

Minutes LABQUEST Meeting of Wednesday, April 10, 2024

The next in-person LABQUEST meeting will be June 12, 2024 at 12:30 in the trailer. We will not be having a meeting in May.

The LABQUEST meetings were held in-person on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 beginning at 12:32 p.m. Chairperson Betsy Bretz presided. Everyone introduced themselves.

Amenities Meeting

Viva White Oak

There was a pre-meeting from 11:00 to 12:30. MCB has hired an outside consultant to develop branding and marketing materials for the project. Dori Farley introduced the consultants and other MCB personnel. They wanted our view of how the area (Viva and nearby) should develop. The LABQUEST people in attendance were Betsy Bretz, Rob Richardson, Peter Myo Khin, Pat Myers, Jewru Bandeh and Dan Wilhelm. Each member provided their view, including the history of the project as it relates to what the consultants were looking for. We had also emailed them a 2019 paper we produced that addresses this question. Jewru is going to send them information that he has about the area. The consultants also asked many questions to get a sense of the community vision.

At the 12:30 meeting, Carlos Banner indicated that Cicero Salles and he had spent several hours earlier in the day touring other local master planned mixed-use communities with Montgomery Planning staff members, whereby the group discussed the pros and cons of the various projects. The group had many common views but there were some differences. The planners provided key views of balancing parking requirements and the street design context with placemaking attributes such as the integration of trees, micro parks, and public plazas. MCB is focused on the overall master plan strategy to ensure proper public realm attributes along with having marketable spaces for potential businesses and residents. Carlos reported that Montgomery Planning has been very supportive of the development team with timely and thoughtful collaboration.

Carlos indicated that their civil and transportation consultants, with Cicero did as well, participated in the MC DOT April 4th meeting regarding the Bikeway Study for Cherry Hill Rd. Their focus centered around the intersection with FDA Blvd. They learned that the project is fully funded by Montgomery County and needs to be ready for construction during the summer 2025. That schedule could potentially be impacted by the WSSC Water Line relocation project which will occur in the same area in 2025. The MCB team prefers DOT Alternative 3 – bikeways on both sides of Cherry Hill Rd.

Carlos, Drew, and Dori will be attending the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) retail conference in Las Vegas, which will be held May 19-22. This is the premier event for the retail real estate industry. They will be talking to possible tenants for Viva White Oak.

Transportation

Dan Wilhelm reported that the East County Citizens Advisory Board Planning and Economic Development Committee has supported his request to urge the Executive and Council to support

studying BRT for Randolph Rd and integrating it with the needs on the east side of Old Columbia Pike, which includes Viva, College, WOMC and FDA.

Since the meeting, we received a notice from MCDOT about a CAC meeting on April 24 to discuss the progress of the US29 Phase 2 project (35% design). DOT and Council had previously selected the alternative.

White Oak Medical Center (WOMC).

Rob Jepson reported that they continue to work to construct, outfit and staff the 30 additional beds on the 8th floor. When the hospital opened in 2019, they had 170 beds. They added 22 beds during the pandemic and with these additional 30 beds they will have 222, not counting the 42 rehab beds that were also added. He expects the hospital to continue growing, especially considering that Viva and the College will be built. He reminded everyone that their development plan includes space for another tower.

Dan Wilhelm asked about the plans before the Planning staff that pertain to the second medical office building (MOB). Dan indicated the Planning Department had obtained Planning Board approval to extend the review completion date to address adequate public facilities (APF) issues (until July 25, 2024). Rob was not directly working on the issue. After the meeting Dan called the Planning Staff and learned that the prior APF approval had expired. Rather than conduct another review (likely they'll need to pay the LATIP fee), the staff has suggested to the WOMC that the prior approval be extended. Staff is waiting for WOMC to respond.

Science Report

Charles Warr reported that the first flight test of the XB-1 supersonic commercial air transport has occurred. The speed would be about twice as fast as a conventional jet and carry some 64-80 passengers. It is designed to be cheaper than the Concord. (April 5 Science Report)

Charles also reported that four electric vertical takeoff and landing air taxis will be delivered to the Air Force in 2025. It will carry a pilot and 4 passengers, have a cruising speed of 200 mph, and range 150 miles. The noise will be about 1% that of a helicopter. (April 5 Science Report)

A blended-wing, wide-body plane is being developed that will be about 40% less expensive to operate. The seating will be much wider than current airplanes. This development is a joint effort with the Air Force.

Charles also indicated that the Covid vaccination has a side benefit in that it reduces risk of heart failure and blood clots. He also reported the first human transplant of genetically engineered pig kidney - human genes are inserted into the pigs, and pig genes known to cause transplant rejection in humans are removed. (April 5 Science Report)

Charles said that EPA has issued a warning about the potential for a cyber attack on our water supply infrastructure.

FDA

Andrew Dempster, FDA, reported that the MCPS science fair for 115 students was held at the FDA under the large atrium on April 6. FDA is also vacating buildings in Calverton by the end of 2024 and the people reassigned to the FRC campus.

Montgomery County

Jewru Bandeh, Regional Director, reported that:

- The Montgomery College East County Education Center ribbon cutting event will occur on April 20.
- The council is working on the operating and capital budgets.
- Ken Hartman-Espada has been appointed by the Executive and approved by the Council as the replacement for Jack Wiseman as Assistant Chief Administrative Officer responsible for economic development.
- The state legislative session ended on Monday, April 8.

Submitted by Dan Wilhelm