

050158c

..Title

Development Review Process Recommendations – Legislative No. 040503 (B)

..Explanation

Following the visit by City officials to Norfolk, Virginia, the City Commission established several committees to formulate recommendations about action items to implement in Gainesville. One committee was the City Government Committee, which has developed several recommendations about City government and processes. One of the City Government Committee's recommendations was to amend the development review process. The City Government Committee made its recommendations to the Economic Development/University Community Committee (EDUCC), which heard the recommendations and then discussed them twice more, on October 5, 2004 and December 8, 2004. The Community Development Committee (CDC) also expressed interest to the City Commission in reviewing the recommendations so that it could make its own recommendations to the City Commission. The CDC discussed the proposed changes several times, most recently at its January 6, 2005 meeting.

The City Government Committee recommends that staff provide more information to citizens participating in the first step process about what materials they could bring to first step in order to have the most productive first step meeting. This has been implemented. The City Government Committee also recommends that staff develop a firm cycle for minor reviews (the staff-level reviews of smaller projects), with clear cut-off dates and turnaround times, just as the City has for larger projects that go to the Development Review Board (DRB). This has been implemented too.

The City Government Committee recommends eliminating neighborhood meetings. (They are proposing a different type of informal early meeting on design input for projects in some areas.) They recommend creating a consent agenda process for the Development Review Board, much like the City Commission has for items unlikely to generate controversy or need discussion.

And the City Government Committee recommends that the development review process be restructured. Their recommendation is that, like now, the City offer a first step meeting at the beginning of the process. But they recommend that thresholds be raised so that projects of considerably larger size be reviewed and approved administratively by staff, so that only projects of 20 houses or more, 50 multifamily units or more, 10,000 or more square feet of commercial, or 5 acres or more of industrial, go to the DRB for discussion and hearings. The City Government Committee recommends that projects in the urban core (those covered by the Special Area Plans or within the Community Redevelopment Agency districts) be required to meet with a landscape architect or architect (the City would probably need two of each on contract in order to avoid conflicts on specific projects) at the Florida Community Design Center. The meeting could take place prior to application, anytime up to staff's technical review of the application, at the petitioner's convenience as to when the input would be the most productive. The meeting would be suggestions-only. The petitioner could choose any of the meeting times which would be regularly scheduled and noticed, either once every two weeks or once a month at the Design Center, whichever the need turns out to be. Finally, the City Government Committee also recommended slotted positions (particular backgrounds) for the DRB members.

The recommendations of the City Government Committee are summarized in a PowerPoint printout and the proposed changes to the development review process are shown on a chart. Community Development Director Tom Saunders also summarized the City Government Committee's proposed changes in a memorandum dated December 8, 2004.

EDUCC discussed the recommendations and moved them forward to the City Commission. Areas of discussion included a need for staff to be able to "bump" projects of particular concern to the DRB even if the project does not meet the thresholds. No formal action was taken on this issue but there was discussion that mid-size projects would be on DRB consent and that a DRB member could pull the item to the discussion agenda if there are concerns. The EDUCC discussed possible changes to the slotted positions for the DRB members and including a citizen at large position. A change from the City Government Committee recommendations was that EDUCC asked staff to review the consent agenda recommendation

with the City Attorney's office, and EDUCC ultimately supported a consent agenda only for DRB and not for the City Plan Board.

The CDC met after EDUCC, so their recommendations are in the form of adjustments and are listed below. (The CDC discussed this item under Design Review Process, Legistar item number 002555.)

..Fiscal Note

Under the proposal, staff could handle as many as 35 additional developments per year as minor reviews without DRB discussion and hearing. Staff reassignments would be made as needed to increase the number of planning staff involved in development review. The City would also need to enter into a contract with architects and landscape architects – probably two of each in order to avoid conflicts. Costs for such contracts would need to be proposed in this summer's budget discussion for the 05-06 budget year. The Florida Community Design Center has indicated that it could make space available at the Design Center under this year's contract within the already approved annual contract amount.

..Recommendation

Economic Development Committee to the City Commission: The City Commission adopt the City Government Subcommittee's recommendations for the development review process: 1) provide additional information to first step applicants; 2) create a cycle for minor reviews; 3) eliminate neighborhood meetings; 4) create a consent agenda process applicable to the Development Review Board; and 5) restructure the development review process as indicated. *(restructure)*

Community Development Committee to the City Commission: Approve with the following modifications: 1) use the nomenclature "restructure" the neighborhood meeting requirement rather than "eliminate" it, and for projects outside the special area plan/CRA areas that meet current criteria for requiring neighborhood meetings, send notices to those within 400 feet offering the meeting rather than requiring it automatically, eliminate the newspaper ad for the meeting, and use a modest notice period for the meeting; 2) require the DRB to move items from consent to discussion if there is a citizen request; 3) continue to require that all subdivision plats except minor subdivisions, as now, be reviewed by the DRB, rather than using a 20-lot threshold for single-family subdivisions; 4) use 25 units rather than 50 as the multi-family cut-off; 5) use 10,000 square feet rather than 5 acres for the industrial cutoff; 6) include natural scientist and citizen slots on the DRB, and 7) include all projects over current cutoffs but under the proposed cutoffs on the DRB consent agenda, and remove the item called "Advisory Boards and Committees – Review of Large Site Plan (030266) from the referral list.

**CITY OF
GAINESVILLE**

**INTER-OFFICE
COMMUNICATION**

DATE: December 8, 2004
TO: Economic Development/University Community Meeting
FROM: Thomas D. Saunders, Community Development Director
SUBJECT: City Government Subcommittee Recommendations on Development Review Process

At the October 5, 2004 special meeting of the Economic Development/University Community Committee, the Committee discussed the recommendations of the City Government Subcommittee of the Norfolk/New Haven Committee, and seemed interested in pursuing most of the City Government Committee's recommendations with certain modifications. Staff was requested to follow up in several areas. The recommendations of the City Government Committee and the follow-up can be summarized as follows:

First Step – Provide additional information to first step applicants. *Staff will formalize the provision of information to citizens participating in first step about what materials they should provide at first step. In the interest of flexible customer service, the materials will not be required. Building Inspections staff has created a list of what materials should be brought to first step. Planning staff has created a checklist about issues covered at the first step meetings. Does not require code changes, so being implemented administratively.*

Create a cycle for minor review. *This has been implemented. Planning staff has prepared a description of the process. Does not require code changes so implemented administratively.*

Eliminate Neighborhood Meetings. *The Economic Development/University Community Committee discussed the low attendance for most neighborhood meetings. Would require Commission action to initiate a petition to the City Plan Board to make this change in Chapter 30.*

Create a consent agenda process applicable to the City of Gainesville Development Review Board (DRB) and Plan Board. *Community Development/Planning staff discussed this with the City Attorney's office. A consent agenda could be created for the Development Review Board. It could be a way to handle mid-sized projects that require a full DRB hearing now. Backup would be provided to the DRB, and if pulled from*

consent by a DRB member upon request of a member (staff could make a recommendation when staff thinks there should be discussion rather than consent action), then the project would be heard as a discussion item. Would not be feasible for the Plan Board because of the Plan Board's statutory obligations to review land use and zoning matters.

Restructure the development review process as indicated. *The Economic Development/University Community Committee members in attendance on October 5, 2004 appeared to generally support the recommendations of the City Government Committee but expressed some question about the extent of the increase in thresholds of projects and how few projects would end up going to the Development Review Board. Planning staff will provide a chart showing how many projects would have gone to the Development Review Board if the City Government Committee's recommendations were implemented. A more moderate increase in thresholds may be the best way to implement initially. A consent agenda for mid-sized projects may reduce meeting lengths and avoid the DRB discussing mid-sized site plans with no controversy or ambiguities.*

The Economic Development/University Community Committee suggested that staff be allowed to bump staff-level reviews up to DRB review if the petition in some way needed that level of review. Staff supports having this option and could prepare criteria.

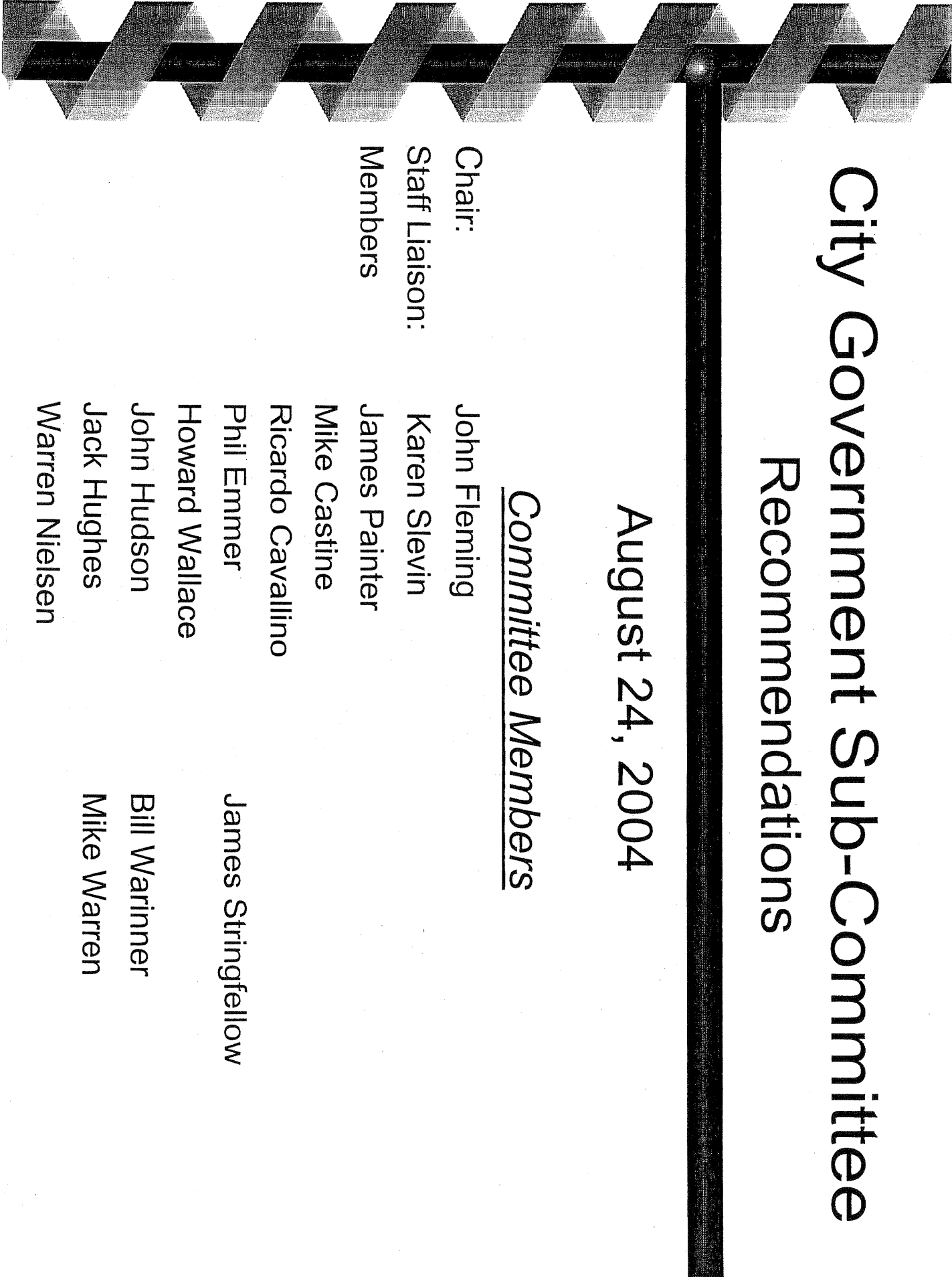
The City Government Committee recommended that petitioners be required to meet with an architect and landscape architect at the Design Center for design suggestions only--not required changes to the project. Staff recommends this meeting be noticed.

The Economic Development/University Community Committee also discussed requiring concept review by the DRB for larger projects. If EDUCC includes this recommendation in its final recommendations to the City Commission, the same thresholds could be used for this as for the large projects required to go to DRB on the DRB discussion agenda.

The Economic Development Committee also recommended that the slotted positions for DRB should include a citizen at large position.

The referenced memos and chart (first step materials, minor reviews memo, chart showing how many projects would go to DRB under City Government Committee's recommended thresholds) will be distributed at the Economic Development/University Community Committee meeting.

cc: Ralph Hilliard, Planning Manager
Lawrence Calderon, Chief of Current Planning
Marion Radson, City Attorney
Dana Crosby, Assistant City Attorney



City Government Sub-Committee Recommendations

August 24, 2004

Committee Members

Chair:

John Fleming

Staff Liaison:

Karen Slevin

Members

James Painter

Mike Castine

Ricardo Cavallino

Phil Emmer

James Stringfellow

Howard Wallace

John Hudson

Bill Warinner

Jack Hughes

Mike Warren

Warren Nielsen



City Government Sub-Committee

Short Term Goals

- 7. Create a cycle for minor reviews.**
- 8. Immediate elimination of the required “Neighborhood Meeting”.**
- 9. Create a Consent Agenda process for the DRB and Plan Board in order to increase efficiency, and reduce delays caused by continued meetings.**