

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
8/19/2014  
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, August 19, 2014, for its regular monthly meeting with Madame Chair Janet Stockton presiding.

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

Commission Members Absent: Derwin Hall

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: Commission Member Tiggle

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: **July 1, 2014 - Regular Meeting Minutes**

Additions or Corrections: None

Motion: To approve the minutes as presented

Motion By: Commission Member Greer

Second: Vice Chairman Speidel

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**

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

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### ***New Business Item #1: Consideration of new date for October 2014 meeting***

Staff Remarks: Due to the Virginia Municipal League conference that is being held October 5-7, 2014 in Roanoke, Virginia, most of staff will be unavailable for the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting on October 7. Therefore, staff respectfully requests that the meeting be rescheduled to another date.

Discussion by Planning Commission: Thursday, October 9 is the preferable date.

Action: It was the consensus of the Planning Commission members present to reschedule the regular October meeting date to Thursday, October 9, 2014.

## **WORK SESSION**

### ***Work Session #1: Comprehensive Planning Work Session with Hill Studio of Roanoke***

Evie Slone of Hill Studio, and lead associate for the town's Comprehensive Plan update project, introduced herself to the Commission and noted that as major stakeholders in the plan, Planning Commission needs to have some major input in the project. She wants this work session to be an informal discussion, and she wants Planning Commission members to share any thoughts they have.

The Comprehensive Plan for Rocky Mount was written in 1995 and amended in 2002, and it is time for an update. Town staff has indicated they would like the plan to be more visual and user friendly, and as engaging as possible. The updated plan should also be useful for staff, Planning Commission and Town Council members in making land management decisions. Staff also suggested that the plan should identify real strategies for needed improvements in transportation and infrastructure, and should identify where growth should occur.

**The current Comprehensive Plan vision statement is not strong. What is special about Rocky Mount and what needs to be enhanced? What is the vision for the**

**future of Rocky Mount? For example, is it "a vibrant county seat that is the center of commerce?" What types of community, businesses, commerce, education, etc. identify Rocky Mount?** Answers to these questions are not needed today, but she would like to use these answers to draft a new vision statement.

Commission Member Greer noted that he would like to see the North Main corridor and surrounding neighborhoods turned into a more commercial use, and he would like to see small shops on the streets (like Circle Drive) instead of housing. The existing housing is not adequate for living, and it is not going to get better. This area needs more commercial growth.

Vice Chairman Speidel asked Greer if he envisions housing in the area with Commission Member Greer advising no, more commercial development. Commercial enterprise will bring jobs. Madame Chair Stockton acknowledged she could see more commerce in the front and housing in the back.

Ms. Slone advised that she plans to work with the community to look at particular areas. Her team plans to look very carefully at North Main Street and to determine how it can be enhanced for commercial growth and housing.

### **What are the 2 top issues for Rocky Mount that will need addressed in the future?**

Madame Chair Stockton: Jobs.

Commission Member Greer: Industrial land, but there is not enough land available in the town. Town should piggy back with the county.

Assistant Manager Hankins: Need a mixture of jobs and some need to be more accessible than others (based on educational attainment levels). Diversity of jobs is the key.

Stockton: Wants to see people walking the streets in downtown and uptown. Wants people who are visiting the Harvester to have somewhere else to go.

Town Planner Rust: Making sure businesses locate in town and stay in town. Why do new businesses leave?

Greer: Specialty shops are needed. Downtown and uptown will thrive within the next 10 years, with younger shopkeepers who will stay open later.

Vice Chairman Speidel: Would like to see uptown and downtown connected so not completely separate entities.

### **What about people issues? Social needs, education needs, health needs?**

Updated demographics show the population for Rocky Mount is increasing, the median

age is increasing and there is an increasing number of high school graduates, but there is a decreased number of people with higher education degrees. People who come to Rocky Mount to live are not necessarily people with college degrees. **Is there a need to bring some young people back? What should this plan address in terms of needed social issues to help young families?**

Madame Chair Stockton: Thinks the Harvester will help with some of the issues, but noted that some people drive to Roanoke to work and then come back to Rocky Mount to raise their families. There is a need for trendy or specialty stores that will be attractive to young people.

Commission Member Greer: Thinks the wages are too low.

Stockton: For residents who cannot drive, transportation is a big problem. There is no way to go anywhere without a car. There is no access to public transportation, and very little access to private transportation.

Blanchard: Housing choices are limited. Not a lot of new choices available. Concerned about the number of rental properties, which has almost doubled. Wants people to own property and live in town. A large number of absentee owners is not the best scenario for the town.

Stockton: Not a lot of options for elderly people who do not want to own a home any longer, no independent living or assisted care.

Greer: The town needs a cab company. Does the town have too many rules for a small cab company to open? Assistant Manager Hankins noted that during his tenure the town has had three or four interested parties apply through the town clerk's office. All have had to submit to a criminal background check, and most have had sketchy pasts. Greer thinks the town and county need to work together to get a cab company. Also thinks that the Panther Express (Ferrum Express) should be promoted more. Blanchard agreed that working with Ferrum College would be good for the Town.

### **What utility or infrastructure improvements are needed?**

Assistant Manager Hankins: Water plant built in 1981. Waste water treatment plant built in 1994. Some water piping still has 2-inch lines and this has caused flow problems with some hydrants. The town is working to correct these problems. Some of the waste water piping is terra cotta. Does the piping need to be replaced? Does it need to be extended? Looking into a water agreement with Western Virginia Water Authority for pass through services tied into town system to give the town extra water and to serve county residents that are not currently served. In exchange the town could be the sewer provider for those additional customers.

## **Environmental issues? Water quality, air quality?**

### **Historic Districts?**

Assistant Manager Hankins: The town has districts on the national register, but there are no boards which regulate them (like architectural review boards). Consensus of Planning Commission that there is no need.

Hankins: The town has adopted Part I of the building code, but has not adopted Part II or III which deals with maintenance and upkeep. Does not think it will ever be adopted in Rocky Mount. Consensus of Planning Commission that it is not worth the effort to pursue it.

### **Police, fire and emergency services?**

Consensus of Planning Commission that this is all in good standing.

### **Recreational facilities?**

Madame Chair Stockton: Options are limited.

Assistant Manager Hankins: No youth basketball courts, no trails, and town does not have a recreation department.

Stockton: Wants kids to stop hanging out at Food Lion parking lot because there is no place to go and nothing to do. Nothing for art, ball playing, etc.

### **Land use and land management? Rezoning and new development? Where and what types? Growth areas? North Main and Downtown/Uptown are growth areas? What are some other areas?**

Commission Member Clements: Western part of town, people there do not have a grocery store.

### **Where should future residential growth occur? Is the Oaks at Rakes Tavern where the new growth will be 10 to 20 years from now? If someone came tomorrow wanting to build 200 new houses on a piece of property, how can the newly revised Comprehensive Plan help Planning Commission make a decision?**

Town Planner Rust: Reported the developer is completing the last houses of the first phase (30 lots), and will be submitting the second phase. Took about three years to build 29 houses. Some have sold, some are renter occupied. Knollwood and Stone Mill

areas have some larger parcels that could be developed for housing in the future.

Greer: Thinks the waterline extension will eliminate a lot of pressure on the town, and that the growth for homes will be right outside the town.

Assistant Manager Hankins: The town's ability to annex, which is generally centered around utilities, may be limited.

### **Regional issues?**

Ms. Slone asked that Planning Commission continue to think about these questions and to contact her with any additional thoughts. She also asked that Planning Commission think carefully about the special qualities of Rocky Mount and what the long term vision should be for Rocky Mount's future.

### **Anything else?**

Commission Member Blanchard: Regarding land management and industrial growth, how will this be addressed? Ms. Slone advised that it will be addressed by a section in the plan which will establish some guiding policies and strategies to help the town accomplish those types of growth, industry and jobs, and will offer some suggestions on ways the town can address it. For example, suppose a property is zoned residential and someone comes in wanting to put in a large industry. This plan should be able to identify the certain kinds of industries which are wanted, which particular areas the industry should go in. The plan should help the Planning Commission make land use decision, making the plan a land management tool to support the decision.

Commission Member Clements: Wants the town to preserve what it has, but also to accommodate growth. Thinks the town should have a better working relationship with the county.

### **What are Rocky Mount's strengths?**

Madame Chair Stockton: Small and quaint, and a caring community. Sense of community.

Commission Member Clements: Leaders work together and look out for the betterment of the community and its individuals.

Vice Chairman Speidel: Effective and responsible town government.

Commission Member Blanchard: A negative is too much wood, too many wood

products. The town needs industrial diversity. Assistant Manager Hankins agreed, noting that he appreciates Plygem and is glad it is here, but thinks the town relies on Plygem too much as the industrial base. If Plygem moved, the town would lose 900-1300 jobs.

Commission Member Greer: Town and county need to work together to get someone to lobby for better jobs here.

Assistant Manager Hankins: Need for a gasline. What would it take to get the gasline to Rocky Mount? \$17 to \$20 million to get the line to the town's industrial park.

Commission Member Tiggler: How much can be packed into Rocky Mount before it loses its small town flavor?

### **COMMISSIONER CONCERNS & STAFF UPDATES**

Blanchard: None

Clements: None

Greer: None

Hall: None

Tiggler: None

Speidel: None

Stockton: None

Staff Updates:

- Assistant Manager Hankins informed the Commission that Town Planner Rust will be leaving the town's employment, and staff will be advertising the planner position soon. He thanked Town Planner Rust for all the work he has done, and noted that he has been a pleasure to work with. Town Planner Rust noted that he has enjoyed his time of employment with the town, and he appreciates all of the members of the Commission and staff for making him feel at home. He will be moving back to North Carolina.
- North Main Street paving is almost done. The railroad near Angle Bridge has been removed.
- 20 Spring Street: The property owner showed up with a contractor, but the house was already on the ground. The demolition sign will be left on display through the end of the week. There is a court hearing Thursday morning to talk about the costs of abatement, and to place a lien against the property. There was an underground storage tank which was rusted through and leaking. There is a trust fund for helping to remove the tank which was contracted to Green Environmental.

- Taco Bell is moving along.
- Sidewalk project is moving along.
- Complaints about Dollar Tree traffic issues. Commission Member Greer was impressed by Dollar Tree. It is a clean development and the town will reap a lot. Assistant Manager Hankins noted that there is currently a bidding war for the Family Dollar franchise, so it is possible the town could lose one of its stores.
- Joyful Light Ministries has submitted a siteplan for a new church on Maynor Street.
- Balzer and Associates is preparing to submit Phase II for the Oaks at Rakes Tavern development.
- The town also has a subdivision plan for Satch Worley's Tanglewood Hills.
- Carl Simpson and business partner have started work on three houses in Landmark subdivision.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to Adjourn By: Commission Member Clements

Second: Commission Member Tiggle

Action: Motion to adjourn approved by a unanimous vote of members present.

Time of Adjournment: 7:32 PM

---

Janet Stockton, Chairman

ATTEST:

---

Stacey B. Sink, Clerk/Secretary