

Minutes LABQUEST Meeting of Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Announcement: The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be Wednesday, January 8, 2025 at 12:30 in the trailer.

The LABQUEST meeting was held in-person on Wednesday, December 11, 2024 beginning at 12:35p.m. Betsy Bretz welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves. Rob Richardson helped facilitate the meeting.

Amenities

Viva White Oak (VWO)

Carlos Bonner reported that they are responding to the 19 pages of comments from the Planning Development Review Committee (DRC) on the Sketch Plan. Some of the comments being asked require details that will be contained in the future preliminary plan and site plan submissions.

Carlos indicated that he will be meeting with a possible major retail tenant and that he expects a decision from them before long. He is also meeting with GSA on Thursday to start coordinating site construction details. MCB needs a letter from GSA indicating their agreement with the MCB proposed changes on their property. That letter needed to be submitted to the DRC.

Carlos reported that the meeting they had last month with the Friends of White Oak (FOWO) was more interactive than other community stakeholder presentations and he preferred that format.

Jonathan indicated Percontee has a long-held mining permit (for the sand and gravel operation) from Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) that requires the site be restored after the conclusion of the mining. (The site is now owned by Global LifeSci Development Corp., an affiliate of Percontee.) Accordingly, MDE is responsible for approving the restoration, not the county or Planning Department. That permit allows restoration to be done on the entire site or large segments of it at one time, which is different than county procedures which only allow one small segment at a time (e.g., 20 acres). Site II was previously restored by the county.

MCB's lobbying consultant is strategizing what steps might be taken to address some changes Trump has indicated he plans to implement.

Dan Wilhelm, Rob Richardson and Cicero Salles met a month ago with MCB about the transportation improvements they plan to construct outside of Viva. Their focus was on BRT and intersection/bikeway/pedestrian improvements at/near Tech Rd and Industrial Pkwy. Dan asked about the status of that review. Carlos indicated he had received a high price from their traffic consultant and it sounded like that price was based upon conducting new traffic studies. Dan pointed out that the traffic volumes developed in 2014/2015 should be used since that is the projected traffic for all development envisioned within the Master Plan. The approach taken at that time was called the Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP). Under it, Planning developed the projected traffic demand and DOT developed the design. Then each development would pay its share for the county to build the improvements or the developer could build one or more of the 25 improvements and receive a credit against the fee. That design was presented by DOT in 2016,

without any opportunity for public comment, so adjustments to the design might be justified as development occurs, but nevertheless, that design is the starting point. It was agreed that Carlos and Dan will talk more over the next several days about this complex subject.

White Oak Medical Center (WOMC)

No person from the WOMC was present. However, Rob Richardson restated the plan where LABQUEST would meet with Rob Jepson to discuss what can be done to allow the WOMC to add more beds to meet the needs of the community. He reported that Councilmembers Mink and Stewart are also interested in this topic, since it relates to excessive ER wait times (a state issue that has a major impact on hospitals in the county).

As reported previously, WOMC is adding 30 beds in December 2024 with patient additions in January. After that addition of 30 beds, WOMC still needs some 60 beds to meet current demand and that demand will increase in the future as Viva and the college start to be occupied.

Science Report

Charles reported on the following:

- FDA, EPA, and other federal agencies are completing “final rule” decisions, which will make it harder for the Trump Administration to change the decision. Charles indicated these are noted in red in the Science Reports. He also indicated that federal agencies dealing with health care and the environment are issuing large contracts to undertake needed research. Once work starts on them, it will be very hard for the new administration to cancel them.
- Charles indicated he has learned a lot more about pasteurization since the last meeting. There are two types: regular and ultra. Under regular, the liquid is heated to 161 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds and results in a shelf life of two weeks. Under ultra, the product is heated to 280 degrees Fahrenheit for two seconds and results in a shelf life of six weeks. (See the 12/13/2024 science report for more details.)
- Charles pointed to the last Science Report where he highlighted the November 15 Surgeon General report on Smoking. Smoking by adults in the US has declined by 70% since 1965, but is still the leading cause of death - 1 in 5 US deaths. There was a discussion about newer forms of smoking like vaping and cannabis. Charles indicated our lungs are not designed to handle smoking.
- Charles pointed to the last Science Report where he indicated that foods rich in antioxidants help reduce the risk of dementia.
- He reminded us that our bodies take in vitamins from food better than from pills. However, he also indicated that Vitamin D3 is rarely found in food. The natural method of getting D3 is by the sun shining on our skin, but at this time of year sunlight is too weak to produce the amount needed so we need to get it via pills. He also warned against getting too much D3. Furthermore, he pointed out that people above age 70 need to take in about twice as much as someone aged 20.

We Achieve.

Donations were collected for We Achieve, as has been the LABQUEST tradition for years.

Hillandale Gateway.

Shane Polin indicated they now have two cranes working and they have installed the first wall, which happens to be below grade. They are still targeting 1Q2027 for completion.

Government

FDA and GSA

Andrew Dempster, FDA, reported the following:

- They are evaluating what actions will need to be taken if government employees are ordered to work on site five days a week. He reminded us that FDA has always had many employees working from home.
- They have slowed their effort to move more employees to White Oak and are retaining site leases.

Montgomery County.

Cicero Salles reported that on Tuesday the Council had overridden the Executive's veto of the Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) and Impact Tax bill by an 11-0 vote, which was the same margin as with the original bills.

Montgomery College.

Dan Wilhelm reported that Montgomery College is updating their 2016-2021 Academic Master Plan and that Hamrawit Tesfa, ECEC Director, held a zoom meeting on December 5 to collect input from some community members. He attended for the entire meeting and Rob Richardson was only able to attend for part of it.

Rob is working to set up a meeting with College President Williams. We intend to indicate that LAQUEST and the broader community need to provide input into the East County Campus site selection process. A separate and expanded effort is also needed to ensure that the needs of businesses and community are addressed in the academic program for that campus. This will build upon the above master plan effort.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm