

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
02/03/2015  
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, February 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 Tiggie; Madame Chair Janet Stockton; Vice Chairman John Speidel

Commission Members Absent: none

Staff Members Present: Matthew C. Hankins, Assistant Town Manager; Joshua Gibson, Town Planner; Deanna Alexander, Administrative Assistant; and Stacey Sink, Town Clerk and Secretary.

**Introduction of Community Development & Planning New Staff Members**

- Joshua Gibson, Town Planner
- Deanna Alexander, Deputy Town Clerk and Community Development & Planning Administrative Assistant

**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

**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: **January 6, 2015 - Regular Meeting Minutes**

Additions or Corrections: None

Motion: To approve the minutes as presented

Motion By: Commission Member Clements

Second: Commission Member Greer

Action: Approved by a unanimous vote

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

### **NEW BUSINESS**

***New Business Item No. 1: Review and discussion regarding Classification of Central Business District Tourist Home and Special Use Permit Zoning.***

#### **Staff Remarks:**

Memorandum from Matthew C. Hankins presented to Commission:

MEMORANDUM To: Rocky Mount Planning Commission Janet Stockton, Chair From: Matthew C. Hankins Community Development Director Date: January 30, 2015 Re: Request to add uses in Central Business District zoning Planning Commissioners: I have what I believe to be an important omission in the Town's Zoning Ordinance, and I request your direction on how to proceed with correcting it. Overnight lodging has historically been an important part of any Central Business District, including Rocky Mount's. The historic Rocky Mount Hotel and other smaller lodging establishments were once part of a thriving business culture in Rocky Mount. Then and now, hotels draw tourists, business people, cultural visitors and families to business districts, adding to the economy by increasing activity and interest in downtown businesses. Consider recent efforts by Roanoke, Lynchburg and other nearby cities to increase available lodging rooms in their downtowns; economic developers know that people drive economic activity, and adding people on a temporary basis adds money to your economy without driving significant service increases. Rocky Mount's zoning ordinance only contemplates one type of lodging facility as a by-right use in the Central Business District: bed and breakfast establishments. Hotels and motels are uses by right in General Business District zoning and uses by special exception in the very limited C1 and C2 Commercial Office districts. Your parking ordinance contemplates "hotels, motels and tourist homes", requiring one parking space per lodging room. Our current zoning policy pushes hotel developments to the east end of town in close proximity to the "big box" retailers, where overnight guests create less impact on the local economy. I had a boutique hotel developer last year looking at Rocky Mount who was uninterested in being located on a big box outparcel, and that made it significantly harder to find suitable locations, even for a boutique hotel with only 20- 25 rooms. From the economic development side, I believe the omission from the zoning ordinance hampers development opportunities in the Central Business District, more in Uptown than in Downtown. Consider larger parcels such as the Branch

Building and now under renovation. If I successfully recruit a hotel developer to consider Rocky Mount, those large parcels would not be readily available for development or redevelopment. Good planning practice and sound economic development principles dictate that temporary lodging should be included as a use in the Central Business District. I ask that you authorize staff to draft and advertise a potential revision to the Town of Rocky Mount Zoning Ordinance, specifically an ordinance adopting one of the following two options:

**Option 1.** Add the following by-right uses to the Zoning Ordinance: 29-1-37. Hotels, motels and tourist homes. That language matches the parking section of the Zoning Ordinance when contemplating parking requirements for this type of facility. Use by right does not mean automatic approval for any hotel, motel or tourist home which would be proposed; those businesses would still require the completion of a site plan, would be required to meet the parking ordinance, and would have to be harmonious with the Comprehensive Plan.

**Option 2.** Add the following as by-right and special uses to the Zoning Ordinance: By Right: 29-1-37. Tourist homes. By Special Use: 29-2-8. Hotels and motels.

This language continues to require planning and council approval for larger developments while balancing that with the ability of home-type lodging operators to operate establishments within the other constraints of the Zoning Ordinance, particularly parking. Also, I would also ask that you consider recommending removal of the numeric limitations on guests at Bed & Breakfast establishments and tourist homes.

### Discussion by Planning Commission:

Open discussion amongst commission members and Mr. Hankins regarding the definition of Tourist Home, Bed & Breakfast, and Hotel as currently defined by Town code. The examples given were the Claiborne House vs The Grove. Discussion continued on the importance of preservation of uptown, downtown, and Central Business District areas.

Administrative side would like to clean up language to have a better understanding of expectations from the commission as a governing body.

All members are in favor of additional lodging in Central Business District to attract visitors and support hometown business. Commission members like option 2 and would like Mr. Hankins and staff to do further research and prepare a staff report with zoning recommendations. Concerns with parking and good fit to downtown area.

Open discussion amongst commission members and Mr. Hankins regarding VRBO (Vacation Rentals By Owner). Whereas, home owners vacate their homes and rent to a tenant during special events in the area with no regulations. Currently, home owner is

required to submit Zoning application for approval as Tourist Home. In reality, it has never happened and unsure how the Town would police and enforce with current staffing. After research, finding a lot of communities that are struggling with how to regulate, enforce and police.

***New Business Item No. 2: Review and discussion regarding non-conforming cellular tower located in Uptown.***

Staff Remarks:

Matthew Hankins came before the commission to discuss non-conforming tower located at 280 South Main Street, Rocky Mount, VA. Property Tax Identification Number 20700-56000. Based on Town Code, a tower structure not in use for 90 days needs to be removed and will be considered a non-conforming tower. Mr. Hankins is issuing an order with Town Attorney's approval for CenturyLink to remove as much of the structure as possible from the top of the building. This is the Commission's opportunity to tell the staff to proceed or not based on enforcement of the Town code.

Discussion by Planning Commission:

Open discussion amongst commission members and Mr. Hankins regarding non-conforming tower on CentryLink building located at 280 South Main Street. Mr. Hankins advised he will be sending a letter to notify property owner of the non-conformance and the order to remove the tower.

CenturyLink owns and operates the local exchange building within the Town of Rocky Mount. The building includes an integrated aerial antenna tower which, until early 2014, housed an inactive microwave antenna dish. CenturyLink removed the microwave antenna dish in May 2014. They are aware the order is coming and have already been given some notification from Mr. Hankins's office that the tower does not meet Town Code and should be removed.

*Zoning Ordinance Section 40-4: Any antenna or tower that is not operated for a continuous period of 90 days shall be considered abandoned, and the owner of such antenna or tower shall remove same within 90 days of receipt of notice from the governing authority notifying the owner of such removal requirement. Removal includes the removal of the tower, all tower and fence footers, underground cables and support buildings. The buildings may remain with owner's approval. If there are two or more users of a single tower, then this provision shall not become effective until all users cease using the tower. If the tower is not removed per this section, the town may require the landowner to have it removed.*

**Commission members' consensus to continue with notification of the order to remove.**

## **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 December, 2014. Ms. Slone noted the following:

- Presented attached Slide Show Presentation for Review
- Discussion on general formatting and content
- Tag Line – She is looking for ideas from commission members
- Review of Page 3 Vision/Goals - send comments in a week to Deanna
- Key Planning Themes
- Plan Development
- Challenges of North Main Street & Route 40 Gateway Entrance
- Community Meeting
- History of Rocky Mount
- Rocky Mount Region – Roanoke, 25 Colleges, & Outdoor Recreation
- Demographics
- Sections to Come
- Zoning management tools
- Future land use map
- Implantation
- Better formant – user friendly, visual, keep it simple
- School Crossing – pattern cross walk with landscaping / thermoplastic
- Special challenge areas – Route 40 Entrance & North Main Street
  - North Main Street – growth & gateway, no wow factor
    - Suggestions: Reduce to Two Lanes with Bike Lane, Middle Landscaping
- Street improvement, crosswalks, way finding, link the trails, community safety, recreation, and work with private businesses for visual improvements.

#### **Discussion by Planning Commission:**

Open discussion amongst commission members, Ms. Slone and Mr. Hankins regarding the overview presentation of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Commission Member Greer expressed concerns about housing issues and ideas for the North Main Corridor. Member Greer would like to see more government participation in development, improvement, and revitalization of the North Main area. A commitment from the Town and the County will help industry growth.

Ms. Slone presented the next steps are working on the drafts and maps, hosting a community meeting, a work session with town council, and joint public hearing with planning commission and town council. Ms. Slone would like to have these items completed in the next 30 days, however, she does not feel that will be possible. Ms. Slone will attempt to complete as quickly as possible. If the Commission members have comments, suggestions, or questions please contact Community Development Staff or Ms. Slone directly.

Commission Member Hall opened a discussion about comparing our community to other communities of the same size regarding comprehensive plan ideas.

Mr. Hankins stated that working with a firm like Hill Studios will give the Commission a perspective of other communities of similarity. It may not necessarily be the input the members have provided, however, Ms. Slone will be glad to take into consideration the input of the members and of things seen in other locations such as in Marion, Abington, Farmville or wherever around the state or even in other states. Now is the time to offer suggestions in order for Ms. Slone to be able to incorporate best practices from other communities.

### **COMMISSIONER CONCERNS AND STAFF UPDATES**

Hankins: Board of Zoning Appeals meets on Thursday night, February 5, 2015 an appeal from R. Fralin Development regarding an administrative ruling made by Mr. Hankins about the Oaks at Rakes Tavern. At the end of the cul-de-sac the developer is asking to add a temporary road to develop parcels behind the current home sites. This violates the green space ordinance approved in the original plan. Mr. Hankins did not approve the request, considering it to be a significant change to the approved original master plan. Mr. Hankins advised R. Fralin Development by letter that the request for the temporary road needs to be presented to the Planning Commission and Town Council for approval.

Brief open discussion ensued with Chair Stockton and Mr. Hankins about asphalt temporary roads tend to become permanent. R. Fralin Development has thirty days to appeal the Board of Zoning Appeals decision through the Circuit Courts and the Town also has thirty days to appeal the decision with the courts.

Hankins: If any of the members of the Commission would like to be heard please attend the BZA meeting or the members can make a recommendation tonight as a group to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Hankins: In addition, Fralin Homes has submitted plans for an additional subdivision for the next phase at the Oaks at Rakes Tavern. The subdivision request extends out Old Fort Road adding five houses to each side of the road. Josh Gibson, Town Planner, and Mr. Hankins are revisiting the original development approval and proffers.

Stockton: Any other updates?

Clements: Any new businesses coming?

Intercept Youth Services has opened in the Branch Management Building in uptown. There is nothing pending at this time. German company Edelmann announced going into the development center downtown. Hopeful Edelmann will bring more jobs for future.

Open discussion by Commission Member Greer and Mr. Hankins on Cox property. We have until 2017 to get a tenant on the Cox property in order to not pay back VDOT bonded money. About three hundred thirty four thousand dollars (334,000) we would need to repay without a tenant on the property by 2017.

Blanchard: No Comments

Greer: No Comments

Hall: No Comments

Speidel: No Comments

Stockton: No Comments

Tiggle: No Comments

Stockton: Any other concerns? Hearing no other comments entertained a motion to adjourn.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to Adjourn By: Commission Member Greer

Second: Commission Member Clements

Action: Adjourned by a unanimous vote

Time of Adjournment: 7:44 pm

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Janet Stockton, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Deanna Alexander, Clerk/Secretary

DLA/