

TOWN OF FAIRFAX STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor, Members of the Town Council

DATE: April 6, 2011

FROM: Michael Rock, Town Manager 
Jim Moore, Director of Planning & Building Services

SUBJECT: Discussion/Consideration of possible consolidation of the
Planning Commission and Design Review Board

RECOMMENDATION

1. Receive staff report and public comment.
2. Direct staff to produce a draft Ordinance (if appropriate) that would amend the Town Municipal Code to consolidate the functions of the Design Review Board into the duties of the Planning Commission.

BACKGROUND

At the January 12, 2011 Town Council meeting, staff was directed to place this item on a subsequent Town Council meeting agenda. On February 17, 2011, staff presenting the Planning Commission with the idea of combining the functions of the Design Review Board (DRB) with those of the Planning Commission (PC).

Currently, applications requiring a DRB hearing must first go through the Planning Commission for entitlements review. This arrangement is somewhat counter-intuitive in that once an application has reached the DRB it has already been "entitled" with regards to set-backs, height, bulk and fenestration - limiting refinements at the DRB review.

At some point in the Town's history, perhaps 25 to 30 years ago, applications requiring DRB review were first heard by the DRB and then by the PC; in reverse order of what is now required by the Town Code.

DISCUSSION

Staff and all seven members of the Planning Commission, two of which have previously served on the DRB, concur that combining the functions of the DRB with those of the PC would be beneficial to staff, the PC, and the public at large.

Such a move could/would:

- (1) Benefit the Town by:

- (a) Consolidating noticing, agendas, and reports from two meetings into one; and
- (b) Thereby reduce staff time at monthly nightly meetings from two meetings to one (this may be particularly beneficial if the Town Council moves to appoint a General Plan Implementation Committee (GPIC) which would commence meeting monthly in the near future).

(2) Benefit the PC by:

- (a) Allowing for a more "holistic" review of a application where consideration is given to both the design of a project as well as its entitlements at the same time; and,
- (b) Allow greater timing flexibility for additional PC hearings; that often is restricted under the Permit Streamlining Act (PSA).

(3) Benefit the public by:

- (a) Providing a more timely review of applications in one setting,
- (b) Provide an opportunity for additional PC hearings without violating the PSA, and
- (c) Reduce staff application processing time/costs (especially now that the Town can charge by the hour for permit processing).