Koch said. Seniors are often forced out of the county when they want to downsize to more affordable, manageable housing like an apartment, he said.

County staff also have general concerns about replacing areas planned for office use with housing, according to the report; something that has been happening frequently during the recent real estate boom.

Koch pointed out that senior housing will not put more children in the schools, which is often a concern in flipping office to residential.

The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the plan amendment Thursday, May 25, at 8:15 p.m.

Zoning ordinance changes under consideration

Over the next few weeks, the planning commission will consider proposed changes to the county zoning ordinance. To review the full text of the proposed changes, go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoningordinance/proposed/>.

Proposed changes include:

Minor editorial revisions for clarity and consistency; hearing is May 25 at 8:15 p.m.

Stricter controls on portable storage units and construction Dumpsters that will limit the length of time they can stay in place; hearing is May 25 at 8:15 p.m.

Establishing special permit guidelines to allow yard requirements to be reduced by up to 50 percent in certain situations. This would only apply to people who are modifying an existing building, and applicants would have to meet certain conditions to minimize the impact of the change. The proposed amendment also sets fees for the new permit and specifies how to measure the height of accessory structures, such as sheds or detached garages.

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