

## **Minutes LABQUEST Meeting of Wednesday, February 14, 2024**

**The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be March 13, 2024 at 12:30 in the trailer.**

The LABQUEST meetings were held in-person on Wednesday, 14, 2024 beginning at 12:30 p.m. Chairperson Betsy Bretz presided. Everyone introduced themselves.

### **Amenities Meeting**

#### **Viva White Oak**

The Global LifeSci Development Corp and MCB Real Estate Partnership have entered into an agreement where MCB will acquire the land and develop the property. The presentation was made by Carlos Bonner, Senior Managing Director who will focus solely on Viva; Dori Farley (MCB) and Nick Over (part of MCB team).

MCB Real Estate is an institutional investment management firm with a diverse portfolio of operating assets and development projects. They invest in industrial, office, retail, multifamily, mixed-use properties and select special use assets. They are headquartered in Baltimore and have projects centered in the Mid-Atlantic region. Their projects span all major asset classes – industrial, medical + life science, mixed-use, multifamily, office and retail.

The team provided examples of other projects:

- Yard 56, 20-acre mixed-use development across from John Hopkin's in Baltimore
- The Rotunda mixed-use development in Baltimore
- Ashley Landing 27-acre mixed-use development in Charleston, SC
- Fairway Village 50-acre mixed-use development in Waldorf, MD

Viva is approved by the county to have up to 12M sq ft of development with at least half non-residential. The exact mix of uses will be driven by the market and what major tenants desire. As an estimate, some 3000 housing units are envisioned (the County years ago had estimated 5000) and non-residential is estimated to add some 10K direct employees and another 6K indirect employees. They are striving to build a walkable, safe community where people will want to linger.

Viva at 280 acres is much more complex, largely because its size is some 10 times that of typical developments. Pike & Rose and Downtown Crown would fit in a small area of Viva. MCB spent 6-7 months last year undertaking detailed studies and designs to understand financial and other aspects of what is required to make Viva successful. They have hired 20 consultant teams to address all aspects of the project and the surrounding area. They have met with the key county and state government organizations.

The presentation showed several charts that illustrated the possible layouts of the property. (They have developed many other possible layouts and the layout will change over the expected 15-year development timeframe as tenants decide to come here and their needs are made know.) One illustration is shown below and includes the following:

- Phase 1A (north side) and Phase 1B (south side) mixed use areas are shown on either side of FDA Blvd between Cherry Hill Rd and the existing bridge. Those regions will have retail (including restaurants) and multi-family housing. They are looking at workforce housing that nurses, teachers, and firemen could afford. This will be the town center.
- Another mixed-use region is shown on the north side of FDA Blvd from the existing bridge to the planned circle, which connects to the back entrance to the Federal Research Center (FRC). This will extend west along Viva White Oak Way (which is the same as Industrial Pkwy extended). Another chart shows 27 acres of this area being used for the Montgomery College Campus.
- The Life Science region is shown on the opposite side of the roads from the previous mixed-use region. This will include medical offices.
- The Master Plan required elementary school is shown across from the college on the western edge.
- The remaining property along Viva White Oak Way is shown as townhouses and 2-over-2 development. Soil and state environmental regulations will not allow single family detached development in that region.



The near-term focus is on building the three master planned roads: FDA Blvd, Viva White Oak Way, and the extension of Healing Way from the White Oak Medical Center (WOMC) to FDA Blvd. The existing FDA Blvd will be rebuilt and widened to somewhere in the 60-100 ft. range. Improvements will also be required on the existing Industrial Pkwy and Tech Road, to US29, including the addition of traffic signals. The total cost of these roads will be in the ballpark of \$100M, including the \$40M from the county that has already be appropriated.

MCB hopes to start building the roads in the second quarter 2025. They must maintain access to the back entrance of FDA during this construction.

Carlos indicated they are working with the WOMC on multiple aspects, including providing housing for much of their staff, many of whom presently drive at least an hour to reach the hospital.

Len Newman, ECCAB member, pointed out that congestion exists on Cherry Hill Rd and Boardbirch Drive. MCB is looking at transportation needs for the entire area around Viva. Note that intersection improvements are part of the 2017/18 Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP). Improvements to Tech Rd and Industrial Pkwy are also part of that plan.

### **Science Report**

Charles Warr indicated the IRS had recently issued new tax regulations dealing with environmental deductions and credits allowed under the Inflation Reduction Act. These regulations also would allow non-profits to receive funds since deductions do not apply to them (they don't pay taxes). More details can be found in the Feb 16, 2024 Science Report.

Charles highlighted several items from the Feb 9 Science Report, including Atrial Fibrillation, and a new Astrazeneca manufacturing facility in Rockville. That new facility will manufacture limited volume drugs, that in part support clinical trials. As a result, there will be many well-paid individuals working there.

Charles also pointed out that FDA is changing the Vitro Diagnostic Testing from risk level 3 to level 2 (see science report). As a result, products will be marketed faster.

Charles recommended that people talk to their doctor about getting the new prostate cancer test.

### **White Oak Medical Center**

Nicole Reilly represented the WOMC at the meeting. On that Wednesday all the regular beds were full and they had another 21 housed in the Emergency Department. They will have a National Prayer Day on May 2 and concert at the Lake on June 21. They will be reaching out to Riderwood about them bussing their residents to the Concert.

### **We Achieve**

Daphne Pallozzi was not at the meeting. Rob Richardson pointed out that their new sign has not been installed. In a prior meeting, Daphne indicated they had run into a roadblock with the county. Jewru Bandeh and Cicero Salles (East Gov't Center) took action to try to resolve this issue.

## **Government Meeting**

### **GSA**

Rudy Ramirez represented GSA at the meeting. He indicated they are working to get through the winter. They plan to plant more trees in the spring. They are also planning “Child to Work” and “Bike to Work” days.

### **FDA**

Andrew Dempster reported that he monitors the number of parking spaces used each business day. The peak day so far has been the week of Feb. 12 with 3500 spaces used.

DOT has been studying bike lanes on each side of Cherry Hill Rd and will be holding a public forum on March 12. Information can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/CherryHillRd/index.html>

An MCPS science fair will be held at the FDA under the large atrium. Set up will occur the evening of April 5 and judging will occur on April 6.

Dan Wilhelm reported on the New Hampshire Ave. BRT study as it relates to FDA. At our insistence, they have developed three alternatives: BRT station on New Hampshire Ave, BRT on FRC campus with exit back onto New Hampshire Ave, and BRT on FRC campus with exit directly to the White Oak Transit Center on Lockwood Dr. There are two options for accessing Lockwood: one through the self-storage and one between the self-storage and garden apartments. Dan prefers the last option. However, there is likely only sufficient space for a single lane road and DOT needs to determine whether they can live with that limitation. They plan to have the results of these alternatives/options at the next community meeting this summer. If either connection to Lockwood is possible, then discussions need to take place with GSA/FDA about what changes are required on the FRC (such as moving the existing security check point.)

### **Montgomery County Government East Regional Office**

Jewru Bandeh reported the following:

- A tour of east county occurred on January 25 that included the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, Viva White Oak (MCB and LSDC), permitting services and council personnel
- A ribbon cutting for Sprouts in Burtonsville was held on January 19. More stores will be opening soon include Domain Fitness & Performance, Moby Dick Kabob, Ulta, TJ Maxx, Eggspectation and Chipotle.
- A ribbon cutting is planned for the Montgomery College Education Center later this spring.
- DOT presented an update on the New Hampshire Ave BRT study to the CAC on January 31 and a ECCAB Planning Development Committee on February 12.
- The Executive’s proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget was submitted to the council and the Council held hearings earlier in February. Council committee worksessions have started.
- The Executive’s proposed Operating Budget will be presented to the council on March 15.

- The East County Citizens Advisory Board (ECCAB) voted on February 6 to support locating the planned East County Montgomery College campus on Viva. It was decided that LABQUEST and other organizations would write to the county supporting the ECCAB recommendation.

### **Other Issues.**

At the end of the meeting, Rob Richardson raised the issue again about the state limiting the number of beds that hospitals can have to the point that ambulances often operate in a code orange or code red condition, which means there is not sufficient capacity at the hospital. Betsy's husband was once directed to Virginia. The Maryland Hospital Association was asked last year to look into this issue and report back by January 1, 2024, but we have been unable to find their report, assuming they provided one. Rob suggested LABQUEST meet with our state representatives once this session is over (at the end of April). See the LABQUEST October 11, 2023 minutes for details, including an October 2 council committee worksession on this subject.

There was a question about what is happening with the old Sears store. There was a suggestion about contacting the company responsible for disposing of old Sears store sites.

The Amalgamated Transit Union is planning to sell their site on New Hampshire Ave. at Powder Mill Rd. WRC Inc, a SC company, is conducting a feasibility/due diligence study for a new town center project on this 46-acre site.

There was a discussion about Parcel K on the FRC. The federal Public Buildings Reform Board (PBRB) recommended on December 27, 2021 that Parcel K and 14 other properties be disposed of in accordance with the 2016 Federal Assets Sale and Transfer Act. This 14 acres is just south of the Viva project. About 2/3 of the land is in Montgomery County and the other 1/3 in PG county. The Parks Department had requested that the property be conveyed to them as a Public Benefit Conveyance rather than sold. Between the pandemic and the PBRB not having a quorum, essentially no actions were taken for two years, but Dan recently looked at their web site and they have now started functioning again. It was decided that a group of us would meet and decide our next course of action relative to this property.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm