

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 4, 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, at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 4, 2014, for its regular monthly meeting with Madame Chairman Janet Stockton presiding.

The following members of Planning Commission were present when the meeting was called to order: Madame Chairman Janet Stockton, Vice Chairman John Speidel and Planning Commission Members Bud Blanchard, Ina Clements, Derwin Hall, and John Tiggle. Let the record show that Planning Commission Member Jerry Greer was absent.

The following staff members were present: Assistant Town Manager Matthew C. Hankins, Town Planner Patrick Rust, Town Attorney John Boitnott, and Deputy Town Clerk and Secretary to the Planning Commission Stacey B. Sink.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Madame Chairman Stockton asked if there were any additions or corrections to the presented agenda, and being none, entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Commission Member Tiggle to approve the agenda as presented, with motion on the floor being seconded by Commission Member Clements. There being no discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Planning Commission received the following draft minutes for review and consideration of approval:

- February 4, 2014 – regular meeting minutes

Madame Chairman Stockton asked if there were any additions or corrections to the

presented minutes and being none entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Commission Member Clements to approve the February 4, 2014 minutes as presented, with motion on the floor being seconded by Commission Member Blanchard. There being no discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

OLD BUSINESS

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

NEW BUSINESS

(1) Review of the Variance Request for Grove Rocky Mount, LLC

Town Planner Rust presented this new business item to the Commission making the following points:

- Variance applications are decided upon by the Board of Zoning Appeals; however, § 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, which will be held on Thursday, March 6, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
- The Town has received a variance application from Brian Hochstein on behalf of Grove Rocky Mount, LLC, requesting a variance from Article 7-2-7 of the Zoning and Development Ordinance, which requires all non-residential driveways and parking spaces to be paved with asphalt, concrete, plant mix, or brick.
- The applicant wishes to construct a parking area at 50 Floyd Avenue, also known as Franklin County Tax Map and Parcel Number 20700 50600, using natural materials, such as chipped wood, instead of asphalt or concrete.
- The property is zoned Central Business District-CBD, and will be used as a commercial bed-and-breakfast establishment.

- The applicants express the perceived hardship that an asphalt parking area would take away from the historic, pastoral setting and charm of the property. In addition, the applicant believes that a green or natural parking area would be more suitable in proximity to the creek on the property, and that stormwater runoff would be minimal.
- The applicant also believes that this variance would enhance adjacent properties.
- After due consideration and review, staff's recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals is to approve the variance request based on the following considerations: (1) a green or natural parking area will be in accord with the existing wooded conditions of the property; (2) the addition of a green or natural parking area to the property will not affect either the property's stormwater runoff or the creek located on the property; and (3) minimal land disturbance is projected by the applicant, which is in keeping with the property's historical character.
- 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.
- Options for Planning Commission's recommendation are approval, conditional approval, denial, or no recommendation.
- Showed an aerial view of the general area where the Grove Bed and Breakfast will be, and referenced plans which were given to Planning Commission in the meeting documentation. The parking area will be entered and exited from Route 40 West, on the lower portion of the Grove property.
- The parking lot is expected to have over 50 parking spaces. A lot of trees were removed from the property and the plan is to chip them for use on the parking area. There will be a base with the chipped wood on top.

Assistant Town Manager Hankins noted that from a management perspective instead of a planning perspective, the Town does not want to pave the world. This variance request will provide a unique opportunity to study the outcome. It will not cost the Town anything and will provide some experience, should this question

ever arise again.

Vice Chairman Speidel expressed concern regarding the chipped wood idea, noting that it does not sound serviceable over a long period of time. Assistant Town Manager Hankins suggested that the variance applicant be allowed to speak to his request.

Bryan Hochstein came forward noting that he is one of the owners of Grove Rocky Mount, LLC. He offered the following points:

- The chipped wood, if put down over a gravel base, will have a more natural color [than asphalt].
- Over time it will get pushed down into the ground and will constantly need to be refreshed and resurfaced.
- It will help to capture the natural features of the property.
- It will not be a small layer of chipped wood, it will be packed and sustainable, atop gravel or crusher run.
- The location is a low setting near a creek, and if hard asphalt is there the water will pool and run into the creek.

Discussion by Planning Commission ensued:

- Concern was expressed about opening up a door for something that might be misconstrued or used in other settings that might not be appropriate to the Town. Assistant Town Manager Hankins noted that requests like this would still be heard on a case by case basis by the Board of Zoning Appeals. This wouldn't be setting a precedent that would have to be followed in the future. He sees it as sort of an experiment. Other localities, such as Colonial Williamsburg, have done it where they need to balance the need for modern parking and the more aesthetic appeal of natural materials. A good aspect of this will be its permeability.
- The drawings are showing a separate entrance and exit. Mr. Hochstein confirmed that it will be a one-way traffic flow. He wants to minimize the potential for traffic congestion.
- Confirmed with Mr. Hochstein the expectation of 50 to 100 parking spaces.
- Mr. Hochstein confirmed to Planning Commission that this is an experiment to him as well, and he understands that it may not work. He does not want his patrons to get stuck in the mud.

Although this was not a public hearing, a member of the public asked to come forward to speak.

Clark Arrington of 560 South Main Street, a neighboring property to the property in question, came forward to make the following comments:

- He is concerned about the base being used.
- Thinks using a gravel base with the chipped wood on top will be okay.
- Pleased with the work going on at the Grove and thinks that the property's former owner, Keister Greer, would be very pleased with the work.
- Hopes that the Grove can partner with the Harvester.

Madame Chairman Stockton opened the floor to discussion regarding Planning Commission's desire to make a recommendation.

- Vice Chairman Speidel noted that he is the Planning Commission representative on the Board of Zoning Appeals and he thinks that the Board would appreciate a recommendation from the Commission.
 - Commission Member Hall noted that he believes he has a conflict with the request and he cannot speak to the matter.
 - Commission Member Tiggle noted that he thinks the plan of work is ideal and that the asphalt would take away from the property.
- Motion was made by Commission Member Tiggle that the Planning Commission recommend to the Board of Zoning Appeals the approval of the variance request for 50 Floyd Avenue, Tax Map and Parcel Number 20700 50600, with motion on the floor being seconded by Commission Member Clements. There being no further discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed with a vote of five for, zero against, and one abstention from Commission Member Hall.

(2) Discussion regarding Planning Commission Bylaws

Deputy Clerk Sink noted that Planning Commission's meeting documents contained a copy of the current bylaws document with suggested changes noted in red. Some of the proposed changes are to correct references within the bylaws to either the state code or the Zoning and Development Ordinance. Some are to add missing words or to remove duplications. In Section 5-1 the proposed change is to specify that if the secretary to the Commission is not a member of the Commission, then the secretary does not have voting privileges. Some of the biggest proposed changes are in Sections 10 and 11 involving Planning Commission's order of business for regular meetings and for public hearings. Deputy Clerk Sink suggested that Planning Commission considering creating a more specific order of business for the public hearing portion of its meetings, similar to the way in which the Board of Zoning Appeals handles its order of business. She also noted that the Planning Commission must review any

proposed changes to its bylaws for 30 days before voting on the matter. It was the consensus of Planning Commission that Deputy Clerk Sink should type a new, draft bylaws document incorporating the suggested edits and then present it to Planning Commission at the next meeting. Planning Commission can then officially consider adopting the changes 30 days later or beyond.

(3) *Prioritization of Upcoming Planning Projects indentified in the 2013 Annual Report*

Assistant Town Manager Hankins addressed the Commission, advising this discussion is centered on the last page of the annual report of Planning Commission's 2013 Annual Report, which was provided in the meeting documents. The page lists upcoming projects which are not prioritized in any way, though staff has identified a certain working order. However, he would like Planning Commission's input on its perceived order of importance. The staff's order of importance is as follows:

1. Wayfinding Signage – there are funds in the budget now and staff is trying to finalize the request for proposals now.
2. Comprehensive Plan – staff is working now to issue a request for proposals to find a qualified firm to help with this process.
3. Identifying a new project for the 6-year plan – something to take the place of the Pell-Franklin-North Main realignment project once it is funded.
4. Joint meetings with Town Council – it has been some time since a joint meeting was held. This will likely be after July 1 and following the results of the May election.
5. Protection of redeveloped areas – looking at what other communities have done to protect revitalized and redeveloped areas.
6. Downtown planning issues.
7. Light Ordinance development.
8. Town initiated rezonings.

General discussion ensued:

- Town Council has had no discussion regarding hiring a firm to look at the Comprehensive Plan. This will be discussed as part of the budget process.
- Could the new VDOT 6-Year project be something at the railroad tracks near Brookside Pool and Sheetz?
- To date, no plans have been found for the roundabout proposed several years ago at the Floyd-Franklin intersection.
- Stone Engineering has done some preliminary work-ups on the Floyd intersection and they will be reviewed soon.

- It was the consensus of Planning Commission that the current order proposed by staff is acceptable.

COMMISSIONER CONCERNS AND STAFF UPDATES

Assistant Town Manager Hankins gave a brief update on the following:

Harvester Performance Center: Construction should be done by the first week of April. The first concert, scheduled for April 11, has been changed due to a scheduling conflict. A concert will still take place on that evening, but the previously scheduled event has been moved to May. April 24 will be the first big concert with the Indigo Girls. Tickets are selling well for all the events. The new assistant manager has been hired and an announcement will be made soon. A great grand-opening week has been planned with a host of great artists. There are about 80 shows awaiting announcement.

Commission Concerns:

- Commission Member Clements questioned if the rumors that Taco Bell is coming is true. Assistant Town Manager Hankins confirmed that it is a possibility, though all the details have not been worked out, and no official plans have been received. It is expected to go in behind Bojangles. It is not expected to have a Long John Silver's.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:08 p.m. and with no further business to discuss, Madame Chair Stockton entertained a motion to adjourn, with motion being made by Commission Member Clements, seconded by Vice Chairman Speidel, and carried unanimously by those present.

Janet Stockton, Chair

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink, Secretary

/sbs

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