

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



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November 11, 2011

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Anthony J. Hood, Chairman
Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 220-S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chairman Hood:

The Trustees of the Committee of 100 (C100) have been engaged in helping to ensure that the Zoning Regulation Revision (ZRR) is a transparent and inclusive process. The C100 fully supports the Zoning Commission's efforts to actively inform the public about proposed changes to the zoning code and to facilitate public comment based on noticed public outreach by the Office of Planning (OP).

The published Zoning Commission agenda for the November 14, 2011 meeting lists an update from OP on the ZRR. The OP deputy director, Jennifer Steingasser, has informed the C100 Zoning Subcommittee chair that the ZRR task force will be convened in December. The C100 urges the ZC to discuss with OP a revised task force schedule that will be consistent with the discussion and scheduling decisions made by the ZC in consultation with OP and the task force on March 30, 2011 and the subsequent schedule prepared by OP.

In particular, the C100 recommends that the task force have at least 60 days to analyze proposed draft regulations prior to meeting to discuss how the technical language implements the concepts approved by the ZC and how the details of the various proposed regulations follow Comprehensive Plan policies and compliments or eliminates current zoning regulations which will be of interest to the public.

Five C100 Trustees serve as members of the Zoning Task Force and have been active participants in task force meetings and frequent presenters on proposed changes before the Commission. They recognize the importance of ensuring there is meaningful task force review which is, in part, based on careful reading of proposed text amendments and analysis of the land use implications of each provision – implications that may not have been considered during the conceptual phase of the ZRR. The ZRR process includes utilizing the task force to provide expert comment on the zoning changes and OP reaction to those comments prior to presentation to the ZC. Meaningful public engagement should be premised on sharing the changes to the zoning code that OP and the task force believe represent the direction approved by the ZC.

As has been noted, the Office of Planning will present an update to the Zoning Commission at its November 14, 2011 meeting and propose a meeting of the Zoning Task Force in December. As the holidays are approaching the timing of this proposed meeting raises concern about task force involvement. The task force has been without OP communication or direction since its last meeting on July 13, 2011 when Travis Parker presented the following timetable:

- A full internal edit and audit of the ZRR draft by OP will take place in August.
- A series of Task Force meetings will be held in September and fall.
- Set down meetings will take place before the Zoning Commission in the fall – January timeframe.

Thus, the task force was notified that it would have four (4) months and a series of meetings to review proposed text amendments prior to the set down meeting with ZC. On September 12, Jennifer Steingasser informed the Zoning Commission that the draft document would be ready for the task force at the end of October. That deadline was not met.

The C100 is sensitive to the fact two OP staff members, directly responsible for producing the draft document, departed at the end of July; however, it is now the middle of November and the task force has been without direction for an extended period of time. The C100 proposes it would be consistent with previous direction to the task force and in everyone's best interest:

- To begin the series of task force meetings to review proposed text amendments no sooner than mid-January; and
- To immediately share with the task force the text amendments in preparation for those meetings.

Thus, the C100 asks the Zoning Commission to work with OP to ensure:

- A minimum 60 day period between dissemination of the text amendments and the first task force meeting to discuss the content;
- Public outreach after the task force has completed its review role and OP has had time to revise the text amendment proposals; and
- Set down after the task force meetings and scheduling of hearings after ward-by-ward public outreach presentations.

The C100 Trustees also urge the ZC to request that OP release the 2010 Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to the public. Many of the changes proposed in the ZRR are dependent on the amendments approved by Council in late 2010.

The C100 is grateful to the Zoning Commission for its attention and sensitivity to our request regarding the next phase of the ZRR process.

Sincerely,



George R. Clark
Chair, Committee of 100
Member of the ZRR Task Force