

**TOWN OF ROCKY MOUNT
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 9, 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 Thursday, October 9, 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; 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 Blanchard

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: **August 19, 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 by a unanimous vote

PUBLIC HEARING

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

OLD BUSINESS

Old Business Item #1: Follow-Up Discussion Regarding Comprehensive Plan Update Work Session

Staff Remarks: Enclosed in the packet are meeting notes from the August 19 Comprehensive Plan update work session with Evie Slone of Hill Studio. Ms. Slone would like to know if Planning Commission has any additional questions or comments concerning the information discussed during the work session. Hill Studio continues to work on the project and is currently in the process of assembling background information and base materials for mapping. Ms. Slone is also working with Deputy Clerk Sink to schedule meetings with other town staff members and community stakeholders to discuss their thoughts and insights regarding the plan update. Also, Ms. Slone would like to know if there are specific community stakeholders that Planning Commission would like for her to interview regarding expectations for the plan.

Discussion by Planning Commission: *Speidel* - Thinks that Ms. Slone's meeting notes were very good.

Action: Let the record show that Planning Commission offered no additional questions or comments at this time. Commissioners will consider the request for community stakeholders and will report back to staff at a later time.

Old Business Item #2: Discussion Regarding Proposed Amendments to Allow the Keeping of Chickens in Non-Agriculturally Zoned Areas

Staff Remarks: At its July 1, 2014 meeting, Planning Commission discussed the urban farming of "backyard" chickens. During that discussion, staff noted that due to an increased interest from citizens, Town Council had referred the issue to Planning Commission for review. Planning Commission discussed various concerns regarding the keeping of chickens and suggested that staff look at preparing a restrictive draft ordinance as a starting point for discussion. Presented for Planning Commission's review is a proposed, draft ordinance amending Part II, Chapter 10, Article IV of the Town Code, along with additional possible amendments affecting the Zoning Ordinance. Staff is looking for a suggestion from Planning Commission if this type of draft document is helpful.

Discussion by Planning Commission: *Blanchard* - Has staff discussed this matter with other localities that have allowed the keeping of chickens? *Hankins* - Most of that

information is anecdotal. Most problems are with enforcement regarding monitoring the number of chickens, as well as how chickens are disposed of when they age or people no longer want to keep them.

Greer - How many people have chickens in town right now? *Hankins* - Approximately eight right now, that staff is aware of.

Hall - Likes the presented draft ordinance. What exactly did Town Council ask Planning Commission to do? *Hankins* - Town Council asked Planning Commission to study the idea of having chickens, and to make a recommendation.

Speidel - Likes the presented ordinance and thinks it addresses everything except the neighbors and how the neighbors feel about having chickens in close proximity. It does talk about it being a nuisance. *Hankins* - As long as chickens are kept according to the parameters of the ordinance, then there is no nuisance. *Greer* - Does the Town Code still allow for five neighbors to petition for declaration of a nuisance? *Hankins* - Yes.

Stockton - Worried about the enforcement. Does not think the town has enough staff to enforce it. *Hankins* - Agreed that enforcement would be an issue, but noted that staff is already having to deal with it through code complaints.

Hall - Thinks that the right idea is to enforce it in a regulated way. Thinks it will be easier to enforce if there are controls in place. Noted that the local food movement with gardens, rain barrels, organic food, and chickens is a large movement now.

Blanchard - Agrees that enforcement is the hardest thing.

Tiggle - Noted that he spoke to a friend in Louisiana who is on a planning commission there, and this issue has caused a lot of headaches for his locality. They have an application fee to keep chickens.

Clements - Do citizens generally come to investigate to see if keeping chickens is okay before they purchase? *Hankins* - No.

Speidel - Would like to see a proposal on fees and application process, etc.

Hall - If the barriers to entry are more difficult, such as through applications and permitting, then it may be easier to enforce.

Stockton - Agreed that if people are going to do it when it is not allowed, then there really needs to be something in place to regulate it.

Action: Consensus for staff to continue to research and make some application and fee recommendations.

NEW BUSINESS

New Business Item #1: Review of Zoning Administrator's Action Regarding Apparent Zoning Map Error

Staff Remarks: Recently, the Office of the Franklin County Commissioner of the Revenue made an inquiry of town staff regarding the zoning status for the property located at 1450 North Main Street. Assistant Manager Hankins did extensive research regarding the zoning history of the property and responded to the inquiry with the letter enclosed with the packet. Assistant Manager Hankins requests that Planning Commission review this decision for accuracy.

Discussion by Planning Commission: *Greer* – Noted that this situation occurred when the town four-laned North Main Street and the house had to be torn down. The owner was unable to rebuild her house on a parcel zoned General Business. A rezoning was approved in 1993.

Hankins – Confirmed to Planning Commission that the zoning on the parcel affects the tax assessments.

Greer - What is best for the family of the property owner? *Hankins* - The best thing is to determine that it is a mapping error and should be zoned Residential R1, as permitted by the 1993 rezoning action.

Action: Consensus that Assistant Manager Hankins made a proper decision and handled the situation appropriately.

New Business Item #2: Discussion Regarding Committee To Review Commission Bylaws

Staff Remarks: At its March 4, 2014 meeting, Planning Commission expressed interest in reviewing its bylaws document. Staff suggests that Planning Commission consider approving a committee to review the bylaws document and offer any recommendations to the Commission.

Discussion by Planning Commission: *Stockton and Speidel* – Agreed to serve on the committee. *Sink* – Will work with Stockton and Speidel regarding scheduling.

Action: Consensus of Planning Commission to approve bylaws committee volunteers.

COMMISSIONER CONCERNS & STAFF UPDATES

Blanchard: None

Clements: Public Works has done a great job on the 40 East sidewalk project. *Hankins* - Will also need to get the signalization in through Richardson & Wayland. Right now, sidewalks will only go on one side of the road. This will greatly improve the pedestrian

safety through the entire corridor. The sidewalks will extend all the way to the Holiday Inn.

Greer: None

Hall: Status of the possible extension of the south bound turn lane to get onto the 220 South ramp? *Hankins* - still under review.

How close is the bridge project to being completed? *Hankins* - The project is supposed to be completed in December.

What is the next project on the 6-year plan? *Hankins* – The realignment of Pell-North Main-Franklin in front of the Hub Restaurant.

Tiggle: None

Speidel: Enjoys driving over Angle Bridge now due to the removal of the railroad tracks.

Is the Grove officially open? *Hankins* - No, but it will be opening soon.

Stockton: When will Taco Bell open? *Hankins* - Expected is next week, but he is not sure they will meet that deadline.

Staff Updates: *Hankins* - Did not get many planner position applications. The timing was not good for advertisement. There are many other localities that are hiring for planners right now. Has not yet reviewed the applications. *Stockton and Speidel* - Would like to sit in on the interview panel for the planner position. *Greer* – Thinks the next planner should be offered a five-year contract.

Hankins – There is currently an ad in the paper to hire an administrative assistant for the community development department.

Hankins - Due to the Harvester the number of vacancies in the uptown and downtown are decreasing. The old furniture building next to the library has been sold to an investor who is hoping to open a restaurant in the space. Arrington Sports & Awards has downsized, leaving an open space in its building. The Edible Vibe space is empty. One of the shops is going to be a photography studio (Leslie Wray). Old's Cool is opening up next to J&J Fashions by Brian Olinger. He is also asking about the possibility of doing small-lot auctions at his business location. First floor of N. Morris Building is still vacant. The top floors have been rented by Child Protective Services. The old Kroger store owned by the Jones family is also vacant.

Hankins - Country Cooking is losing its lease at Liberty Fair Mall. It, however, is not interested in leaving the Martinsville market to come to Rocky Mount. The Covington Company is working to fill its vacant spaces. Re-Play games in the Marketplace Shopping Center has closed. Centrex is now marketing that 2,400 square-foot space.

Hankins - Twelve code enforcement complaints in the last month, but those should be winding to an end as the growing season stops.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn By: Vice Chair Speidel

Second: Commission Member Clements

Action: Motion to adjourn approved unanimously

Time of Adjournment: 6:58 p.m.

Janet Stockton, Chairman

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink, Clerk/Secretary

SBS/