



Council considers reducing rezoning notice period to just 7 days with dozens of applications pending in 1/3 of the county



Rezoning signs and webpage notifications would go from 14 to just 7 days.

Every 10 Years, in conjunction with the new General Development Plan, the County conducts Comprehensive Zoning. Property owners can apply to have their property rezoned if the land use in their community has undergone changes over the past 10 years.

Prior to 2022, the comprehensive rezoning process provided opportunities for property owners to request amendment of the comprehensive rezoning bill and quickly achieve rezoning before the surrounding community was even aware that the rezoning was under consideration.

However, in the last election cycle, the county charter was amended by inserting language into Art III Sec307 (e) (1) to assure that signs were posted before the amendment to alert the surrounding community and eliminate "surprise" rezoning. Exception was made for emergency ordinances.

Last fall, the County Council passed enabling legislation to meet the requirements of the Charter Amendment. The legislation requires that the signs be posted for 14 days, as well as having the proposed amendment listed on the Council website. The length of the time period was debated, heavily, and GAN pushed very hard for at least 14 days notice so the community could get organized if they opposed the change in zoning. In fact, GAN argued that even 14 days is not enough and preferred 30 days, but agreed to support the compromise 14 day window as long as it would not be shortened or further compromised.

The process this time around has involved the County producing an overarching document on development priorities called Plan 2040, and then divided the County into 9 regions. For each Region, citizens and business owners could fine-tune the land use and zoning plans. This process is complete for the first three regions to undergo this process. What resulted to date are Region Plans, and companion Comprehensive Zoning Bills for two of the the 3 regions.

Since these bills have been introduced, the County Council has received a number of requests for amendments from property owners to change land zoning. However, many have come in very late in the legislative calendar and can't comply with the requirement that they notify neighbors of the requested change at least 14 days in

advance.

Now comes Council Bill 26-24, introduced as an emergency ordinance, that reduces the time that the signs have to be posted and notice filed on the county website from 14 days to 7 days. This was said to be due to the challenges that Regions 2 and 7 have faced with the timing of the required days of postings, the legislative meeting schedule, creation of the signs, and drafting time which have resulted in continued "holding" of bills.

It is important to recognize that a timeline of important dates for submitting applications for amendments to the Comp Zoning bills was set up before the bills were even heard for the first time on March 4. The Council knew of the 14 day notification requirement, because they passed the bill with that requirement last fall, but apparently didn't plan accordingly.

Realistically, 7 days is not enough time for citizens to notice and read the signs, research the implications of the proposed zoning change, coordinate with neighbors, and contact their Council representative. Many will need time to even be able to understand the legislative process, the terminology, and how the Council Meetings operate. This is very clear from listening to testimony by some of the public at Council meetings. It could be argued that even 14 days is not enough.

GAN members are urged to contact all Council members and request that the 14 day notification period be retained.

Watch for displays of Councilmember Courtesy on zoning amendments to the Region Plans



When one Council member introduces a bill or amendment that pertains only to their district, the remaining Councilmembers will nearly always defer to them and vote in support of the bill. This is commonly described as Councilmanic courtesy. The net effect of this is to give Councilmembers nearly complete control over rezoning requests in their district.

This gives special interests very specific targets for lobbying and campaign funding contributions when the zoning of a particular property can have a large impact on its value. Of course, it can also simplify the advocacy efforts of a well-organized community with strong opinions about the future uses of a particular property.

The comprehensive rezoning process involves many rezoning amendments to the draft rezoning plan, and often provides numerous opportunities for observing Councilmanic courtesy in action.

GAN members are encouraged to monitor the Council voting on comprehensive rezoning and use this information to inform future strategies on local land use advocacy.

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