

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 3, 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, June 3, 2014, for its regular monthly meeting with Madame Chair Janet Stockton presiding.

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

Commission Members Absent: None

Staff Members Present: Matthew C. Hankins, Assistant Town Manager; Patrick N. Rust, Town Planner; 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 unanimously

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: **May 7, 2014 – regular meeting minutes.**

Additions or Corrections: None

Motion: To approve the minutes as presented

Motion By: Commission Member Tiggle

Second: Commission Member Greer

Action: Approved unanimously

PUBLIC HEARING

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

OLD BUSINESS

Let the record show there was no old business to discuss at this time.

NEW BUSINESS***New Business Item #1: Review and Consideration of Agreement for Professional Services with Hill Studio for Comprehensive Plan Update***

Staff Remarks: Assistant Town Manager Hankins noted that his staff solicited proposals from community development consulting firms interested in leading development of the Town's next comprehensive plan. Mr. Rust led that effort and received six proposals. Staff then narrowed the list down to three highly qualified firms.

Town Planner Rust, Deputy Clerk Sink and Vice Chairman Speidel interviewed all of the firms. Assistant Town Manager Hankins was unable to interview the first firm, and chose not to vote on the selection. However, he was impressed by the quality of applicants and the scope of work proposed by all three firms, and he does not think the Town could make a bad decision in choosing one of the three firms.

The staff recommendation, after due consideration of the benefits to the Town, is to enter into a contract with Hill Studio of Roanoke. Hill has worked with the Town on a number of projects, is familiar with many of the Town's goals, and is qualified to offer the skilled advice needed to advance the Comprehensive Plan. Assistant Town Manager Hankins has also conferred with his colleagues who have used Hill in the past, and the firm comes highly recommended both for the quality of its work and the timeliness of its effort.

Hill states that it can complete the Town's Comprehensive Plan six months after engagement. Staff rationally expects a few bumps in the road; however, this puts the expected completion date in early 2015.

Hill's lead staff on this project will be Evie Slone. Town Planner Rust and Ms. Slone have developed a draft contract, which is included in the meeting documents. The contract falls within the budget the Town has available to complete the project. Should Planning Commission recommend that the Town enter a contract, Town Council will have to approve the contract.

Planning Commission should expect to participate in a few extra meetings this fall to bring the plan to completion. This may involve extra commission meetings,

community meetings and focus groups necessary to get the public involvement needed to complete this plan.

Discussion by Planning Commission: Madame Chair Stockton questioned how and why did the committee chose Hill, with Assistant Manager Hankins advising that the firm's familiarity with Rocky Mount, the staff's comfort level with the firm, and the firm's ability to complete the comprehensive plan within six months were the primary reasons for selection. Some of the proposing firms had not worked with the Town before and some had not worked in Virginia before. He did call references for both Hill and the firm that finished second. The references indicated that the Town would have a hard time going wrong in choosing either firm. Staff also reviewed comprehensive plans for other localities which Hill had completed in the past. Hill's measurables came out better when compared to other firms. Their action list was more comprehensive and easier to track at the end of the process.

Madame Chair Stockton questioned if other localities normally hire outside firms to do their plans for them. Assistant Manager Hankins explained that the ratio is about fifty-fifty. The Town has not, in recent history, used a consultant. However, none of the Town's current planning staff has completed a comprehensive plan before, and all agree that developing a plan which conforms with everything Virginia Code requires is better achieved by an outside firm. Commission Member Hall expressed his belief that an outside firm might also bring some fresher ideas that the Town had not previously considered. Assistant Manager Hankins agreed that a set of fresh eyes, from someone who knows Rocky Mount, but can also see the Town through a different lens can be a good thing.

Madame Chair Stockton questioned what the project kick-off meeting and community tour would consist of. Assistant Manager Hankins advised that this will be an opportunity for everyone concerned with the project implementation to meet with the planning staff from Hill Studio, and to show them around town, including some issues, potential problems, things that work well for the Town, things they should see and be planning for, an introduction to Town staff, and an opportunity for staff to get them up to speed and going quickly.

Madame Chair Stockton questioned who will arrange for the focus group discussions and who will be in charge of the refreshments and setup for the focus groups, noting that \$3,000 is a rather large sum if Town staff is expected to do the work. Assistant Manager Hankins noted that the staff's expectation is that this is a turnkey project. Staff will secure the location and Hill Studio will do the rest.

Vice Chairman Speidel commented that as the member of the Planning Commission on the selection committee, he felt all the presentations were well-managed by some very talented people. He felt like the layman in the group. He is concerned about the cost of the project but realizes, in effect, the Town is hiring another person to do the

comprehensive plan. The Richmond group and Hill Studio were both very strong. The Richmond group is younger, but Hill is more established. He feels that staff is capable of doing the basics, the maps, etc. However, what staff wants is some new way of thinking or new concepts which Planning Commission and staff have not, yet, considered. Each interview lasted about one and one-half hours. Hill seems to know more about Rocky Mount than the other firms. He noted that he had gone back through the minutes for the years he has been on Planning Commission to look at the time frame needed to complete the work. In 2002, the process was 18 months and in 2007 the process was two years. He is not excited to go through such a lengthy process again at the staff/Planning Commission level.

Commission Member Greer noted that he has a lot of confidence in Hill Studio and the way the firm operates, and he feels that Hill Studio is a good choice.

Commission Member Blanchard questioned if Hill Studio has done this kind of work before for other localities. Assistant Manager Hankins advised that Hill Studio has done this work before, with the Town's closest comparison being Abingdon, which has done work with both firms. Commission Member Speidel noted that Hill has also done plans for South Boston, Halifax, Matthews County, and Purcellville. Hill has the largest staff and can complete all of the work in-house, unlike some of the other firms which had to contract out the mapping.

Commission Member Blanchard noted that, as an engineer, he has done work for Hill Studio before. He is confident the firm can do the work.

Assistant Manager Hankins noted that, going into the process, Hill Studio is not the firm he expected the staff would be recommending.

Commission Member Hall referenced some of the good work that Hill Studio has done for the Town in the past, including designing some of the façade improvements, the downtown revitalization, amphitheatre design, and Harvester design.

Commission Member Clements likes that Hill can do all the work in house.

Vice Chairman Speidel noted that he still has a problem with the money involved but realizes it may not be a major concern. Assistant Manager Hankins confirmed that the Hill proposal is within the budget for next year. Staff expected \$40,000 and Hill's expectation is \$37,000.

Motion: To recommend to Town Council the professional services of Hill Studio for updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan

Motion By: Commission Member Greer

Second: Commission Member Clements

Motion Discussion: None

Action: Approved unanimously

COMMISSIONER CONCERNS & STAFF UPDATES

Blanchard: None.

Clements: Questions if there has been any interest in the outparcels at Lowe's. Staff reported no recent interest.

Greer: Thinks the Town should issue free tickets to every Town employee to come to a free concert at the Harvester sometime over the next three to six months. He feels that the Town's employees need to be able to experience the facility first hand to see what the Town has to offer and to promote the facility in the community.

Hall: Questioned the status of the Harvester. Assistant Manager Hankins confirmed that, to date, approximately 4,500 people have gone through the gates. There have only been a couple of shows with low attendance. Overall, crowds have been either in line with or above expectations. The facility is on pace to host over 40,000 people in its first year. The business model set an expectation for success with 25,000 attending shows. All shows have been in the black except for one. The Harvester has received its permit to sell alcoholic beverages, and there have been no significant issues. A local restaurant, The Daily Grind, is the current food vendor. He sees a lot of very happy people as they exit concerts. People have bought tickets from as far away as Arizona, Illinois, Vermont, Seattle, and Washington DC. Artists like the venue and want to come back. It has been reported by several people attending the Allison Krauss and Union Station concert at the Roanoke Civic Center in May, that Jerry Douglas, the worlds best dobro player who plays with Union Station, raved on stage for two to three minutes about the Harvester and how people need to come to Rocky Mount to support the Harvester as he feels it is the best venue in Virginia. The Wailers also said that the Harvester's green room is the best green room they have ever been in.

Tiggle: None.

Speidel: Questioned if the Town has received a signage plan for the new Taco Bell along with the time frame for construction. Town Planner Rust advised there will be a freestanding sign on the corner past Bojangles, which will meet road setbacks, site distance requirments and will not block Bojangles. This sign will be lower than the Bojangles sign. Assistant Manager Hankins noted that the expectation is to open in September. Vice Chairman Speidel also noted that he feels the Harvester is a first class venue and staff and Council has done a great thing.

Stockton: Questioned what Mr. Perdue is doing with his lot on South Main Street. Staff confirmed that the Town received a zoning request from Mr. Perdue to develop a

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residential pad site. Mr. Perdue indicates that he is not planning to build right now, just level the lot out for future development of a residential use.

Staff Updates: Update on Stormwater Ordinance requirement - The Town's Erosion and Sediment Control program will, along with the new state stormwater regulations, be taken over by the County of Franklin next month. In order for this to happen, there is a need to amend the Town's erosion and sediment control ordinance to reflect that the County will be now be handling the program. There will be a public hearing in July. All existing open erosion and sediment control projects will be managed by the Town until the projects expire. Any new site plans will be under town review, but the erosion and sediment portion will be handled by the County.

Update on Taco Bell - The plans were approved by the Town last Friday. The Town is going to take over the spur road next to Taco Bell which opens up to the Coleman property, and Taco Bell will have an entrance and exit on the spur road as well as Marketplace Drive.

Premanufactured building sellers - There are several premanufactured accessory building retailers/dealers in the county who tell interested customers that a permit is not needed for the buildings. They sell the building and install it without ever checking to see if a permit is required. Staff intends to address these retailers and dealers through written correspondence advising them of the requirement for zoning permits in the Town of Rocky Mount.

Other - Possible special use next month for accessory building.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn By: Vice Chair Speidel

Second: Commission Member Clements

Action: Approved unanimously

Time of Adjournment: 6:53 P.M.

Janet Stockton, Chairman

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink, Secretary

/sbs