

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
12/2/2014
6:00 p.m.**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Rocky Mount, Virginia met in the Council Chambers of the Rocky Mount Municipal Building, located at 345 Donald Avenue, Rocky Mount, Virginia, at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 2, 2014, for its regular monthly meeting with Madame Chair Janet Stockton presiding.

Commission Members Present: Bud Blanchard; Derwin Hall; Ina Clements; Jerry Greer; Madame Chair Janet Stockton; Vice Chairman John Speidel

Commission Members Absent: John Tiggle

Staff Members Present: Matthew C. Hankins, Assistant Town Manager; Stacey Sink, Deputy Clerk and Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Additions or Corrections: None

Motion: To approve the agenda as presented

Motion By: Commission Member Clements

Second: Vice Chairman Speidel

Action: Approved by a unanimous vote of members present

REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Let the record show that prior to the meeting, Planning Commission received the following draft minutes for review and consideration of approval: **November 5, 2014 - Regular Meeting Minutes**

Additions or Corrections: None

Motion: To approve the minutes as presented

Motion By: Commission Member Clements

Second: Commission Member Blanchard

Action: Approved by a unanimous vote of members present

PUBLIC HEARING

Let the record show there were no public hearings held at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Old Business Item No. 1: Review and discussion regarding Comprehensive Plan update

Staff Remarks: Evie Slone with Hill Studio came before the Commission to go over the Comprehensive Plan work since she last met with the Commission in August, 2014. Ms. Slone noted the following:

- Since meeting with Planning Commission she has had the opportunity to meet with others in the community, including citizens and employees, regarding their visions for the future of Rocky Mount. Some common themes were:
- North Main Street as a future growth corridor, need for more industry with more diverse jobs and employers, and to be able to keep residents and to attract new residents.
- Uptown and Downtown to be full of businesses, improve building occupancy, and connect the two.
- More diverse housing for senior and/or young professionals.
- Transportation needs for those without cars and students.
- Utility discussion about aging terra cotta pipes, and also discussion about a lack of recreational facilities in town and the need for youth activities.
- She met with members of the town staff including public works director, town manager, fire chief, acting police chief, and also met with others including educators, citizens, civic leaders, members of the religious community, representatives of the hospital and Economic Development Authority, and a couple of business owners.
- They all said some of the same things that Planning Commission said in August. (1) Young people are leaving the town and county, due to lack of jobs that allow them to pay off loans and make a living in the area; (2) educators noted that the county continues to struggle with the value of education and the value of educators, everyone believes that the system is good, but there is a need for more programs for students; (3) need for more downtown businesses, like the feel of downtown Salem and Floyd as models; (4) need for recreational facilities, parks are maintained but not used, big opportunities with Mary Elizabeth Park, Mary Bethune important but tucked away; (5) youth needs to have a connection to activities, consider a youth center that will give young people a place to go and get them oriented towarded being civically involved; (6) park upgrades are needed along with recreational resources on North Main; (7) people are very pleased with town administration and feel that police and fire department work well with the public; (8) need for a different

type of single family home; (9) Tank Hill, Goodview, and Needmore areas are real challenges, need to be looked at more intensively, and until this improves, North Main may not be attractive for development; (10) need to enhance gateway corridors and work on addressing some of the challenges in the neighborhoods; (11) 40 East strip malls could use some improvement (private property); (12) acting police chief interested in the SARA process model for community oriented policing (scanning, analyzing, responding, and assessing) to determine what needs to be done in the future to rebuild the community and bring in partner stakeholders to look at crime prevention.

Discussion by Planning Commission:

Stockton: When will PC see completed document?

Slone: Middle to end of January with a draft document. Has a draft vision statement which she needs to share with staff. She is shooting for January.

Blanchard: Student input is real important and he would like to have the high school students involved throughout the entire process. Thinks this is an important part.

Hankins: Spoke to Brenda Muse about going into one of her classrooms and talking to a class. Would also like to do it with high school students through Ms. Decker.

Stockton: Two students that represent the high school on the School Board. January would be a good time to meet with the students because it will be a new semester.

Slone: Would like to get the youth involved in January.

Greer: is there anything that can be done for the strip malls to entice upgrades to their looks? Grants, or incentives?

Hankins: There are some things that can be looked out. Rocky Mount Plaza just did a parking lot upgrade at Roses, and Ms. Brooks upgraded the sound system at the cinema.

Greer: Like the Westlake model where if a customer spends \$50 at any store, he can go to Willard Offices and get two tickets to the theater.

Hankins: Thought about using Harvester tickets as an incentive, similar to the former "\$5 on Us" program.

Slone: Sometimes it is a matter of meeting with the businesses and talking with them one on one.

Greer: Should be the effort of a lot of people working toward a common goal.

Slone: Is the youth center idea a good question for the students?

Greer: Thinks the school should be involved in that decision.

Stockton: Have been talking about a youth center for 20 years, but something is needed other than the YMCA or the Roses parking lot. The Town's youth needs a place just to hang out.

Speidel: Sometime adults make decisions about what kids want and it ends up not being what the kids really want.

Greer: Thinks the school system should be used for after school entertainment because there is already available space.

Slone: Has the town ever identified model youth centers in other localities for study?

Clements: Floyd Country Store on Friday night, 3 bands playing, thinks we could use empty stores in Rocky Mount where things like this could be done.

Hankins: Working on some festivals.

Slone: Thinks the town is on the brink of expanding on the success of the Harvester.

Slone: Will present an update to Planning Commission on January 6, with a draft report on February 3.

NEW BUSINESS

New Business Item No. 1: Review of 2015 meeting calendar

Staff Remarks: Staff noted that in reviewing the regular meeting dates on the 2015 calendar, it appears that the only date which will conflict with a holiday or other event is the November meeting, due to the first Tuesday being Election Day. Therefore, staff recommends that the meeting date for November 2015 be moved to Wednesday, November 4, 2015.

Discussion by Planning Commission: None

Motion: To approve the proposed meeting calendar as presented

Motion By: Commission Member Greer

Second: Vice Chairman Speidel

Motion Discussion: None

Action: Approved by a unanimous vote of members present

New Business Item No. 2: 2014 Annual Report

Staff Remarks: As the end of 2014 draws near, and as required by the Code of Virginia, it is once again time to prepare Planning Commission's Annual Report. In the past, Planning Commission has relied upon staff to prepare a draft report for final editing and

approval by the Commission. Is Planning Commission happy with this process, and does the Commission wish for it to continue? If so, are there any particular discussions or ideas on which Planning Commission would like the report to focus? Any new elements which Planning Commission would like the report to address? Any changes in formatting or appearance?

Discussion by Planning Commission: It was the consensus of Planning Commission members present that staff continue to prepare the report. Stockton: Noted that she would like the Commission's Comprehensive Plan work to be included.

New Business Item No. 3: Brian Olinger Variance Request for 285 Franklin Street

Staff Remarks:

- The Town has received a request from Brian Olinger, owner and proprietor of Old's Cool at 285 Franklin Street, Franklin County Tax Map & Parcel Number 20701 02500, for a variance from Article 8-14D-4 of the Zoning and Development Ordinance. The Code allows each permitted business in Central Business District Zoning (CBD) no more than 60 square feet of signage. Mr. Olinger wishes to install additional signage on the side of his commercial structure in excess of the maximum allowance.
- Variance applications are decided upon by the Town's Board of Zoning Appeals. However, Article 15.2-2310 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, requires that the zoning administrator transmit a copy of any variance application to the local planning commission which may send a recommendation to the board or appear as a party at the hearing. The Board will hear this variance request on Thursday, December 4, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Rocky Mount Municipal Building.
- To approve this variance request, the Board of Zoning Appeals must find the following: (1) That the strict application of the ordinance would produce undue hardship relating to the property; (2) That the hardship is not shared generally by other properties in the same zoning district and the same vicinity; and (3) That the authorization of the variance will not be of substantial detriment to adjacent property and that the character of the district will not be changed by the granting of the variance. Additionally, the Board may impose such conditions regarding the location, character and other features of the proposed structure or use as it may deem necessary in the public interest, and may require a guarantee or bond to ensure that the conditions imposed are being and will continue to be met.
- In reviewing this variance request, staff considered the following: (1) Mr. Olinger has submitted sign permits and received approval for two signs located on the front of his establishment totaling 59 square feet. An additional sign application, for a third

sign totaling 32 square feet to be located on the side of his establishment, was denied by staff; (2) In Central Business District – CBD zoning, a maximum of three signs plus three directional signs is permitted per lot containing single establishments. Additionally, each permitted business in CBD is allowed a maximum of 60 square feet of signage; (3) Mr. Olinger's request for a third sign was denied due to the request being in excess of the 60-square-foot requirement; (4) One question the Board of Zoning Appeals must consider is whether the hardship is shared generally by other properties in the same district or vicinity. All businesses in CBD zoning are restricted to 60 square feet of signage; however, not all businesses have both front and side facades.

- Staff makes no recommendation regarding this request. Planning Commission may choose to make no recommendation or to make a recommendation for or against the request.

Discussion by Planning Commission: Hall: This will be on the blank wall that is to the side. Is there a way this can tie in to the art center, and the restaurant? His belief is that it would be better than a blank wall. Also thinks that it would be a great place for a mural.

Greer: Is in favor of a small business owner doing what he can to make his business known.

Hankins: Spoke about murals in downtown Abingdon and how nice they look, noting that he can look for grant money to do something similar.

Motion: To recommend to the Board of Zoning Appeals the approval of the variance request

Motion By: Commission Member Greer

Second: Commission Member Hall

Motion Discussion: Blanchard agrees with the previous comments.

Action: Motion to recommend approval of the variance request approved by a unanimous vote of members present.

New Business Item No. 4: Sign Regulations - Article 8, General Discussion

Staff Remarks: Assistant Manager Hankins noted that staff wished to have a general discussion with Planning Commission regarding the Sign Ordinance and some general enforcement difficulties, particularly in relation to temporary signage.

Discussion by Planning Commission: It was the general consensus of Planning Commission that the current sign ordinance is sufficient and no changes need to be entertained.

COMMISSIONER CONCERNS AND STAFF UPDATES

Blanchard: No comments

Clements: No comments

Greer: Sidewalks really look good. Hankins: noted that at Holiday Inn Express staff is working to acquire additional right of way to be able to complete the work, then the project will be finished except for pedestrian signals.

Hall: Thinks the annual Christmas parade is nice but would like for people to police their own areas, clean up the trash, etc. Hankins: noted that the sidewalks are the most important because the street sweeper will get the street trash in the street.

Speidel: No comments

Stockton: No comments

Tiggle: No comments

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn By: Vice Chairman Speidel

Second: Commission Member Clements

Action: Adjourned by a unanimous vote of members present

Time of Adjournment: 7:05 p.m.

Janet Stockton, Chairman

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink, Clerk/Secretary

SBS/

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