

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rose Hill Coalition

Alexandria, VA (Fairfax County)

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Sharada Gilkey, 703-402-9291, stopzoning@rosehillcoalition.org

Community Asks to Delay Public Hearings on Redevelopment of the Franconia Governmental Center

On Tuesday, November 21, two days prior to Thanksgiving last week, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors scheduled a very unusual “repeat” Public Hearing for December 5, at 3:00 pm, regarding the transfer of the Franconia Governmental Center property to the Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RHA). Although the publication of the announcement in the Legal Notices section of the *Washington Times* meets the legal two-week requirement for announcing public meetings, the timing leaves the public with limited opportunity to prepare for the meeting.

After the North Franconia Civic Association (NFCA) pointed out a legal problem with the original public hearing in March 2021, the Board of Supervisors is "repeating" the public hearing regarding the property's transfer to RHA.

According to Sharada Gilkey, Founder of the Rose Hill Coalition LLC, “The new Public Hearing date of December 5, 2023, is unacceptable.”

“On November 29, I asked Supervisor Lusk’s office that the public meeting be rescheduled for the middle of January 2024 or later to allow more time for preparation of public input.”

Following the property transfer, the current proposal is to create 120 affordable multi-family units for low and moderate-income households, together with surface and structured parking.

In addition to the Board of Supervisors’ public hearing, the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority announced *on Wednesday, November 29*, that it also will hold a public hearing on December 14, 2023, to address the proposed “interim” agreement with SCG DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS (SCG), a Virginia Limited Liability Company, on behalf of itself and its partners, Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services, A Virginia Corporation, and NFP Development Corporation, a Virginia Corporation for the development of the 3.26 acre

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property at 6121 Franconia Road, called the Franconia Governmental Center Redevelopment Project.

If the Board of Supervisors again votes to convey the property to the Redevelopment and Housing Authority at the upcoming December 5, public meeting, any future public comments will only be allowed on the planned housing. No other options for potential use will be considered. Based on the additional December 14, public hearing by the County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, plans are well on their way.

The history of the redevelopment of the Franconia Governmental Center has been fraught with controversy, starting with the initial public hearing on March 9, 2021, during the pandemic. Many of the surrounding neighborhoods have been upset because no one knew about the 2021 public hearing where the decision was made, and therefore no one commented.

Currently, the Franconia District Governmental Center is a taxpayer-owned site. In 2021, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted to convey the property to the Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Turning the property into housing means that the public/taxpayers will lose access to this space.

No uses for this property other than housing were ever considered by the County. In subsequent meetings with Supervisor Lusk, he said no use other than housing could be considered due to that March 2021 public hearing.

Community members are requesting that the County hold meetings to ask the surrounding neighbors most impacted about their preferred use for the property. Previous meetings with Supervisor Lusk involved residents being told what they were getting, not being asked what they wanted. The community has asked that a variety of other uses for the building and site be considered, including a community center.

“This pattern of short notice of public meetings has to stop,” said Gilkey. “Especially for planning and development proposals. Better communication and transparency with the community on land use issues must be a sincere goal of the County and not limited to legal announcements.”

To date, there are over 4,000 dwelling units that have been approved in Franconia, but not yet built. For example, the County has approved over 600 new apartments (not yet built) for the Kingstowne Town Center area. Another 2,000 proposed dwelling units, such as the proposed 174 housing units at the Top Golf site, are in various stages of the land use approval and development process.

In 2024, the Franconia Governmental Center offices of the District Supervisor and police station will be relocated to a new building on Beulah Street. The new multi-million dollar site will also house a library and senior center which are currently located in the Lansdowne shopping center.

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