

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: Thanh Dang
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 11:08 AM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer
Cc: Adam Fletcher
Subject: FW: Item 6a Public Comment for Tonight

Pam,
Please find below a public comment for the Peach Grove Avenue item to share with City Council. Thank you.

Thanh Dang, AICP | Assistant Director of Community Development

From: Kenneth Kettler <kettlerkenneth@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 9:51 AM
To: Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Item 6a Public Comment for Tonight

WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.

Good morning Thanh,

I'd like to submit this for public comment on item 6a for City Council's agenda tonight, regarding the development at Peach Grove Avenue.

I suggest tabling this proposal until adequate proffers are given regarding parking.

There is a clear need for housing, particularly more dense housing in proximity to transit and other services, such as the nearby Food Lion. And while it would be easy to view this as only student housing, we do need more studio and one-bedroom options available that this project proposes, as opposed to apartments that rent by the room. In many respects, this is exactly the kind of development we need.

The applicant unfortunately prioritizes parking over transit-oriented development. Staff notes at the end of page three of their first memorandum that they generally prefer to have buildings massed closer to the public street, unlike what the applicant proposes. Looking at the supporting documents, the applicant shows parking close to the street, so cars can park directly in front of apartments, and pedestrians have to walk through parking lots to get to the bus or the street. The applicant will also be adding 1.3 parking spaces per unit rather than the minimum 1 unit per unit. I would also like to hear from the applicant on if they intend to separate the cost of a parking space from the cost of rent.

When we have adequate public transit and make it easy and comfortable for students in particular, not all of them will need a car. Commissioner Armstrong opposed this project because of the concern with traffic. The only way to get cars off the road is to promote the alternatives - in this case, making buses and the pedestrian experience more comfortable than the car options.

The other concern is the applicant. JMU has consistently prioritized outward expansion and building parking garages over providing dense, student housing close to campus. To be sure, the density and proximity to amenities is provided for, but they seem to think a car-centric model is essential for the university - it is not. We have few opportunities to

pressure JMU in this area and encourage them to a path more in line with city development goals. Therefore I suggest tabling this proposal, or getting adequate assurances on parking at the meeting.

Sincerely,
KC Kettler