

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Planning Commission

From: Anne McClung, Planning and Building Director 

Date: August 31, 2018

Subject: RZN 17-0006 – Request to rezone the Old Blacksburg Middle School property at 501 South Main Street from R-4 Low Density Residential to Downtown Commercial (DC) and Planned Residential (PR) zoning districts by Steve Semones (agent) on behalf of Midtown Development Partners LLC (applicant/owners).

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At the August 21, 2018 Planning Commission work session, there was continued discussion regarding the OBMS Rezoning Application and associated Pattern Book. The applicant has submitted responses to the issues discussed. The revised submittal is dated August 29, 2018 and was received by staff on August 30, 2018. The staff analysis is arranged by topic below.

**BUILDING ELEVATIONS**

- Elevations for the Office Building (Gateway Building) on South Main St. were discussed at the August 21<sup>st</sup> work session. At previous work sessions the Planning Commission noted the importance of this building as it faces Main Street and is the most visible building in the project.

*Elevations for the Gateway building have not been provided. The applicant has provided wording proposed for inclusion in the Development Agreement. The wording is shown in the applicant's cover letter dated August 29<sup>th</sup>. Staff would like to discuss the wording at the work session to understand the nature of the commitment proposed and the relationship of the proposed Development Agreement wording to the Proffers in the rezoning. The wording in the August 10<sup>th</sup> proffer statement (Proffers #9 and #10) are shown below.*

*"The final location, orientation and design of the proposed public safety building shall be approved by the Blacksburg Town Council through a process involving the Planning Commission, the Historic or Design Review Board and the public."*

*"The final location, orientation and design of the proposed parking garage shall be approved by the Blacksburg Town Council through a process involving the Planning Commission, the Historic or Design Review Board and the public."*

*The proposed wording for the Development Agreement covers the Gateway building and other buildings. The proposed Development Agreement wording indicates that site plans for the Office Building, Hotel, Residential Building, Public Safety Building and Parking Garage will also include conceptual plans and architectural elevations of each side of the building detailing the proposed exterior appearance. It further states that the Town representative may present these plans to*

*Town Council to evaluate compliance with the Development Agreement and Rezoning application. The Pattern Book will govern the appearance of all buildings on the site except for the additional review for buildings covered by the Proffer Statement (public safety building and parking garage).*

*While the focus has been on the Gateway building, public safety building and parking garage, the Planning Commission may recall that there are four other buildings in the proposed DC zoning district. Three of the buildings (DC Parcels #4a, #4b and #5) will be governed by the Pattern Book. The regulations governing the hotel building on DC Parcel #6 are discussed below.*

- Elevations for the proposed hotel on DC Parcel #6 were provided as part of the August 10<sup>th</sup> submittal. At the last work session the applicant indicated that the wording shown on the elevation provided is what is binding. All other aspects of the visual representation in the elevation are not binding in any way.

*In the August 29<sup>th</sup> cover letter the applicant states that the South Main Street facing office building will have a future review process similar to the proposed hotel. As noted above, the applicant submitted elevations with wording about what elements shown on the elevation are binding. Staff would like to confirm whether the materials submitted for the last work session are still applicable given the new wording proposed for the Development Agreement. If the elevations continue to be part of the application, staff would note that it is confusing to have elevations where the wording is binding and the illustrations are not. Staff would not want the visual illustration to imply that the architectural style, colors, window style, or 4<sup>th</sup> story materials shown are binding.*

- In the cover memo for the August 29<sup>th</sup> submittal, the applicant has provided a response to the letter from the Clay Court Homeowners Association. Some of the concerns are difficult to respond to since the design of the parking garage and public safety building are not known at this time. Staff would consider that this will be an ongoing conversation with the Clay Court HOA, the applicant and the Town to provide information as it becomes available and to discuss the interface with Clay Court.
- At the last work session there was further discussion about the wording addressing architectural variety in the project; especially concerning buildings in the PR portion of the development. Revised wording was included on page 6 of the August 10<sup>th</sup> submittal of the Pattern Book. In the August 29<sup>th</sup> submittal, the applicant has further added to the wording on p. 6 of the Pattern Book as follows:

*“The design of the buildings in the Old Blacksburg Middle School project will use similar materials and elements in their design. This will create a cohesive design throughout the community. So as to not create duplicative architecture or style, variety will be provided through the architectural design and creating a variety of scale, massing, color and design. This design criteria will eliminate the appearance of a Mega Block”.*

*The additional wording is helpful. The Pattern Book is binding by reference. Staff would like to clarify the applicant’s intent meaning that the expectation is that staff enforce the wording and not approve any site plans or building plans deemed by staff to be “duplicative”.*

- At the last work session there was continued discussion of the revised Proffer #7 wording regarding EarthCraft or other certification as was included in the August 10<sup>th</sup> submittal. The Town Attorney and applicant Mr. James Cowan offered to work on revised wording for this proffer. The goal was to reword the proffer so that it would be easier to understand and in a format that could be accepted by the Town.

*The wording of Proffer #7 shown in the August 29<sup>th</sup> submittal includes wording in addition to what was provided by the Town Attorney based on his work with the applicant. Additional review of the proffer wording from the applicant is needed.*

The proposed revised wording for Proffer #7 from the Town Attorney:

*The applicant proffers that all buildings in the Project ~~shall be designed and constructed with careful consideration of environmentally responsible design and~~ shall meet a minimum of Earthcraft, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design ("LEED") BD+C New Construction, LEED BD+C Homes and Multifamily Lowrise, Living Building Challenge, Green Globes New Construction, the National Green Building Standard.*

*Given the length of the anticipated phases of development, and the fact that new and improved certification programs and standards may be developed over the 8-10 year anticipated build-out, Town staff may approve comparable green building standards which utilize a 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification process.*

*Owners of each parcel shall obtain the applicable certification for each above-referenced program (or an approved alternative) for any building(s) on such parcel. Alternatively, an owner may retain either a licensed architect or engineer, with demonstrated professional experience in green building methods acceptable to the Town, to provide adequate documentation to the Town to verify that a building, as designed and constructed, meets the standards and any applicable scoring criteria required for certification in the above-referenced programs or approved alternative programs.*

### **BUILDING MATERIALS**

The issues regarding the use of EIFS and synthetic stone were discussed at the last work session on August 21<sup>st</sup>. There is no new information on this topic.

### **USES**

- More clarity was needed on how office uses on the ground floor space in the Downtown Commercial district would be allocated. In response to discussion at the August 21<sup>st</sup> work session the applicant has further modified the wording regarding general or medical office uses on the ground floor.

*Page 33 of the August 29<sup>th</sup> rezoning application:*

*"No individual building within the proposed DC district shall have more than 50% of the ground floor used for office uses. Further, for structures that have a ground level entry on South Main Street and/or Midtown Plaza, no more than 25% of the ground floor area accessed by South Main Street and/or Midtown Plaza shall be used for office uses"*

*Staff would note that the proffer addresses spaces with access to Main St. or Midtown Plaza but not necessarily spaces with visible frontage on Main St. or Midtown Plaza that may not have an access. The two buildings that have frontage on Main St. and Midtown Plaza are the Gateway office building and the multi-use building on DC Parcel #4a. The proffer could be improved by applying the restriction to the portion of any ground floor fronting South Main St. or Midtown Plaza regardless of access.*

- The Applicant has revised the application text to exclude DC Parcels #1, #3 and #6 from the residential density calculation. Thus the density calculation of 24 units or 48 bedrooms per acre will not be based on

the entire 9.25 acres zoned DC. The public safety building/parking garage, Old School Common and Midtown Plaza have now been excluded from the maximum density calculation. The total number of bedrooms allowed based on the revised calculation could be spread out in any configuration over the remaining DC zoned parcels. Parcels may be developed at less or more than 24 units/48 bedrooms per acre as long as the total number of allowed units or bedrooms is not exceeded.

*The applicant was asked to calculate the new maximum density that could occur on the DC parcel and the PR parcel with the lands proposed for dedication to the Town removed. The applicant has indicated that the acreage for the Downtown Commercial parcel would be 5.12 acres with a maximum density of 122 units or 245 bedrooms.*

*It was staff's understanding that the revised density calculation would also apply to the PR zoned parcel. The wording on page 33 of the August 29<sup>th</sup> application retains the 11.89 acre parcel size with the 3 acre Town Park included in the density calculation. If the acreage for the park is subtracted, then the calculation results in a maximum density of 213 units (24 units/acre) or 426 bedrooms (48 bedrooms/acre) on the PR zoned parcel.*

#### **SITE DESIGN**

- *The applicant was asked to confirm and has confirmed that para-transit vehicles can traverse through the project and that should smaller scale transit service exist in future that the smaller body-on-chassis transit vehicles can maneuver through the site on new Church St.*

- The applicant has added a parking standard of one space per room for the hotel proposed on DC Parcel #6. The parking standard in the Zoning Ordinance for a hotel/motel/motor lodge is one space per guest room plus one space per 10 guest rooms plus spaces as required for other uses. The Applicant should provide more information on the derivation of the parking standard proposed. The standard in the Zoning Ordinance is designed for more suburban stand-alone hotels and is not directly transferable to a Downtown hotel in a larger mixed use project.

*For comparison the Planning Commission asked for the parking calculation used for the Main Street Inn. The Main Street Inn has 34 rooms and 16 on-site parking spaces. 22 spaces are leased in the Kent Square parking garage.*

- Discussion about the need for sidewalk on Clay Street has occurred at all of the Planning Commission work sessions. Staff briefed the Planning Commission at the August 21<sup>st</sup> work session on the ongoing efforts to determine a way to provide a street level sidewalk. As previously discussed with the Planning Commission, the Town is in the process of looking at the entire length of Clay Street to find a way to provide continuous sidewalk to accommodate existing and future pedestrian traffic.

*Based on the work of the Engineering Department and in subsequent conversations with the applicant, the sidewalk improvement at street level along Clay Street is constructible and stormwater management can be handled. The Town is open to various funding options to accomplish the project and will continue conversation with the applicant.*

- The August 21<sup>st</sup> work session included discussion on circulation for emergency vehicles through the site. The applicant did confirm that there is room at the dead-end of Midtown Way for passenger vehicles to turn around. Staff was concerned that visitors driving down Midtown Way looking for an on-street space and not finding one will not turn into the residential areas and circulate through the site but will attempt

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to turn around at the end of the street. Staff asked for a drawing to better show the space at the end of Midtown Way.

*The applicant has provided a graphic that windows in on the end of Midtown Way. The graphic is attached to applicant's cover memo dated August 29th.*

#### **GENERAL REZONING APPLICATION**

● The applicant is requesting an exception to the standard in the PR district regarding the separation between multi-family and townhome buildings and is requesting the Pattern Book guide this separation. Specifically, the Applicant is requesting an exception to Section 4216(a)(1) and 4231(b)(3) for multi-family and townhome uses respectively which govern the minimum separation between buildings.

*Staff has reviewed the exceptions and there are no identified issues with these two requests. The building separation requirements of the Virginia Building Code will continue to apply.*

#### **UPDATED CORRESPONDENCE**

● Attached is correspondence to be added to the correspondence packet that was included as Attachment F to the June 29<sup>th</sup> staff report. The correspondence is from the following individuals:

*Mark Larsen dated 8-20-18*

*Kathy Huser dated 7-3-18*

*Steven Brinlee dated 8-17-18 and 8-29-18*



## Anne McClung

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**From:** Mark Larsen <mlarsen@larsencommercial.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 20, 2018 9:52 AM  
**To:** Marc Verniel; Chris Lawrence; Susan Anderson; Elizabeth Moneyhun Contact; Don Langrehr; Melissa (Mel) Jones; J.B. Jones; Andy Kassoff; Tim Colley; Michael Sutphin; Susan Mattingly; Jerry Ford; Lauren Colliver; John Bush; Leslie Hager-Smith; Anne McClung  
**Cc:** Ann Sensabaugh; Chris Belluzzo; mbarch55@gmail.com; hillcompanies@pemtel.net  
**Subject:** Clay Court Association Comments to Town's Memorandum of Aug. 17, 2018  
**Attachments:** Planning commission.pdf; Clay Ct Condo Assoc - Letter to Planning Commission 6-25-2018.pdf

Dear Planning Commission member, Council member, Town Managers, Mayor and Director of Planning & Building:

In reviewing the memorandum from The Town to the Planning Commission dated August 17, apart from one comment, the Clay Court Association did not see any reference to the points addressed in our letter to the commission dated June 25, 2018 (see attached copy). We are hopeful that they will each be addressed at tomorrow evening's Planning Commission session.

The only response in the 8/17 Memorandum was a recommendation for the Planning Commission to decide to *"not make a decision"* on the parking garage and police station now. The Memorandum states the desire/recommendation to approve the rezoning without any definition of "the final, orientation and design". We assume this means no strategy on the size, footprint, exterior finishes, noise from parking garage exhaust fans, height, base ground elevation, lighting, setbacks, sidewalks, entrances or other important aspects. If other details of Midtown require such specificity, why is the parking garage and the public safety building an exception? This is an important part of the project. Our Association sees no reason why these areas shouldn't be contemplated and held to the same detailed standard of review and scrutiny *"before"* your approval. It is hard to imagine saying *"yes"* to something before knowing the details of your approval.

As far as our other recommendations, each are yet undefined by the developer and awaiting your pushback. At the risk of redundancy, the Clay Court Association feels that the Midtown project overall will be a positive addition to the Blacksburg community. However, the adjoining sites to the Clay Court Condos will significantly impact us. We hope that the concerns of our Association not be overlooked.

Our Association would like to see responses to our points and hopefully some favorable conclusions. Again, I am attaching our detailed letter of June 25<sup>th</sup>, but as a brief bullet-point reminder, the comments are:

1. Totally covered underground truck/car tunnel from driveway to the northeast rear of Clay Court Condos.
2. Roadway between Clay Court Condos and the police station/parking garage to be wide, side-walked, treed, landscaped, well-lit and with a walkway stairwell to the Midtown plaza level (trucks will need to backup and turn around).
3. Mandate that all grease be stored and removed by pumps, not in open grease bins.
4. Provide bonding to insure against damage and cracks throughout Clay Court Condos – inside and out.
5. Construct the police/parking buildings with a high-quality skin on the exterior facing the Clay Court Condos, such as brick or stone (and not painted cinder block).
6. Construct the exterior wall of the parking garage from ground to roof with no pass-through windows or vents. *A revised comment is to have any large exhaust fans face away from Clay Court Condos.*
7. Provide periodic power washings of Clay Court Condos during the full decade-long development.
8. Construct the retail/office building on South Main Street with an adequate setback between Clay Court Condos.
9. Place trees, bushes, landscaping between Clay Court Condos and retail/office building.
10. Clarification the parking description for the retail/office building. All in the separate garage? Under building? Any other entry points?
11. Mandate specific hours that the retail/office building can receive deliveries.

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12. Construct enclosed trash rooms and the same hours for deliveries etc. for both the police station and parking garage.
13. Construct a separate exit from the garage for police cars.
14. Add a list of "non-acceptable" uses within Midtown to Proffer 3.1.
15. Define and limit (2 feet either way) the amount of change to be permitted for dumpster locations at the retail/office building. Currently it states, "Minor dumpster location changes..."

If you have any questions on these items please feel free to call, email or perhaps discuss them with me at Tuesday night's meeting. A few Association Board members plan to attend.

Respectfully,

Mark Larsen  
President, Clay Court Condo Association  
703-259-8350  
[mlarsen@larsencommercial.com](mailto:mlarsen@larsencommercial.com)

June 25, 2018

Members of the Planning Commission  
Planning and Building Department  
Town of Blacksburg  
400 South Main Street  
P.O. Box 90003  
Blacksburg, VA 24062-9003

**Re: Clay Court Homeowner's Association's comments to proposed Midtown Development**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing this letter as President of the Clay Court Condominium Association - the only land owner immediately adjacent to the planned "dense" portion of Midtown.

Our Association Board has reviewed the most recent plans for this development presented at the Town's public hearing on May 23, 2018. Additionally, I met with both Jim Cowan of Midtown Development and Anne McClung of Blacksburg Planning Department and verbally discussed the plans.

In general, our association is favorable to the concept of the Midtown development and its broad overarching plans. We recognize the significant amount of work undertaken by the developer and the Town in the drafting of this plan. Everyone is to be complimented for their efforts.

There are a few details the Association would like to have incorporated into the final approval for the conditional rezoning required to implement the plans by the Town (and the developers). Additionally, it appears that there are details presented in the rezoning plans provided to participants and mentioned in the discussions at the hearing that are not guaranteed to be incorporated in an enforceable manner into the final rezoning approval.

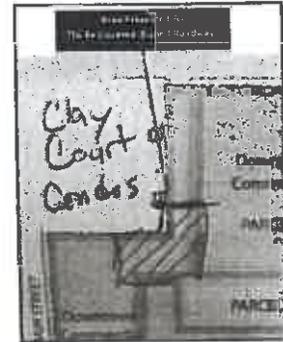
The Association offers its tentative support to this project, but such support is specifically subject to some confirmation by the Town in its rezoning and subsequent permit approval documents that the comments presented below, be included in the final approved document. We recognize that the development will occur within feet of our existing homes. The impact on our structure from the proposed development will be significant – and while mostly positive – we are concerned about a few aspects of the developments. Our Association would like to view the development as one that "includes" our residences and doesn't simply ignore them. With the two rear stairwells from Clay Court Condominiums ("CC Condos") abutting the future rear service road or alley, we would like to have a "welcome entrance" feel to our structure as opposed to an after-thought or ignored feel.

The Association's requests fall into two categories:

- 1) those addressed in the materials presented (or verbally) that are desirable, and
- 2) those that are not addressed.

**Features Conveyed Verbally and On Plans  
That We Request Be Included in the Rezoning Package  
Prior to Final Approval by Town Council.**

1. Totally covered underground truck/car tunnel from driveway to the NE rear of CC Condos to serve the new retail/office building on S. Main (Parcel 2). This access path is being presented as totally enclosed (underground) from the approximate location of the police station or parking garage to the retail/office building. All underground parking, trash, recycle, grease removal and deliveries to be totally underground. Although this was *verbally* presented in the meetings it is not shown on the plans in the Proffers (Rezoning Application) or on the architectural renderings. **We request the rezoning package include a requirement for this underground access.**



2. The roadway between CC Condos and the police station/parking garage to be wide, side-walked, treed, landscaped, well-lit and with a walkway stairwell to the main plaza level of Midtown. These items are addressed in Proffer 6.3 Pedestrian Walks and in T.12. Sidewalks, but not under T.48. Alleys. Page 51 of the Proffer says further that Alleys "will be landscaped to lessen the visual impact of asphalt". This may need more specificity. Further, CCP1 addresses "existing Paths to the Future routes" ... The Association feels that for CC Condos the existing rear stairwells from our complex should be incorporated into this coverage. **We request that the rezoning package include specific design and landscaping parameters for the alley consistent with Proffer 6.3 and Proffer T.12.**
3. Mandate that all grease be stored and removed by pumps, not in open grease bins. **We request that the rezoning package include a condition that all grease be stored and removed by pumps.**

**Unaddressed Features That We Request  
Be Added to the Rezoning Package  
Prior to Final Approval by Town Council**

We request that the final rezoning package include the following additional proffered conditions before Council approves the rezoning:

1. The Applicant shall provide bonding to insure against damage and cracks throughout CC Condos – inside and out. We understand that there will be much blasting of rock.

2. The Applicant shall construct the police station/parking garage with a high-quality skin on the exterior side of the police station/parking garage that faces the CC Condos, such as brick (and not cinder block). We note that Proffer Exhibit A for both the Civic and the Multi-Use Commercial buildings allow for only 50% of the exterior to be of a high-quality material. The Association does not feel that a cinderblock, imprinted concrete or smooth concrete finish meets this higher standard.
3. The Applicant shall construct the exterior wall of the parking garage which will be solid from ground to roof with no pass-through windows or vents. The goal would be to reduce noise and lights from emitting to CC Condos and to lessen the impact of being bordered by an open-air parking deck.
4. The Applicant shall provide throughout the construction of the development for periodic power washing of CC Condos during the full decade-long development due to the dust of the various stages of the Midtown development.
5. The Applicant shall not construct buildings within an adequate setback between CC Condos and the retail/office building on South Main Street. The Association does not wish to have the residents' balconies immediately blocked by the new building. The full-page overview statement in the Proffer for Parcel 2 (retail/office) shows a setback of 10 feet but the larger site plans we received show 25 feet. We assume this means from the building to CC Condos. We request the largest possible setback.
6. The Applicant shall construct a walkway and stair between CC Condos and the new retail/office building. This would provide access for those approaching from downtown and also reduce the volume of those climbing CC Condo stairs and using our balconies as an approach. The Proffer shows a potential bus stop at this spot. A stairwell and walkway would also make this a more convenient bus stop access point.
7. The Applicant shall place trees, bushes, landscaping between CC Condos and retail/office building. Proffers do not address this area for landscaping.
8. The Applicant shall add further clarification to the parking description. Clarify the parking because parking for retail/office building was presented as being located only in the public garage. Proffer shows it to be "under the building". Which is it, and if it is under the building then the Association feel that a second access point to this under-building parking needs to be required otherwise the rear alley would be overloaded.
9. The Applicant shall mandate specific hours that the retail/office building can have deliveries. Be specific as to types of vehicles and times (18 wheelers, straight trucks, vans, 8:00 to 8:00, no horns, not backup buzzers, etc...).
10. The Applicant shall only construct enclosed trash rooms and the same hours for deliveries etc. for both the police station and parking garage.
11. The Applicant shall construct a separate exit from the garage for police cars. It is anticipated that there would be emergency situations where sirens will be blaring as they exit.

12. The Applicant shall add the following non-acceptable uses to Proffer 3.1: any (a) use which creates a material adverse nuisance, materially increases noise, noxious emissions or dust, or endangers health and safety of persons in the surrounding area; (b) central laundry, wholesale dry cleaning plant, or laundromat (excluding a retail dry cleaning and laundry store); (c) automobile, truck, trailer, or recreational vehicles repair, storage or body shop repair operation; (d) veterinary hospital or pet day/overnight care operation; (e) establishment selling or exhibiting drug-related paraphernalia or other merchandise normally used or associated with illegal or unlawful activities; (f) gambling facility or operation, including but not limited to, off-track or sports betting parlor or bingo hall, slot machines, video poker, table games such as poker or black jack, keno machines or similar devices; (g) facility selling, renting, distributing, using or providing pornographic materials or other sexually oriented goods, merchandise or services, including without limitation, any store selling, renting or showing adult or pornographic videos or movies (i.e., "X-rated" or similarly classified videos or movies); or, (h) business which is primarily an amusement or video arcade, or dance hall.

13. The Applicant shall not make changes to the dumpster locations that move the dumpster more than two (2) feet in either direction. We believe the Applicant should specify with respect to dumpsters. In Proffer 5.3 it is written that the developer can make "Minor dumpster location changes...". As stated above, the Association would like the locations and the underground, covered conditions of the retail/office building and the police/garage facility to be very specific.

Again, we are excited about the proposed development and look forward to our new neighbors. We are, however, very concerned about the impact of the development on our homes. Thank you very much for your consideration of our requests.

Our Board is pleased to address these items in more detail, if desired and as may be necessary, for the Town's planning. Please feel free to reach out to me at the below number.

Respectfully,



Mark Larsen  
President, Clay Court Condo Association  
703-259-8350  
[mlarsen@larsencommercial.com](mailto:mlarsen@larsencommercial.com)

## Anne McClung

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**From:** kmh <huserkm@lumos.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 3, 2018 10:24 AM  
**To:** Town Council; Planning Commission  
**Subject:** OBMS concerns -- one more

I don't know how this fits into the re-zoning decision process, but...  
as a citizen of the "Public" portion of this proposed "Public/Private Partnership", I am extremely wary.

I recall Mr. Cowan, in his presentation to the neighborhood meeting, using the word "giving" several times when referring to features/amenities. Hah !  
Please remember the attempted WalMart and pictures these same developers painted of the proposed First & Main.

Please consider the FULL cost of this -- in cash outlay, interest, tax abatement, and opportunity cost.  
This was glossed over when approving the recent golf course "improvements" which, including "upgraded" personnel, will cost in excess of \$10,000,000. over the 20-year loan payback period.  
That could easily pale in comparison to this proposal.

Thank you.

Kathy Huser  
404 Eastview Terrace



## Anne McClung

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**From:** Steven Brinlee <sgbrinlee@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 17, 2018 12:33 PM  
**To:** Anne McClung  
**Subject:** OBMS Meetings + Proposal

Dear Ms McClung,

I've been following the proposal for the OBMS site closely all of these years (I attended BMS, as did my sister) and I just wanted to reach out to express my support for the plan presented in the Pattern Book and associated documents developed by the architects, developers and affiliated partners.

Certainly, you and your team know more than anyone, the pressures inherent in making the "right" decisions with this particular downtown parcel.

I was born, raised, and educated in Blacksburg; my father and sister are both retired and living there. Extensive family and friends also live there and I am in town frequently - Blacksburg is my roots and has been influential in everything I've ever done in my life.

Despite the on-going challenges and controversy we've all experienced with proposals around the OBMS site, I from personal and professional experience believe now is the time, and this is the right plan to close the chapter of old doubts and divisions, and bring downtown into its 'mature' professionally-focused potential.

The opportunity here is immense, and the proposal on the table is the best one we will see for a long time; if ever again.

The concept of bringing Police, Parking, even possibly a Library, in addition to extensive public space and public parkland into a development like this is huge. We should not fear, but we should focus, on how to bring those elements to light collaboratively and frankly, swiftly. There is no stronger death knell for a large-scale plan than dragging that planning process out until it is no longer economically viable.

Hearing that one of our local tech companies is interested in occupying office space is also a huge deal. Remember, we lost, and so did Modea, momentum and the opportunity to become part of the old proposal. (Which I agree was not the best conceptual plan.) This one is. It seems the developers have tapped into companies who are willing to invest by occupying professional, civic, and commercial space - but those entities can only wait so long before they must, for obvious reasons, move on elsewhere. The adage 'time is money' is very real in a truly competitive market.

Let's not miss this opportunity.

The street connectivity, the decreasing scale of housing from Main St to the rear of the parcel is also correct and on-scale with what architects, land-use planners, and developers are doing successfully around the nation in rehabilitating and expanding downtowns.

I fully understand how some in the decision making process might feel intense pressure in "making the decisions" but I fully believe, as a consumer, as a visitor, and as someone with 54-years of connections to Blacksburg that this is what can propel us to the next level — attracting and retaining our brain power of VT graduates, satisfying new comers relocating to Blacksburg to work and who absolutely expect high-quality amenities on par with the likes of Charlottesville, Athens, Boulder, Princeton and other brain-focused, growing communities around the country.

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My plea is both selfish and for the community at large — while obvious intelligent questions about rezoning are important; the nitty gritty detail of "who" and "what" occupies the rezoned plan only come after there is confidence on the part of the folks investing \$100 million + into this kind of project that their project can move forward.

It is at that point, that the conversations on how the Police Station is funded; which hotel brand occupies the hotel; and the like are finalized and penned to move forward. Blacksburg is rigorous, and that's a good thing, but once re-zoned you've secured the fundamentals with regard to height, density, architectural standards, and land-use you've done the right thing. And the business end of the development can then be penned and ground broken.

So I ask with gratitude and optimism, that the Planning Commission, keep an open mind and remember that all parties appear to be doing their best due diligence; and if we drag our feet or mis-step in how we evaluate we can lose this and all of the positives that are included in the proposal.

The best use here is density, not sprawl. Building, by right, single family homes on this site, or leaving this site empty for another 25-years with no addative value or taxable revenue is the worst possible scenario we can experience.

Thank you for indulging my comments. You are all doing a fantastic job, Blacksburg is looking and functioning very well and I thank you for your attention, and aspirations for all of us who live, visit and only want to see Blacksburg succeed at every level.

Best,  
Steven Brinlee  
(917) 374-0693

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## Anne McClung

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**To:** Leslie Hager-Smith  
**Subject:** RE: Regarding the OBMS Development Proposal

**From:** Steven Brinlee <[sgbrinlee@gmail.com](mailto:sgbrinlee@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 29, 2018 10:58 AM  
**To:** Leslie Hager-Smith <[LHager-Smith@blacksburg.gov](mailto:LHager-Smith@blacksburg.gov)>  
**Subject:** Regarding the OBMS Development Proposal

Dear Mayor Hager-Smith,

Respectfully, I wanted to submit my public comment regarding the OBMS Proposal currently on the table; my sense of urgency amplified upon seeing your open letter regarding public involvement in the decision process.

First, however, I want to thank you for your dedication and passionate involvement in guiding Blacksburg through today into the future. I've followed your career through the media and town issues, and as a long-time 'Burger' I appreciate when our leadership is one of respect, honesty, and commitment. You are one of the many women who are setting real-life leadership examples at a time when we know we need it.

Second, a quick bit about me to level-set where my thoughts originate. I'm 54, raised and educated in Blacksburg; having attended Gilbert Linkous (actually at the Christian Church facility which housed us in the 70s because of school crowding); the Old Blacksburg Middle School (which was a worn out facility during my four years); and the old High School (which leaked and revealed its insufficiencies starting with my sister's inaugural class of the facility); while attending VCU I returned to complete my bachelor's at VT. I donate to the Moss Center, the Lyric, Animal Shelter and more, I care about the people and the organizations that sustain the area. Both my father and sister are retired and living in Blacksburg (my mother passed a few years ago). I follow the news daily; visit monthly; and can't count the number of friends and colleagues currently living there. Thus, my connection with the town spans more than half a century and with very deep roots. My plan is to return in the coming years myself.

In essence, my interest in the OBMS plan is as active as anyone living there today. I personally believe the proposal on the table is the right plan, and through both the lengthy public involvement in the Town's Master Plan of recent years; the lengthy and deep public involvement in the recent Downtown Strategy Master Plan which was just completed this summer; and the lengthy and on-going involvement by the public in the OBMS Plan (1) (which fortunately was not realized; however was not

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realized in the wrong way by my observation); the current OBMS Plan (2) has not only corrected what was wrong initially, but is also coming to fruition at exactly the right moment for the town — both economically (broad view) and (local view).

By this, I mean economic, population growth, and business growth in Blacksburg have aligned at a once-every 25-years moment that this type of plan has the investment, the backup, and the public-private space and opportunity for investment to become real. This is not only about land-use, aesthetics and inclusion; this is about attracting and retaining the new workforce we have been trying to cultivate here that moves us beyond a college town to a fully sustainable community - retaining our graduates and bringing new brain power to live here.

Once this moment passes, and if we do not move forward, we may sit with a parcel (once again) that generates zero revenue for the town; provides no new housing or business growth; and signals far and wide that Blacksburg, when left to its own devices, can quickly become mired in a sticky mess of indecision and division.

We have seen it before, and it reflects poorly on all of us.

The public has had its on-going input on the future of Downtown; and the future of the OBMS Site for nearly one-quarter of a century! That is a long time to talk in committee and to date that design by committee has resulted in a net gain of ZERO.

Mind you, I have no fiscal, social, or personal stake in the proposal other than I love my hometown, I hope to return to my hometown, and what I have seen, read, and researched thus far on this plan is that it is the correct path - infill growth, a more dense 'urban' style growth that avoids sprawl into virgin land, and already has interest by professional office firms, future residents, and local business.

The OBMS Plan holds a place for our Police who desperately need and deserve vastly upgraded facilities; a potential space for a Library if they were to be involved; puts a very large well-designed Public Park; Trails, and Pedestrian amenities downtown; brings a diversity of new housing downtown vs. creeping past our town boundaries; and will only make our downtown stronger, more visible, more of an attraction, and benefit all of the amazing businesses, festivals, and community we love that much stronger.

Of course there are small pieces that are still being worked out, that will be the case until the final brick is laid in the square. But we can't allow ourselves to drift into the neverland that we do in fact find ourselves so often.

This plan, and this Town leadership - I hope - can and should move forward with confidence, commitment, and vision. To strip it back and pull out piecemeal will make it not economically viable and we will be left with something that ultimately doesn't fit or work...we don't

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want that.

So I by all means believe the public process is important, but we already have thousands of pages of detail on what the public wants to see, and by the realities of planning development, this plan takes into account and includes just about every single one of those public 'wishes'.

My greatest fear, and it should be all of our greatest fears, is that we begin to 'unpack' what is before us and we find ourselves holding an unrealistic ideal that simply doesn't work when you apply it to real-life situations. This is a good plan, we should support it and get it moving.

Thank you so much for your time and your thoughtful consideration. I fully understand how charged this particular decision process is for anyone representing the Town given our recent history. But, I also believe that we can see this come to life and become an unimaginable positive for everyone here. There's some old cliché about keeping one's eye on the ball, or prize, or both, and now is that moment.

Again, thank you, I'm sure a note from a stranger is the last thing you need in your busy day.

Blacksburg is indeed a special place, but it has to be a special place for all people, not just those who want to hold us in a nostalgic space, we aren't that anymore, and that is part of what allows this place to thrive and attracts newcomers who should be as welcomed as old-timers.

All the best,  
Steven Brinlee  
(917) 374-0693

