

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
DECEMBER 4, 2007
6:00 P.M.**

The Planning Commission of the Town of Rocky Mount, Virginia met at the Rocky Mount Municipal Building on Tuesday, December 4, 2007, at 6:00 p.m. with Vice Chair John Speidel presiding.

The following members were present:

Vice Chair John Speidel; Planning Commission Members Derwin Hall, John Tiggle, Milton Arrington, Ina Clements, and Jerry W. Greer, Sr.; Assistant Town Manager & Community Development Director Matthew C. Hankins, Planning and Zoning Administrator Paul D. Stockwell, and Deputy Clerk Stacey B. Sink.

Let the record show that Planning Commission Chair Janet Stockton was not present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

- November 2, 2007
- November 15, 2007

Vice Chair Speidel asked the Planning Commission to consider each of the minutes separately.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Tiggle to approve the November 7, 2007 minutes as presented, with the motion on the floor being seconded by Planning Commission Member Clements. There being

no discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Arrington to approve the November 15, 2007 minutes as presented, with the motion on the floor being seconded by Planning Commission Member Greer. There being no discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

PUBLIC HEARING

Vice Chair Speidel recessed the meeting to hold the following public hearings:

- A) Historic Resources Interpretive Plan of the Pigg River Heritage Area in the Town of Rocky Mount, Virginia: Prepared By Hill Studio, P.C.

After being duly advertised, the Planning Commission reviewed the Town of Rocky Mount staff's request for adoption and approval of the *Historic Resources Interpretive Plan of the Pigg River Heritage Area in the Town of Rocky Mount, Virginia* as prepared by Hill Studio, P.C.

Vice Chair Speidel opened the floor to the Planning and Zoning Administrator for comments regarding the proposed interpretive plan.

The Planning and Zoning Administrator stated that the interpretive plan was presented at a previous Planning Commission meeting, and therefore, he would not make the presentation again. However, he offered the following brief synopsis of the presentation:

- The interpretive plan is, essentially, documentation of the historic resources in the Pigg River Heritage Area, and includes such resources as the Farm at the Furnace, the Washington Iron Furnace, Callaway's Forge, the Old Covered Bridge, the Robert Hill Fort and the Rakes House and Cement Spring.
- In addition to the documentation, the interpretive plan also outlines several themes associated with the resources, including: government, transportation, and industry.
- The interpretive plan also makes recommendations for preservation of the historic resources through comprehensive planning, land-use planning and zoning, historic overlay districts, easements, and advertising through the Friends of the Pigg River organization, etc.

Vice Chair Speidel opened the floor to anyone wishing to come before the Planning Commission to speak regarding the adoption of the proposed interpretive plan.

- Though she had previously indicated that she wished to speak regarding the adoption of the interpretive plan, Deanna Shoemaker of 25 Old Furnace Road, declined the opportunity to speak at this time.

Let the record show that no one from the public came forward to speak on this hearing.

Discussion ensued between the Planning Commission Members and the Planning and Zoning Administrator:

- Vice Chair Speidel stated that he read through the interpretive plan document and he thinks that the information presented is impressive. He learned a lot about the history of the area and hopes the information presented is accurate. He then confirmed with the Planning and Zoning Administrator that the Planning Commission is considering the approval of the document entitled *Historic Resources Interpretive Plan of the Pigg River in the Town of Rocky Mount, Virginia*, as prepared by Hill Studio, P.C.
- Planning Commission Member Clements confirmed with Vice Chair Speidel that each of the proposed plans, namely the interpretive plan, and the Pigg River Heritage Trail Master Plan, would be considered separately for approval.

Let the record show that Vice Chair Speidel reconvened the meeting back into regular session.

There being no further discussion, Vice Chair Speidel entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Tiggle for the Planning Commission to recommend approval and adoption of the *Historic Resources Interpretive Plan of the Pigg River Heritage Area in the Town of Rocky Mount*, as prepared by Hill Studio, P.C. Let the record show that the motion on the floor was seconded by Planning Commission Member Clements. A roll call vote was taken. Voting in favor of the motion were Planning Commission Members Hall, Tiggle, Clements, Greer, and Vice Chair Speidel. Planning Commission Member Arrington abstained from voting. Let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present and voting.

Let the record show that Vice Chair Speidel recessed the meeting to go into the next public hearing:

B) The Pigg River Heritage Trail Master Plan

After being duly advertised, the Planning Commission reviewed the Town of Rocky Mount staff's request for adoption and approval of the The Pigg River Heritage Trail Master Plan.

Vice Chair Speidel opened the floor to anyone wishing to come before the Planning Commission to speak regarding the proposed Pigg River Heritage Trail Master Plan.

- Richard Shoemaker of 25 Old Furnace Road came forward to speak. He agreed with Vice Chair Speidel that the interpretive plan is impressive; however, the Trail, because it encroaches on his personal property, is concerning to him. He further stated that upon arriving at the meeting this evening, he realized there have been changes made to the proposed trail route which make it more palatable to him, but he would like to caution the Planning Commission that there is a matter of private property and also a matter of privacy. He is concerned that the Trail will have to cross his property, which contains the Iron Furnace. The Iron Furnace cannot be seen from his home, so he would have no idea who could be on his property. He has a large family, with many children and grandchildren who enjoy his yard and the Furnace, and without knowing who is on his property, he would not want his family to use his property unsupervised, which would be ridiculous on his own property. He further stated that he would not be willing to grant an easement for open access to the Furnace for this reason, and this is difficult for him to say because he thinks the basics of the plan are good. The plan is somewhat more palatable to him now because the proposed trail route has been moved from his property, to the other side of the creek, and it has also been moved from Phase I of the plan to Phase III, which makes the prospect of it somewhat more distant. There is still the possibility that someone could forge the creek to see and touch the Iron Furnace. He is not sure how this can be worked out to maintain his privacy, and he asks the Town to keep his desire for privacy in mind.

Discussion ensued regarding the plan changes he referred to, specifically the line of trail that was along the side of his property and the line that represented a bridge to cross the creek to the Iron Furnace.

- Mr. Shoemaker reiterated to the Planning Commission that since the route has been changed (moved across the creek) he has nothing to say about it, because it is now shown on Joplin property and doesn't pertain to him. However, he worries about the closeness, but it is not his property. He also added that he has had a long standing

agreement with the Franklin County Historical Society, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the Community Partnership for Revitalization, the County of Franklin, and the Town of Rocky Mount, and everyone is aware of his interest in history and the fact that it is his intention to allow anyone wishing to see the Iron Furnace to gain access to it. He knows that the Iron Furnace is one of the most significant historical sites in the County. However, he wishes to reserve the right to know when people enter and exit his property.

- Planning Commission Member Greer confirmed with Mr. Shoemaker that the route is now on his neighbor's property, formerly the Latimer property, now the Freeborn property, with Mr. Shoemaker stating that now it will be on the back side of the creek near the Franklin County Veterans' Memorial Park and where the old ice plant used to be. In addition, there is still a bit of concern on his part because there is not enough room to build a trail due to the rocky nature of the area.
- Planning Commission Member Greer questioned the intent of the Town as related to the rockiness of the proposed trail route. The Assistant Town Manager complimented Mr. Shoemaker on his willingness and helpfulness in bringing out issues as related to trail development and further stated that Mr. Shoemaker's comments are one of the reasons that staff has attempted to clarify the phases of the development. The Assistant Town Manager also noted that the logical development for the trail starts out connecting Lynch Landing to the Franklin County Veterans' Memorial Park (Phase I), and due to the development of the Rakes Tavern properties, this area is the obvious Phase II. In order to include some of the historical resources like the Iron Furnace, this area was moved to Phase III to allow the opportunity to seek engineering monies and to determine the feasibility of locating the Trail there. It may be that the costs are too prohibitive and that section of the Trail could be abandoned in the future to allow extension of the Trail into areas that are more affordable. The Assistant Town Manager again expressed his appreciation to Mr. Shoemaker for his graciousness in allowing Town staff to tour the property. The Assistant Town Manager also expressed his understanding of Mr. Shoemaker's concerns over privacy and stated that the Town is willing to do whatever is necessary (such as putting up a fence), and within reason, to protect his property and allow access to the Trail, and the Town does not want to do that at the expense of any other residents that may be affected.
- Planning Commission Member Greer confirmed with Mr. Shoemaker that he believes the portion of the Trail at the Iron Furnace should be looked at as an "invite only" area, and that this will be considered when Phase III is to begin.

- The Assistant Town Manager confirmed to the Planning Commission that projects of this nature tend to develop fairly slowly, depending on funding from grant sources, how much investment the Town is willing to put into it, and other variables, so it could be several years down the road before this is necessary to discuss again. The Town is asking for approval of the concept of the Trail with the caveat that all of the phases may not be completed as they are planned.
- There was discussion among the Planning Commission members concerning the difficulty of protecting the Iron Furnace if it is open to the public, as well as the need to include the Iron Furnace with the Trail as it is an integral part of the area's heritage.
- Deanna Shoemaker joined her husband before the Planning Commission to reiterate her husband's desire to share the heritage of the Furnace, while maintaining the privacy and safety of the property.
- Vice Chair Speidel questioned the Planning and Zoning Administrator if Phase II is scheduled to go along with the Pigg River, with the Planning and Zoning Administrator stating that this has not yet been determined. He has discussed the matter with the property owner, Mr. Philpott, and Mr. Philpott did question why the planned route was to come up Old Fort Road rather than along the river. Mr. Philpott has made no indication that he would be willing to grant an easement but he did indicate that the primary route should be along the Pigg River. The Phase II proposed route was changed to go along the river for this reason.
- The Planning and Zoning Administrator reiterated to the Planning Commission that this plan is "concept only" and is totally dependent upon the property owners' approval. A recommendation for approval by the Planning Commission and approval by Town Council will just allow staff to proceed with meetings with individual property owners to discuss concerns, and make provisions for obtaining easements.
- Vice Chair Speidel expressed his partiality to having Phase II run along the Pigg River rather than Old Fort Road. He also expressed his concern over making sure that the Franklin County Veterans' Memorial Park is protected. The Planning and Zoning Administrator indicated that it is goal of the Trail to enhance the Veterans' Memorial by making it more accessible through the addition of a pedestrian boardwalk connecting the Veterans' Park to Lynch Landing. The Assistant Town Manager pointed out that work was done several years ago by the Veteran's Memorial Commission regarding the boardwalk addition.

- B.W. Wright, of 5064 Franklin Street, and on behalf of the Franklin County Veteran's Memorial Commission, came before the Planning Commission stating that the Veterans' Memorial Commission wholeheartedly supports the Trail and thinks that it will be an asset and improvement to the Veterans' Park. However, they do not want the Trail to encroach upon other property owners.
- Planning Commission Member Hall stated that connecting the Veterans' Memorial Park to Lynch Landing would give the Park access to good parking during special events.
- Vice Chair Speidel expressed his desire to endorse Phase I and II, but stated that he is uncomfortable with Phase III. However, he understands this is concept only.
- Planning Commission Member Clements confirmed with the Planning and Zoning Administrator that this is only in the planning phase and approval will allow staff to start searching for grant money and working with property owners to reach agreements for obtaining easements. The Planning and Zoning Administrator further stated that approval of this plan by the Planning Commission in no way means that the Trail will definitely happen or will definitely cross properties. It will be up to each of the individual property owners if an easement is allowed.
- The Planning and Zoning Administrator confirmed to Vice Chair Speidel that the interpretive plan booklet was funded by a Department of Historic Resources grant, but the Trail Master Plan was entirely produced by staff. Vice Chair Speidel and Planning Commission Member Clements commended staff for the quality of work on the project.

Let the record show that Vice Chair Speidel reconvened the meeting back into regular session.

There being no further discussion, Vice Chair Speidel entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Clements for the Planning Commission to recommend approval and adoption of the Pigg River Heritage Trail Master Plan concept. Let the record show that the motion on the floor was seconded by Planning Commission Member Tiggle. A roll call vote was taken. Voting in favor of the motion were Planning Commission Members Hall, Tiggle, Clements, Greer, and Vice Chair Speidel. Planning Commission Member Arrington abstained from voting. Let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present and voting.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

A) Old Business

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

(Let the record show that as Mr. and Mrs. Shoemaker were exiting the meeting, Planning Commission Member Clements thanked them for their attendance and questioned Mr. Shoemaker if he currently has any trouble with trespassers on his property. Mr. Shoemaker stated that it was a favorite right of passage for many years to have people climb the Iron Furnace. He installed flood lights several years ago and this has prevented any such trespassing.)

B) New Business

- Meeting Changes for Calendar Year 2008

Prior to the meeting, the Planning and Zoning Administrator informed the Planning Commission that three meetings will need to be moved from the regularly scheduled meeting day of the first Tuesday in each month, due to conflicts with holidays and election days. The meetings which will need to be changed, as well as the recommended rescheduling dates, are as follows:

- Meeting of January 1, 2008 rescheduled for January 2, 2008.
- Meeting of May 6, 2008 rescheduled for May 7, 2008.
- Meeting of November 4, 2008 rescheduled for November 5, 2008.

There being no discussion, Vice Chair Speidel entertained a motion.

- Motion was made by Planning Commission Member Clements to change the meeting dates as noted above, with motion on the floor being seconded by Planning Commission Member Tiggle. There being no discussion, let the record show that the motion on the floor passed unanimously by those present.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Vice Chair Speidel entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:45 p.m., with motion being made by Planning Commission Member Clements, seconded by Planning Commission Member Tiggle, and carried unanimously by those present.

John Speidel, Vice Chair

ATTEST:

Stacey B. Sink
Deputy Clerk

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